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Lives and Livelihood in the Aftermath of the Arab Spring: Is MENA Different?

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Fragile Lives 2024 Evidence for human development, food security, and
peace in poly-crises

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Abstract

The massive popular uprisings that swept the Arab world in the second decade of the 21st Century, better known as the Arab Spring, challenged the entrenched authoritarian political order that dominated the region, leading to the collapse of long-reigning regimes in some major countries.

However, the Arab democracy wave was not only pre-empted by authoritarian relapses, but it also resulted in horrific, high intensity and long-duration violence and mass internal and external displacement in scale rarely seen in traditional civil wars.

This keynote will review the evidence on the impact on lives and livelihood of the political violence perpetrated by authoritarian regimes in response to popular democratic uprisings.

The keynote will argue that the extent of fragility, economic cost, even the total or near state collapse associated with this particular type of violence have substantially limited the effectiveness of community level humanitarian support, coping mechanisms and resilience.

As a consequence, the keynote will make a case for a more integrated research design, spanning community and household analysis as well as country-wide political and economic considerations.

In this context, the keynote will ask some key questions as to what role has resource dependency played in promoting political violence in the region? how the interface between resource rents, social polarization, among other factors, shaped the varied responses to realized or potential popular uprisings by incumbent regimes throughout the region? And, what insight might be gained from this analysis for the design of humanitarian assistance and post-conflict reconstruction agenda.

Outline

- Opinion on lives and livelihood in the aftermath of the Arab Spring
- Post-Arab Spring conflicts (PASCs) are Different
 - devastating economic collapse
 - massive loss of lives and physical capital destruction
 - Severe Impact on core economic sectors
 - Massive dislocation of people and untold humanitarian crises
 - Particularly challenging for peacebuilding
- The making of Uprisings: elites choices- gambling on development
- The making of conflicts in the aftermath of uprisings: elites strategies
- Future Direction of Research: A Macro-institutional Perspective

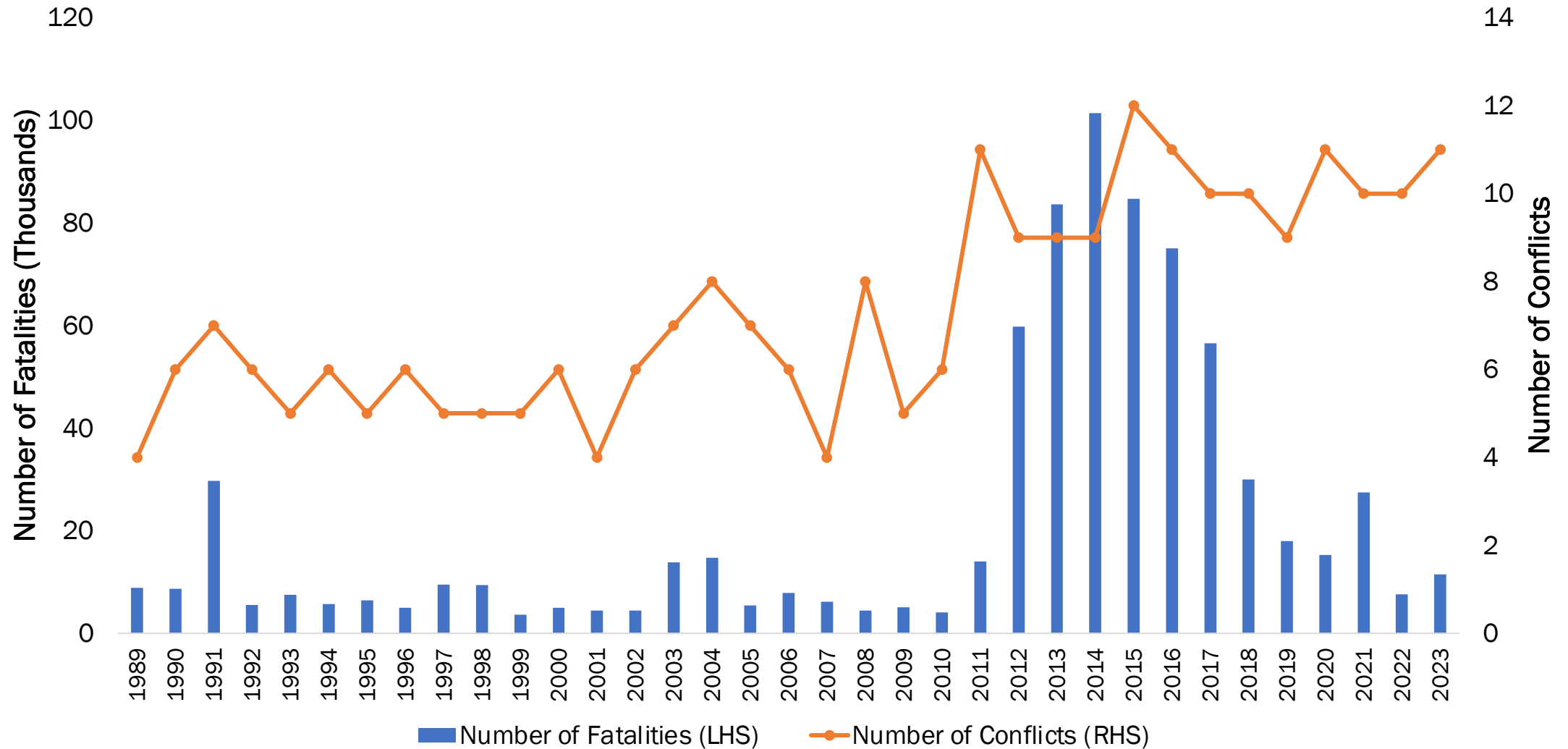
Sudanese December 2018 Revolution:

