

April 2018 — Conflict, Violence, and Fragile States

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Fragile states: Employment programs must become a bridge to prosperity

In fragile and conflict-affected states, governments frequently turn to public works programs to provide temporary jobs to vulnerable populations. A new body of research across five countries and 40,000 households shows how policy makers can redesign these programs to transform their short-term benefits into long-term prosperity and stability. During an emergency, these programs deliver critical economic benefits for the communities where they are offered, whether measured by rates of employment, income, or consumption, but do little to tamp down crime or promote pro-social behaviors. Research shows that extending the impact of these programs requires better targeting of beneficiaries, complementary programs such as training and small grants, and interventions to provide at-risk youth alternatives to crime and violence.

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Re-evaluating peacekeeping missions

Sending peacekeepers to a conflict zone is based on the idea that they will help build peace “from the bottom up” by bolstering local security and supporting local economic and social vitality. This bottom-up hypothesis is tested using surveys and administrative data from post-war Liberia in a quasi-experiment that applies matching techniques to administrative data used in mission planning. When viewed this way the evidence supporting claims that peacekeeper deployments increase local security and have modest effects on economic or social vitality is weak. Moreover, NGOs tend to work in areas where deployments are not present, contrary to the hypothesis. It may be time to consider other mechanisms such as signaling and deterrence at the level of leaders, and to examine if and how peacekeeping missions contribute to stabilizing fragile states..

[Peacekeeping and Development in Fragile States: Micro-Level Evidence from Liberia](#), Eric Mvukiyehe and Cyrus Samii, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 8389, March 2018.

What characterizes Daesh foreign recruits?

U.N. estimates suggest over 25,000 foreign fighters went to Iraq and Syria between the start of the civil war in 2011 and September 2016 to fight for Daesh or the Al-Nusra Front. A leaked copy of Daesh's personnel records for 3,695 recruits

include countries of residence, education level, age, and self-reported knowledge of Islam, as well as a desired occupation in the group. When the individual-level education information for recruits is linked to their peers in their home countries, the estimated coefficients indicate that higher unemployment rates are a push factor toward radicalization, especially in countries geographically closer to Syria. A one percentage point increase in the unemployment rate leads to 42 additional Daesh recruits. The effect vanishes for countries further away from Syria.

[Unemployment and Violent Extremism: Evidence from Daesh Foreign Recruits](#), Mohamed Abdel Jelil, Kartika Bhatia, Anne Brockmeyer, [Quy-Toan Do](#), and [Clement Joubert](#), World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 8381, March 2018.

Assessing the size and consequences of criminal activity in Colombia

Illicit incomes in Colombia peaked at 12 percent of GDP in 2001 and decreased to less than 2 percent of GDP by 2013. In turn, laundered assets increased from about 8 percent of GDP in the mid-1980s to a peak of 14 percent by 2002, and declined to 8 percent by 2013. The decline in illicit activities and laundered assets occurred during a high economic growth period and the implementation of Plan Colombia. These estimates are guided by an economic model that considers illicit activities alongside a licit private sector and a functioning government. The model can also be applied to other countries. It can be used to assess the effects of changes in productivity, government efficiency, and drug prices on different types of illicit activities (those that generate new income, like drug trafficking, and those that only redistribute it, like theft) and, subsequently, on licit investment, work, and income growth.

[Illicit Activity and Money Laundering from an Economic Growth Perspective: A model and an Application to Colombia](#), Norman Loayza, Edgar Villa, and Martha Misas, *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, October 2017 | [Working Paper](#).

Daesh ineffective in exploiting oil fields for revenue

Terrorist organizations and insurgencies—including the Islamic State group, also known as ISIL/ISIS or Daesh—tap oil as a revenue source. Understanding oil production in territories controlled by terrorist groups can provide estimates of potential revenue streams, assess long-term economic potential, and inform reconstruction strategies. More broadly, in circumstances lacking reliable administrative data, remote measurement of extractive industry activity can support a broad range of public policy decisions and academic research. Satellite multi-spectral imaging and ground-truth pre-war output data show production levels in areas controlled by Daesh were approximately 56,000 barrels per day (bpd) from July-December 2014, dropping to an average of 35,000 bpd throughout 2015, before dropping further to 16,000 bpd in 2016. These results support the view that Daesh financing comes from other sources such as taxation and extortion rather than oil.

[How Much Oil is the Islamic State Group Producing? Evidence from Remote Sensing](#), [Quy-Toan Do](#), Jacob N. Shapiro, Christopher D. Elvidge, Mohamed Abdel-Jelil, Daniel P. Ahn, Kimberly Baugh, Jamie Hansen-Lewis, and Mikhail Zhizhin, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 8231, October 2017.

