

Climate Change, Social Stress and Violent Conflict
State of the Art and Research Needs
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Abstract

Environmental shocks and civil conflict

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The economies of agrarian societies are tightly linked to environmental conditions and events. Using annualized rainfall data as an instrument for economic performance, a recent study of Sub-Saharan Africa found strong evidence linking economic shocks (i.e. droughts) with increased risk of civil war. But what are the causal mechanisms that connect economic shocks with conflict? This applies employs a spatially disaggregated approach, with new geo-referenced precipitation and conflict data, which permits a more appropriate and targeted empirical assessment of alternative explanations. By analyzing the effect of rainfall deviation on conflict through economic growth at various levels, we seek to assess whether any systematic co-variance is driven primarily by local effects on motivation/rebel recruitment or by national impacts on state capacity. This paper thus speaks to both the general literature on economic causes of civil conflict and the ongoing debate on implications of climate change for human security and peace.