High but Premature Hopes, Authoritarian Backlash and Civil War



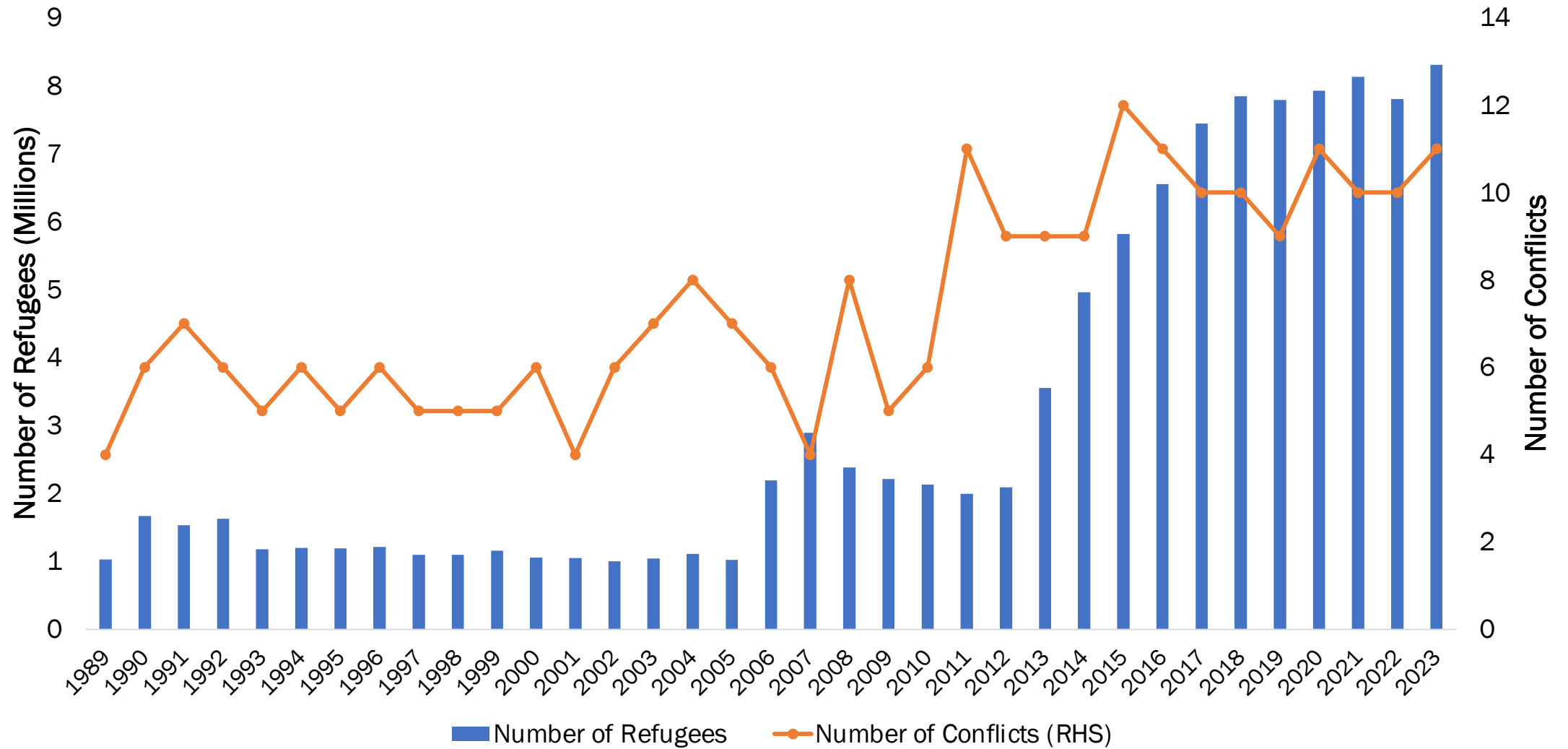
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Number of Conflicts and Fatalities in Arab Countries (1989-2023)



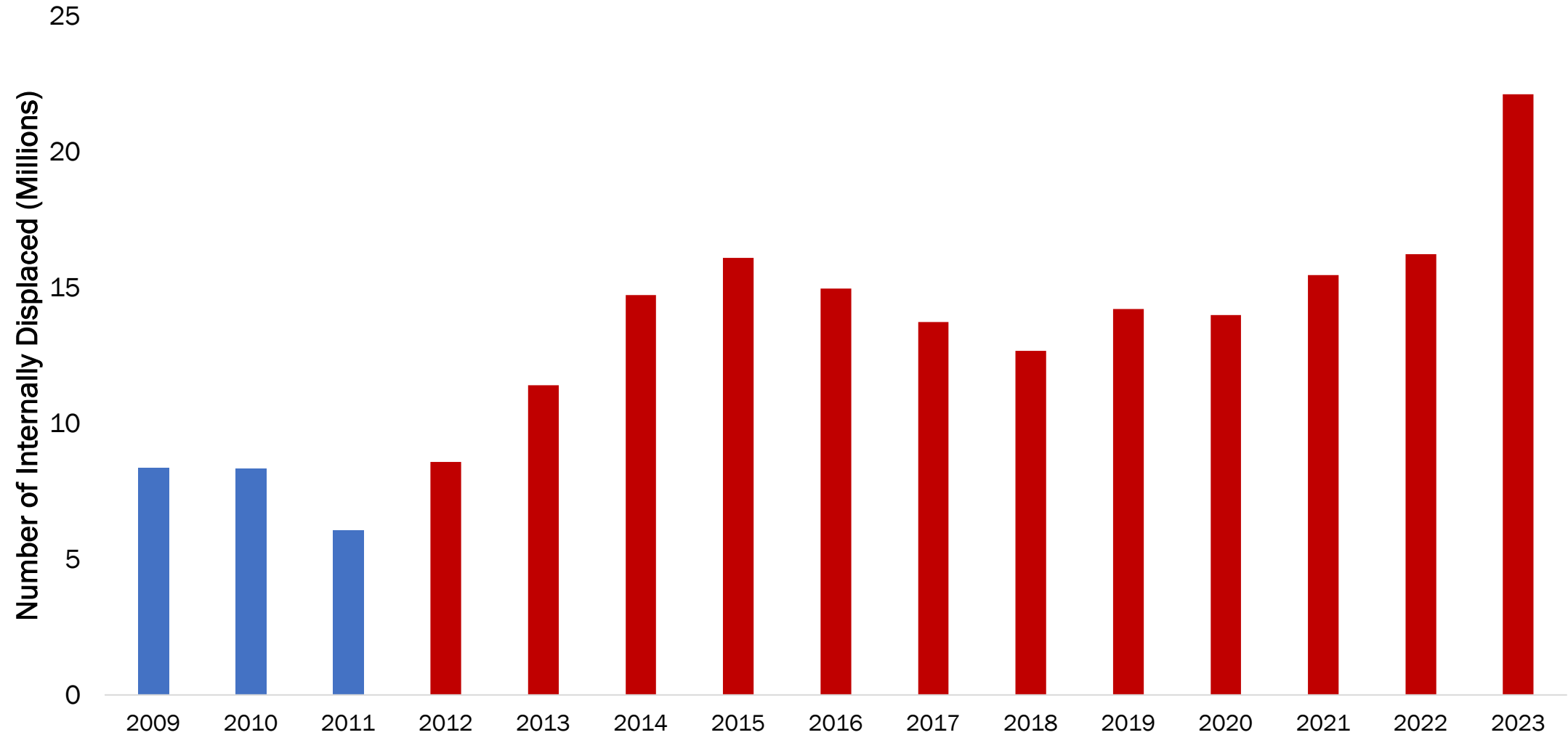
Sources: UCDP Organized Violence Dataset