Unconventional algorithms lead to better predictions of conflict

A robust predictive framework for conflict events can provide policymakers with opportunities to respond more proactively to different risks of conflict. For example, international organizations might use a risk of conflict assessment to persuade donors to devote resources to aid programs to mitigate the risk of conflict. This study tests both the estimation and predictive power of various conflict prediction approaches in 114 developing countries since 1977 using data on the frequency of battle deaths, the presence of UN peacekeeping operations, and the proportion of the population displaced as refugees across international borders. A simple “threshold classifier” that predicts conflict based on the number of conflict indicators cross thresholds is the best overall predictor. This algorithm is simple and transparent, making it well-suited for policy-making, and relevant for the World Bank’s classification of fragile and conflict-affected states.

[Predicting Conflict](#), Bledi Celiku and [Aart Kraay](#), World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 8075, May 2017.

Investments in behavioral skills can pay off in reduced crime and violence

Poor young men in many countries exhibit high rates of violence, crime, and other “antisocial” behaviors. Common government responses are policing and job creation. Research has shown that certain noncognitive skills, especially self-control, predict long-run economic performance and criminal activity. This study uses a combination of cognitive behavioral therapy and \$200 grants to show that values are malleable in adults, and that investments in skills and preferences can reduce crime and violence. Cash alone and therapy alone dramatically reduced crime and violence, but the effects dissipated within a year. When cash followed therapy, however, crime and violence decreased by as much as 50 percent for at least a year. The hypothesis is that cash reinforced therapy’s impacts by prolonging learning-by-doing, lifestyle changes, and self-investment.

[Reducing Crime and Violence: Experimental Evidence from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Liberia](#), Christopher Blattman, **Julian C. Jamison**, and Margaret Sheridan, *American Economic Review* 107 (4): 1165-1206, April 2017 | [Working Paper](#).

The average duration of refugee exile is 10 to 15 years

As of end-2015, 15.5 million people were international refugees (including asylum seekers and people in refugee-like situations) and 33 major refugee situations had lasted five years or more (protracted situations). Data from UNHCR show people who were refugees at the end of 2015 have been in exile for an average of 10.3 years, while the average duration of exile has varied between 10 and 15 years since the late 1990s. The number of people in protracted situations (over five years) has been at 5 to 7 million since the mid-1990s, and currently stands at 6.6 million. For those people, the average duration of exile is 21.2 years. All these estimates are very sensitive to two situations: Afghanistan, where the crisis has been ongoing since 1979 and increases all averages, and the Syrian Arab Republic, which is relatively recent and lowers the averages. These numbers re-emphasize the importance of effective humanitarian interventions on the right scale.

[How Many Years have Refugees Been in Exile?](#) Xavier Devictor and [Quy-Toan Do](#), World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 7810, September 2016.

The economic cost of crime and deterrence off the coast of Somalia

Piracy off the coast of Somalia took off in 2005. From 2005-2011 over 1,000 ships were attacked and over 200 were successfully hijacked. In 2012 piracy attacks plummeted. A model of crime and deterrence investigates two deterrents that lead to the collapse of Somali piracy: navy patrols, which provide security to all vessels, and onboard security, which only protects the vessels that hire them. The model is calibrated using unique data on attacks, hijacks, and ransoms and uses cost to explore the optimal allocation of limited funds between these two instruments. While private onboard armed security is found to displace crime towards smaller vessels, it nevertheless accounts for the bulk of the observed drop in piracy attacks starting in 2012.

[Pirates of Somalia: Crime and Deterrence on the High Seas](#), [Quy-Toan Do](#), Lin Ma, and [Claudia Ruiz](#), World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 7757, July 2016.

BRIEFS

[Global Trade: Slowdown, Factors, and Policies](#) by Dorina Georgieva, [Norman V. Loayza](#), and [Fabian Mendez-Ramos](#), Research & Policy Brief 12, Research Hub Malaysia, February 2018.

Growth in global trade has been slow since 2012. While global trade downturns are not unprecedented, is this trade slowdown transitory or a more long-lasting phenomenon brought about by structural changes? This new dynamic, coupled with the rise of protectionist policies and rhetoric in many countries, positions trade at the forefront of policy discussions. This brief explores recent patterns in global trade, examines the factors affecting trade—distinguishing between transitory and structural components of the slowdown—and discusses policies shaping the path of future trade, including the rise of protectionism and the relevance of multilateral and bilateral trade agreements.