Number of Conflicts and Refugees in Arab Countries (1989-2023)



Sources: UCDP Organized Violence Dataset; World Bank's WDI

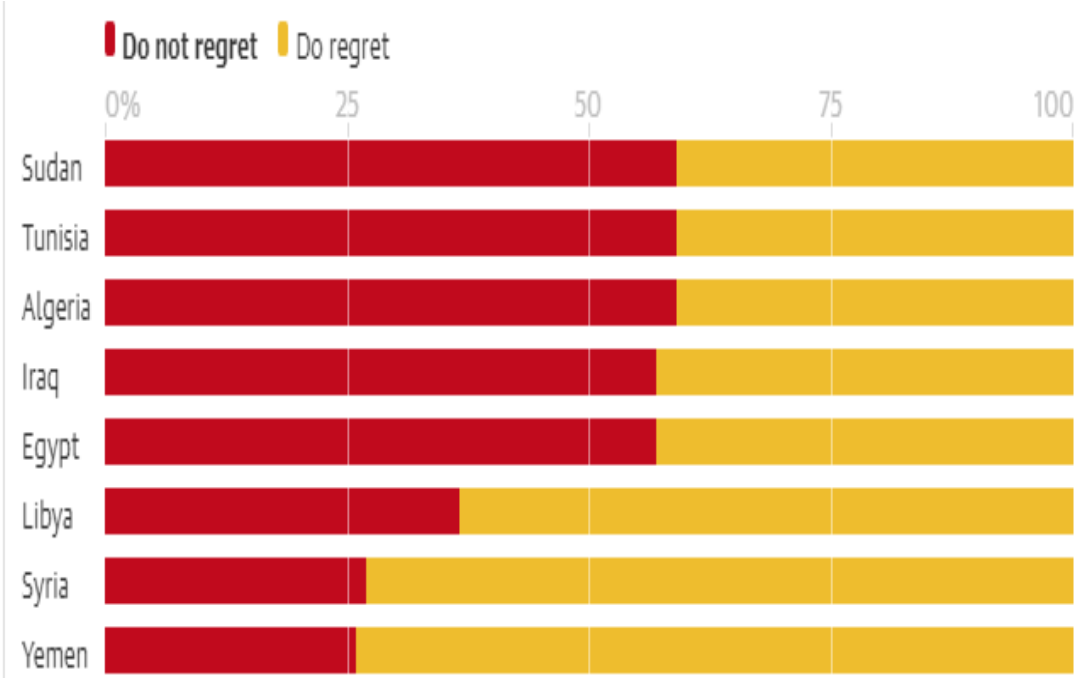
Number of Internally Displaced in Arab Countries (2009 -2023)



Sources: UCDP Organized Violence Dataset; World Bank's WDI

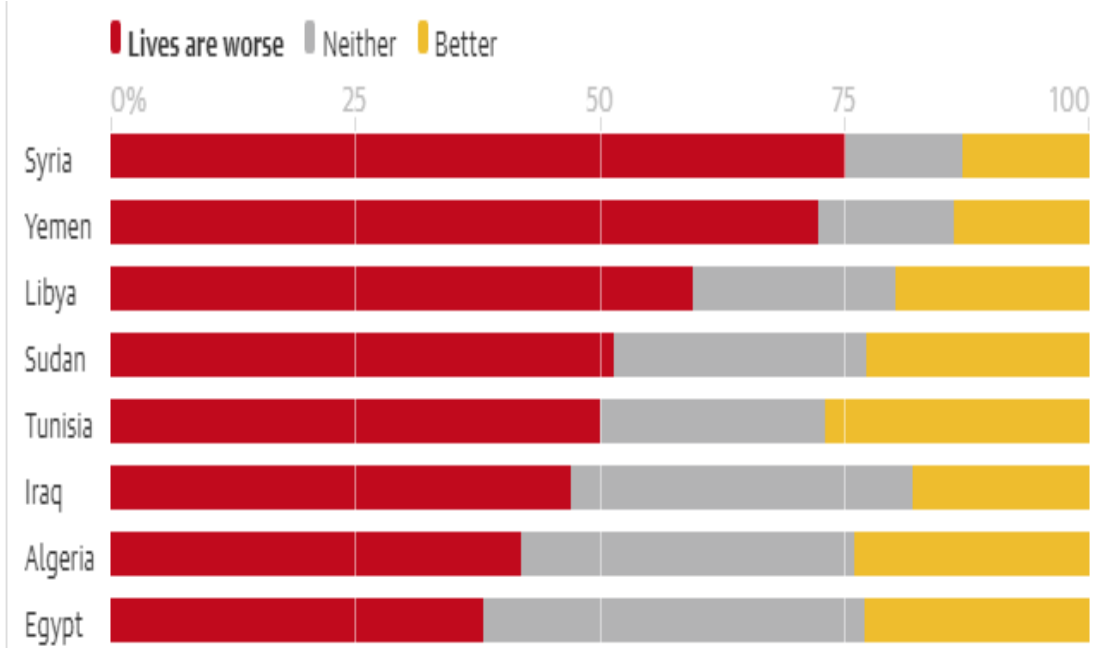
Life has got worse since Arab spring, say people across Middle East (Guardian-YouGov poll, 2021) (1)

Majority of people in conflict-afflicted countries say they the Arab Spring



Guardian graphic. Source: YouGov

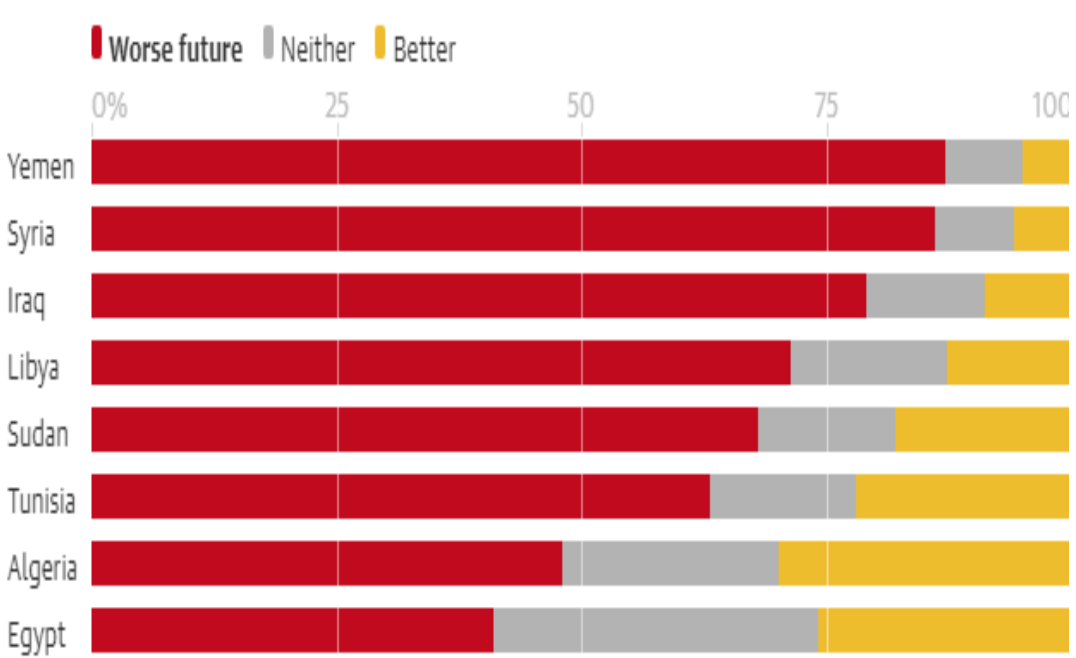
Large proportions of people in MENA believe their lives are worse than before the Arab spring



Guardian graphic. Source: YouGov

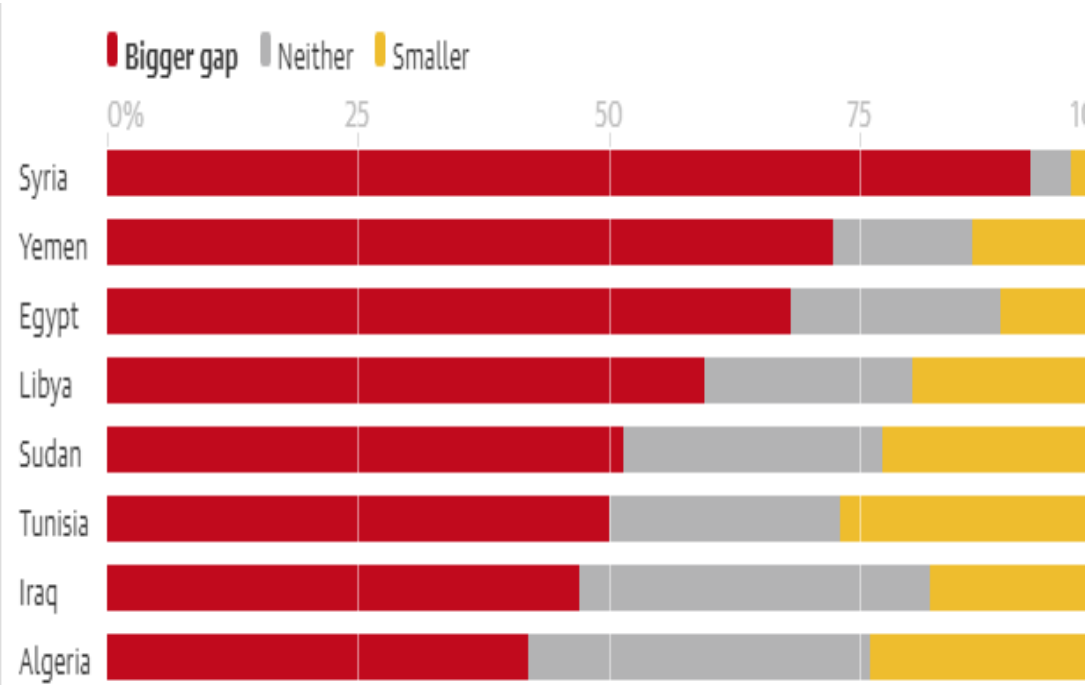
Life has got worse since Arab spring, say people across Middle East (Guardian-YouGov poll, 2021) (2)

A Generational Divide: majority of people believe children have a worse future than before the Arab Spring



Guardian graphic. Source: YouGov

Social Contract still broken: strong belief that the gap between rich and poor has widened in the past decade



Guardian graphic. Source: YouGov

Post-Arab Spring conflicts (PASCs) are Different

War Images from Sudan, Yemen, Libya and Syria



Council on Foreign Relations
Yemen's Tragedy: War, Stalemate, and ...