[More](#)

[Does large farm establishment create benefits for neighboring smallholders? Evidence from Ethiopia](#) by Daniel Ayalew Ali, Klaus Deininger, and Anthony M. Harris, January 2018.

Positive spillovers for small holders is an essential part of the policy dialogue on large-scale agricultural investment, but difficult to measure. The direction and magnitude of spillovers were analyzed using variation over time in smallholders' proximity or intensity of exposure to large farms, with available data sets for Ethiopia. The study found that between 2004 and 2014 newly formed commercial farms did not contribute to job creation and provided only minor benefits to neighboring smallholders cultivating maize. Ethiopia may need a more strategic approach to maximize smallholder benefits from large-farm formation. Finally, the study shows that the applied methodology is robust and can be applied to analyze spillover effects of large-scale commercial farming more generally.

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EVENTS

- **April 18, 2018:** [Roundtable on State Fragility and Development](#), Watch live @ 10 am.
- **April 23, 2018:** [Policy Research Talk: Fintech and Inclusion](#)
- **May 22, 2018:** [Policy Research Talk: Intergenerational Mobility around the World](#)
- **June 4, 2018:** [Policy Research Talk: The Human Capital Index](#)
- **June 12–15, 2018:** [Disruptive Innovations, Value Chains, and Rural Development](#)
- **June 18-22, 2018:** [World Bank Group Financial Overview Course: Finance in the Digital Era](#)
- **June 25–26, 2018:** [Annual Bank Conference on Development Economics 2018: Political Incentives and Development Outcomes](#)

[All upcoming events](#)

BLOGS AND ARTICLES

Can satellites deliver accurate measures of crop yields in smallholder farming systems?

Let's Talk Development, 29 March 2018

How much food is produced on a plot of land? The answer is central to several pressing questions in agricultural and development economics: How efficiently do smallholders use their labor and land? What interventions are most effective at lifting smallholders out of poverty? Are smallholders better off investing more time and resources on the farm, or intensifying their reliance on off-farm employment? The answers in part depend on the ability to accurately measure crop production. This is why household and farm surveys across the developing world, such as those supported by the [World Bank Living Standards Measurement Study – Integrated Surveys on Agriculture \(LSMS-ISA\) initiative](#), attempt to obtain precise, within-farm measures of crop production and productivity.

Read the [blog](#) by [Talip Kilic](#) and [David Lobell](#).

The latest research in economics on Africa: The CSAE round-up

Development Impact, 21 March 2018

This post was coauthored with Niklas Buehren, Joao Montalvao, Sreelakshmi Papineni, and Fei Yuan. This team couldn't attend all 106 sessions so coverage is limited. If there is a paper you saw that you think people should know about please

submit a comment.

You can skim the full summary, or you can skip to one of the topics: [Agriculture](#), [conflict](#), [credit](#), [savings](#), [risk and insurance](#), [education](#), [electricity access](#), [firms](#), [health and nutrition](#), [households and networks](#), [institutions](#), [labor](#), [political economy](#), [poverty and inequality](#), and [using evidence to inform policy](#).

The full program and links to most of the papers is available [here](#).

Read the [blog](#) by [Markus Goldstein](#) and [David Evans](#).

Artificial intelligence for economic development conference: Roundup of 27 presentations

Let's Talk Development, 20 March 2018

Is artificial intelligence the future for economic development? Earlier this month, a group of World Bank staff, academic researchers, and technology company representatives convened at a [conference in San Francisco](#) to discuss new advances in artificial intelligence. One of the takeaways for Bank staff was how AI technologies might be useful for Bank operations and clients. Below you'll find a full round-up of all the papers and research-in-progress that was presented. All slides that were shared publicly are linked here, as well as papers or other relevant sites.

Read the [blog](#) by [Maria Jones](#).

The state of development journals 2018: Quality, acceptance rates, review times, and representation

Development Impact, 19 March 2018

Last year I published an inaugural "[state of development journals](#)" in which I put together information about different development journals that is not otherwise publicly available. As there seemed to be interest in this from readers and many of the editors, I thought I would do it again this year and see how much things have changed, as well as investigate a few more topics not covered last year. Many thanks to the editors and editorial staff at different journals for the information they shared.

Read the [blog](#) by [David McKenzie](#).

A school is not a factory: Why teacher specialization in early grades may not work

Let's Talk Development, 16 March 2018

In chapter 1 of book 1 of Adam Smith's foundational economics book, [The Wealth of Nations](#), he explains the concept of the division of labor. He uses the example of a pin factory.