en.alwasat.ly

Libya for training of new special forces



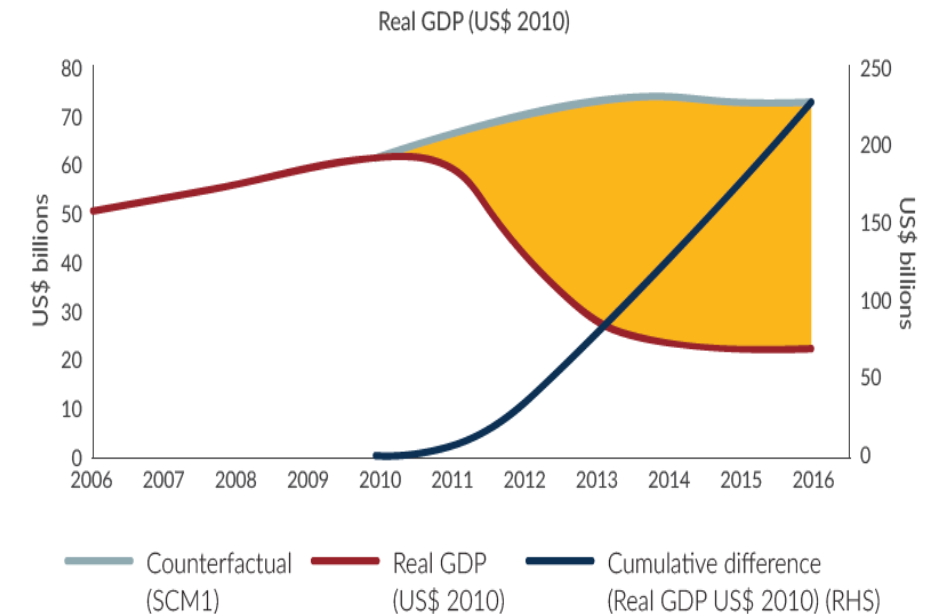
- Like interstate wars fought within the border of one country in terms of intensity and scope of violence
- Unlike traditional insurgencies, it destroys the nerve centers of the economy and livelihood:
 - Transportation, energy, water, communication networks ...etc.
 - State and private institutions
- Create large scale, country-wide humanitarian crises
- Unlike interstate wars, it degrades social capital, especially in socially fractionalized societies
- Constitute existential threat to afflicted countries: (Libya, Sudan, Syria, Yemen)
- Attract malicious external interventions and threaten regional peace and security: regional “public bad”
- Present major challenges for peacebuilding.

PASCs' devastating economic collapse: Sudan and Syria

LTGM Simulated Costs of Sudanese Civil War for Two Peacetime Growth Counterfactuals (Elbadawi and Fiuratti, 2024)

War Duration	Relative to Stagnant Growth Rate (at 2022 GDP level)	Relative to GDP growing at 4% from 2022
15-year War	189 billion (convergence achieved by 2047)	2.2 trillion (convergence achieved by 2079)
5-year War	52 billion (convergence achieved by 2034)	271 billion (convergence achieved by 2043)

Figure 3.3: Actual and Counterfactual GDPs and Cumulative GDP Losses

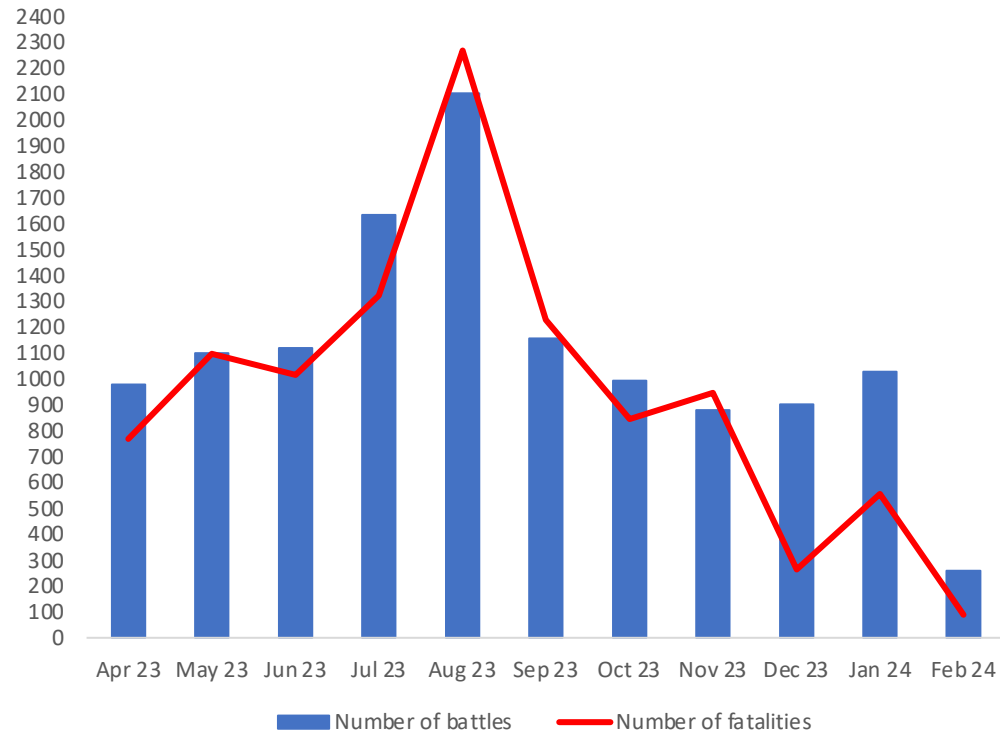


During six years of civil war, the size of the Syrian economy has declined by about two-thirds, from \$60 billion to \$20 billion, and the economy has lost approximately \$225 billion.

PASCs' massive loss of lives and physical capital destruction : the “High Intensity Violence” of the Sudanese factional military war

Sudan setting the stage for a long bloody war

(Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), at www.acleddata.com)

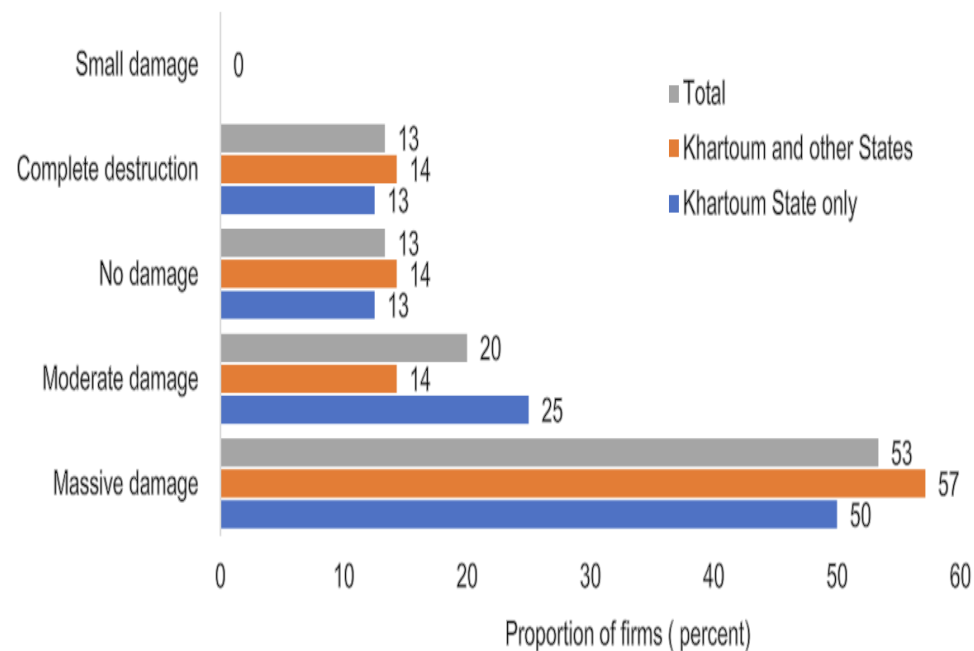


Unlike traditional insurgencies, these wars were centered on major cities and populous regions