To take an example, therefore, from a very trifling manufacture, but one in which the division of labour has been very often taken notice of, the trade of a pin-maker: a workman not educated to this business (which the division of labour has rendered a distinct trade, nor acquainted with the use of the machinery employed in it (to the invention of which the same division of labour has probably given occasion), could scarce, perhaps, with his utmost industry, make one pin in a day, and certainly could not make twenty.

Read the [blog](#) by [David Evans](#).

For billions without formal land rights, the tech revolution offers new grounds for hope

Let's Talk Development, 15 March 2018

Many of today's increasingly complex development challenges, from rapid urban expansion to climate change, disaster resilience, and social inclusion, are intimately tied to land and the way it is used. Addressing these challenges while also ensuring individuals and communities can make full use of their land depends on consistent, reliable, and accessible identification of land rights.

Read the [blog](#) by [Klaus Deininger](#).

Having an impact as a development economist outside of a research university: Interview with Alix Zwane

Development Impact, 14 March 2018

When you study for a Ph.D. in economics, the pathway to success and happiness as a development economist seems very straight and narrow. The implicit (or explicit) metric of success is to publish lots of articles and become a professor in a research university, and you are taught by people who have done this, and surrounded by lots of classmates aspiring to do the same. But there are many other ways to use the skills of your Ph.D., contribute to the world as a development economist, and have a great job and happy life following different paths. Since Ph.D. students tend to know a lot less about what life as a development economist outside of a research university looks like, we thought we'd profile some people doing interesting jobs outside of a research university. We thought we'd kick off this series by interviewing [Alix Zwane](#), the CEO of the Global Innovation Fund.

Read the [blog](#) by [David McKenzie](#).

Registered reports: Piloting a pre-results review process at the Journal of Development Economics

Development Impact, 9 March 2018

The world is a messy place. What happens when the results of an empirical study are mushy or inconsistent with prevailing theories? Unfortunately, papers with unclear or null results often go unpublished, even if they have rigorous research designs and good data. In such cases, the research community is typically only left to consider the papers that tell a "neat" and clean story. When economic and social policy relies on academic knowledge, this **publication bias** can be costly to society.

In a new effort to potentially help address this problem, the *Journal of Development Economics (JDE)* now offers authors the opportunity to have their prospective empirical projects reviewed and approved for publication *before* the results are known. This track for article submissions will be available as part of a pilot project, which will allow us to better understand the extent to which pre-results review can be applied at the JDE, and possibly in economics. This new article format may not apply to all papers currently being published at the JDE; we envision that it will be particularly attractive to development economists working on research projects for which the data is yet to be collected (or researchers who have not yet had access to the data they will analyze).

Read the [blog](#) by [Andy Foster](#), [Dean Karlan](#), and [Ted Miguel](#).

Risk of sea-level rise: high stakes for East Asia & Pacific region countries

East Asia and the Pacific on the Rise, 9 March 2018

Sea level is rising, and the rise in sea level will continue beyond the year 2100, even if greenhouse gas emissions are stabilized today. Expected to rise by at least one meter during this century according to the current scientific consensus, sea levels may even rise by three meters by 2100, considering new evidence on ice-cliff instability of the Antarctic.

Read the [blog](#) by [Susmita Dasgupta](#).

What data do decision makers really use, and why?

The Data Blog, 7 March 2018

When it comes to revolutions, the data revolution has certainly been less bloody than, say, those in the 18th and 19th centuries. Equally transformative? A question for historians.

AidData, a research and innovation lab located at the College of William & Mary in the US, set out in 2017, to identify what data decision makers in low and middle-income countries use, whose data they use, why they use it, and which data are most helpful.

What can the World Bank learn from AidData's study, and do data from our own [Country Opinion Survey Program](#), align with AidData's findings?

Read the [blog](#) by [Sharon Felzer](#).

How can machine learning and artificial intelligence be used in development interventions and impact evaluations?

Development Impact, 5 March 2018

Last Thursday I attended a conference on AI and Development organized by CEGA, DIME, and the World Bank's Big Data groups ([website](#), where they will also add video). This followed a World Bank policy research talk last week by Olivier Dupriez on "Machine Learning and the Future of Poverty Prediction" ([video](#), [slides](#)). These events highlighted a lot of fast-emerging work, which I thought, given this blog's focus, I would try to summarize through the lens of thinking about how it might help us in designing development interventions and impact evaluations.

Read the [blog](#) by [David McKenzie](#).

Machine learning and the measurement of injustice

Let's Talk Development, 1 March 2018

Machine learning methods are increasingly applied in the development policy arena. Among many recent policy applications, machine learning has been used to predict [poverty](#), [soil properties](#), and [conflicts](#).