- Average monthly level of casualties for Sudan accounts for more than 30 times the monthly number in the median country experiencing a civil war in the recent past
- Massive destruction of services and production infrastructures and supply chain disruptions:
 - About 20% of the productive infrastructure and capital stock of the Sudanese economy has been destroyed in the first 6 months into the war
 - The economy of the capital city, where the war started, accounts for about 25% of the country's GDP

PASCs' Impact on core economic sectors: the Sudanese wartime food processing industry

Extent of damage of firm's Infrastructures and equipments



Source: Table 8 of IFPRI Report Oliver K. Kirui et al. 2024:
<https://cgspace.cgiar.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/c018b123-c850-4649-bc96-bd9ca3abb628/content>

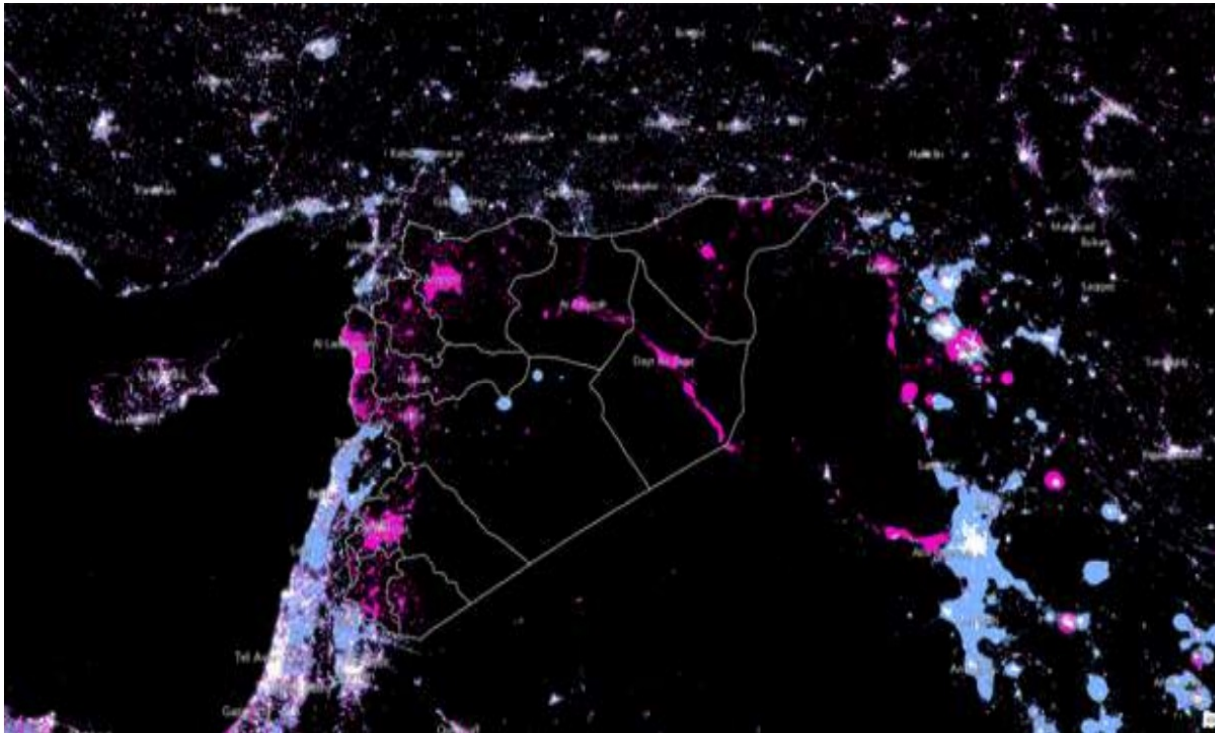
High productivity, transaction-intensive economic sectors are most severely impacted by Sudanese high-intensity, urban-based wars

- Primary agriculture (on-farm activities) generates about 20 percent of total Gross Domestic Product and employ 50% of the country's labor force
- The entire agri-food system (primary and off-farm agricultural activities), contributes 34 percent and 58 percent, respectively
- For every dollar of GDP generated on the farm, an additional 70 cents of GDP are generated off the farm.
- A large portion of this off-farm GDP is from agri-food processing, where labor productivity measured in GDP per worker is much higher than for the whole agri-food system - USD 6,301 per worker versus USD 1,554 per worker

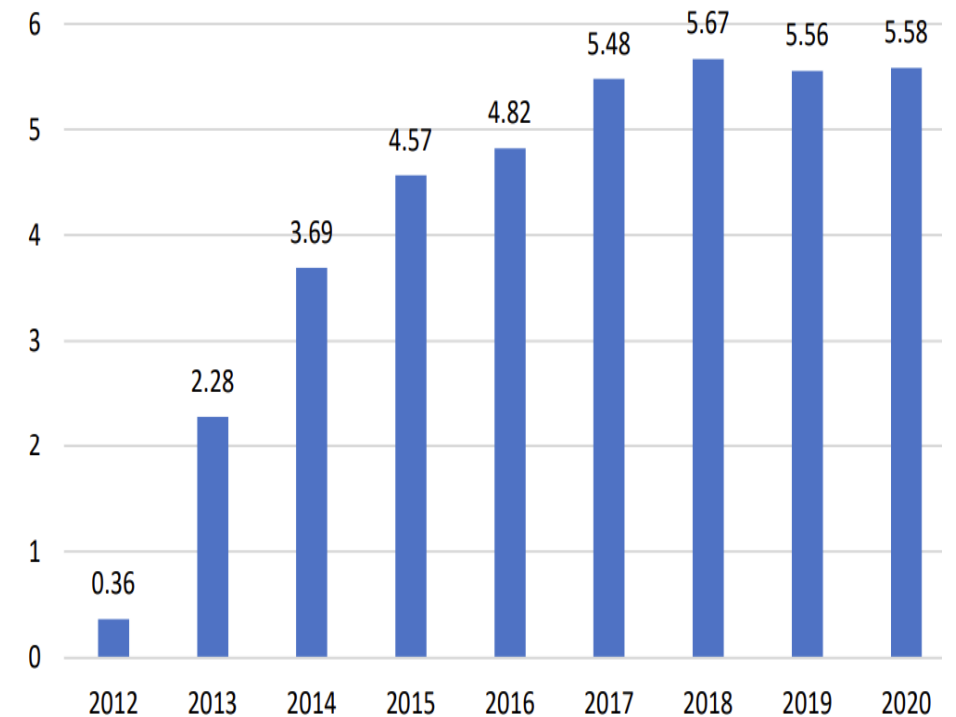
Source: Armed Conflict and Business Operations in Sudan: Survey Evidence from Agri-food Processing Firms (Oliver K. Kirui, Khalid Siddig, Hala Abushama and Alemayehu Seyoum Taffesse, August 2023)

PASC's massive dislocation of people: Tracking Syrian Refugees (Satellite data)

Patterns of forcibly displaced Syrians between 2012 and 2016



Number of Registered Syrian Refugees



PASCs' humanitarian crises: trying to cope with untold suffering in wartime Sudan

Home farming becomes alternative means of sustenance in Sudan



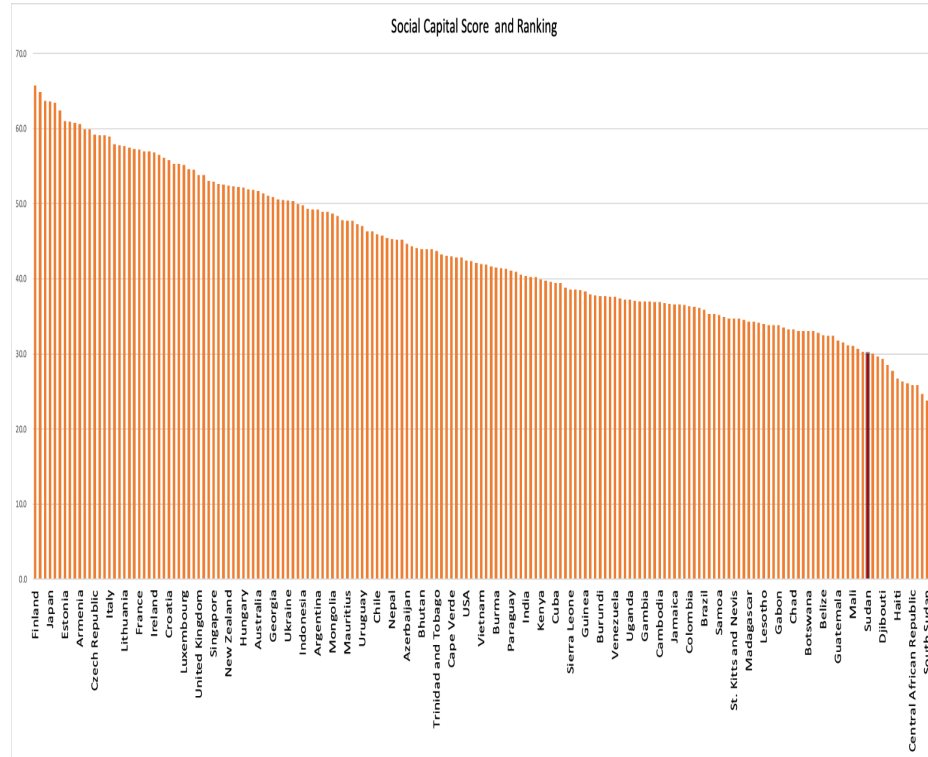
18 MILLION FACE HUNGER IN SUDAN (OCHA, Sudan)

- Sudan faces an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Over 5 million people have been displaced due to intense conflict.
- This has led to significant civilian casualties, a collapse of the health sector, and a dramatic rise in untreated chronic illnesses. With over 10 million people lacking access to essential medical services, the situation is dire.
- Nutritional needs are critical:
 - 7.3 million people, including 2.3 million children, suffering from severe malnutrition
 - Nearly 18 million people are facing acute food shortages
 - And the destruction of agricultural infrastructure has pushed many regions to the brink of famine
 - Additionally, 12 million people lack access to clean water and proper sanitation facilities, exacerbating the health crisis with a surge in waterborne diseases.

PASCs' impact on “social capital”: the degeneration of wartime Sudan into sub-national allegiances

Sudan Social Capital and Ranking

<https://solability.com/the-global-sustainable-competitiveness-index/the-index>



An iconic quote

The Sudanese intellectual and politician Dr. Ibrahim al-Amin, in his valuable essay “Is There Any Hope?”, expressed the extent of the deterioration of social capital in the context of the degeneration of Sudanese political and societal discourse during the course of the current war:

“The absence or absence of minds and the blockage of dialogue channels means opening the doors to more violence and extremism and calling for the spread of new values that call for violence and racism, glorifying the tribe as a substitute for the collective identity of all Sudanese people. Talking about entities that are better than others and the supremacy of one culture over another, a culture that has the upper hand and should therefore prevail at the expense of other cultures..”