In a [recent Policy Research Working Paper](#) by Paolo Brunori, Paul Hufe and Daniel Mahler (BHM hereafter), machine learning methods are utilized to measure a popular understanding of distributional injustice—the amount of unequal opportunities individuals face. Equality of opportunity is an influential political ideal since it combines two powerful principles: individual responsibility and equality. In a world with equal opportunities, all individuals have the same chances to attain social positions and valuable outcomes. They are free to choose how to behave and they are held responsible for the consequences of their choices.

Read the [blog](#) by [Daniel Mahler](#), [Paolo Brunori](#), and [Paul Hufe](#).

How to attract and motivate passionate public service providers

Development Impact, 28 February 2018

In Gaile Parkin's novel *Baking Cakes in Kigali*, two women living in Kigali, Rwanda—Angel and Sophie—argue over the salary paid to a development worker: “Perhaps these big organisations needed to pay big salaries if they wanted to attract the right kind of people; but Sophie had said that they were the wrong kind of people if they would not do the work for less. Ultimately, they had concluded that the desire to make the world a better place was not something that belonged in a person's pocket. No, it belonged in a person's heart.”

It's not a leap to believe—like Angel and Sophie—that teachers should want to help students learn, health workers who want help people heal, and other workers in service delivery should want to deliver that service. But how do you attract and motivate those passionate public servants? Here is some recent research that sheds light on the topic.

Read the [blog](#) by [David Evans](#).

Bank ownership: Trends and implications

Let's Talk Development, 27 February 2018

In the wake of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), many wondered whether the strong pre-crisis trend toward greater internationalization in banking would be reversed and, more immediately, whether local state-owned banks had to assume a larger role in restoring banking stability and ensuring the delivery of credit. We revisit those conjectures in the light of new data on bank ownership and research on the post-Crisis period ([Cull, Martinez Peria, and Verrier, 2018](#)).

Read the [blog](#) by [Bob Cull](#) and [Maria Soledad Martinez Peria](#).

Future Development Reads: Teachers in poor countries, human capital investments, and tips for disseminating research

Future Development, 23 February 2018

A [new paper](#) by Justin Sandefur, senior fellow at the Center for Global Development, tells some inconvenient truths about teachers in poor countries: First, they are relatively well paid (the highest ratio of teacher salary to GDP per capita is in the Central African Republic). Second, their pay does not seem to have much to do with their qualifications or teaching performance. For example, public school teachers are paid about twice as much as their private-school counterparts with the same qualifications. A different paper by [Tessa Bold](#), [assistant professor at the Institute for International Economic Studies](#), [and co-authors](#) finds that among fourth grade teachers in a sample of African countries, only 7 percent had the minimum knowledge necessary to teach language in that grade.

These findings are particularly disturbing because there is now increasing evidence that the quality of teacher input matters a lot for student learning. Using data from 31 countries, [Eric Hanushek](#), [senior fellow at the Hoover Institute](#), [and co-authors](#) show a clear and robust relationship between teachers' cognitive skills and student performance. And at the college level, using a creative identification strategy, [Carolina Arteaga](#) finds a significant relationship between human capital and earnings (thereby rejecting the hypothesis that a college education is simply “signaling”). In short, unless we make substantial progress in teacher ability and performance, students in developing countries will face significant difficulties later in life.

Read the [blog](#) by [Shanta Devarajan](#).

If you pay your survey respondents, you just might get a different answer

Development Impact, 21 February 2018

When I was doing my dissertation fieldwork, the professor I was working with and I had a fair number of conversations about compensating the respondents in our 15-wave panel survey. We were taking a fair amount of people's time and it seemed like not only the right thing to do, but also a way to potentially help grow the trust between our enumerators and the respondents.

Read the [blog](#) by [Markus Goldstein](#).

Improving public service delivery through local collective action

Let's Talk Development, 20 February 2018

In the past two decades, development policy has aimed to involve communities in the development process by encouraging the active participation of communities in the design and implementation of projects or the allocation of local resources. The World Bank alone has provided more than \$85 billion for participatory development since the early 2000s.

Read the [blog](#) by [Xavier Gine](#) and [Ghazala Mansuri](#).

[All World Bank blogs](#)

List of New Policy Research Working Papers

- 8357. [Geo-Spatial Modeling of Access to Water and Sanitation in Nigeria](#) by Luis A. Andres, Samir Bhatt, Basab Dasgupta, Juan A. Echenique, Peter W. Gething, Jonathan Grabinsky Zabludovsky, and George Joseph
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