Peacebuilding in PASC societies is particularly challenging, limiting effectiveness of community-level support, coping capacity and resilience (1)

- The United Nations Security Council adopts the concept of “sustainable peace”: “after peace has been negotiated or imposed, a serious attempt to address the sources of existing hostility and to build local capacities for conflict resolution.”
- This concept of peace is centered on “the ability of a sovereign state to resolve natural conflicts to which all societies are vulnerable by means other than war.”
 - This comprehensive definition includes the need to build the institutions, frameworks, and economic, political, and social capabilities that ensure the peaceful resolution of conflicts
 - The empirical expression of this concept is the so-called “participatory peace”:
 - End of war, no significant residual violence
 - unfragmented sovereignty
 - Minimal political openness

Peacebuilding in PASC societies is particularly challenging, limiting effectiveness of community-level support and coping capacity and resilience (2)

- The standard model for analyzing the prospects for peace requires robust international support, including multi-dimensional UN peacekeeping operations to augment the two sides of the “peacebuilding triangle” (Doyle and Sambanis, 2000, 2006):
 - High level of hostility and diminished national social capital
 - Diminished local capacities for post-war recovery and development
- Moreover, sustainable peace requires fast and sustained growth, which requires credible political settlement, including deep security reforms for enabling (e.g. Syria: Devadas, Elbadawi and Loayza, 2021; Sudan, Elbadawi and Fiuratti, 2024, Sambanis,):
 - Financing large scale postconflict reconstruction
 - Repatriation of refugees
- Consequently, PASC societies might have to contend with:
 - Long-duration, high intensity wars
 - Living in failing or failed, possibly dismembered states
 - Continuing to depend on external support to augment their diminished coping capacities

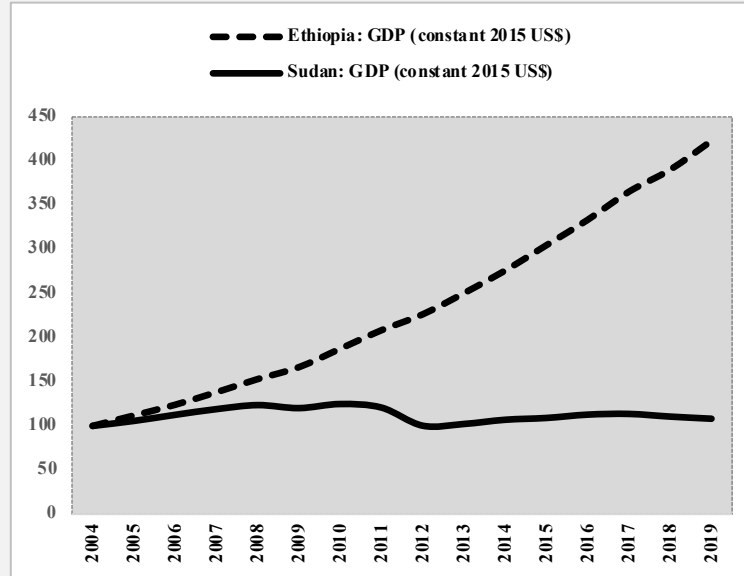
The Political Economy of Growth: A Tale of Two Countries

The making of Uprisings: Elites Choices (gambling on development)

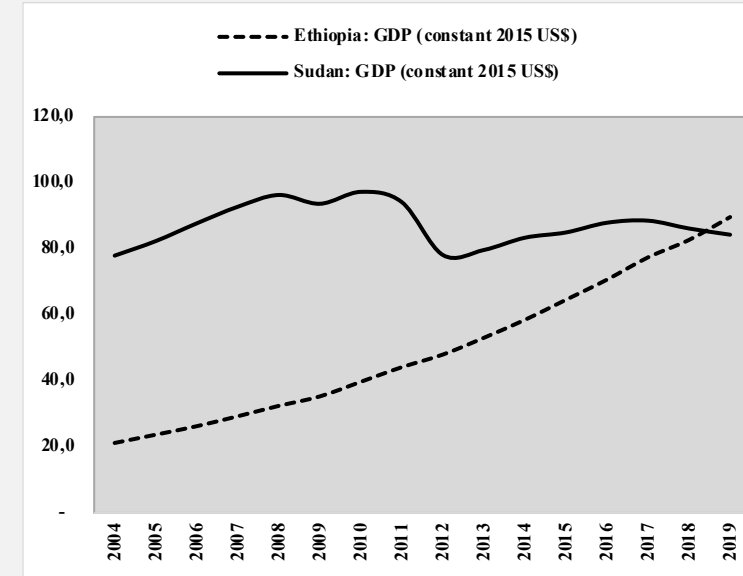
“These two large multi-ethnic developing countries share a common border, the Blue Nile, and a host of political and economic challenges from separatism to chronic food insecurity, and both faced scenarios of imminent state failure at the cusp of the 1990s. For a generation thereafter, the respective governments in Addis Ababa and Khartoum pursued radically divergent political and economic policies, each guided by its endowment and history, but also by leadership decisions. In the policymakers’ caricature, Ethiopia became a model for an African developmental state while Sudan reproduced a pathological rentierism that foretold intractable crisis.” (Sarkar and de Waal, 2022): p. 1).

The Political Economy of Growth: A Tale of Two Countries

Panel A: Constant GDP Trend in Sudan and Ethiopia (scaled)



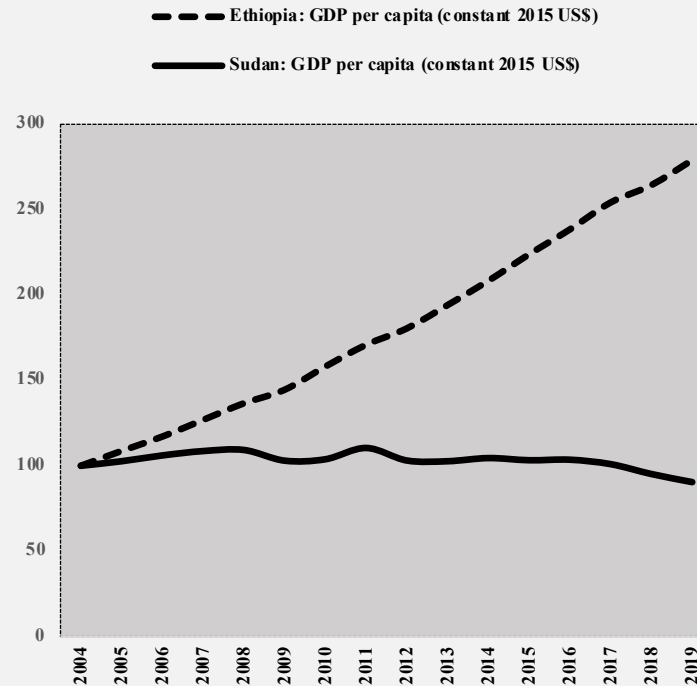
Panel B: Constant GDP Trend in Sudan and Ethiopia



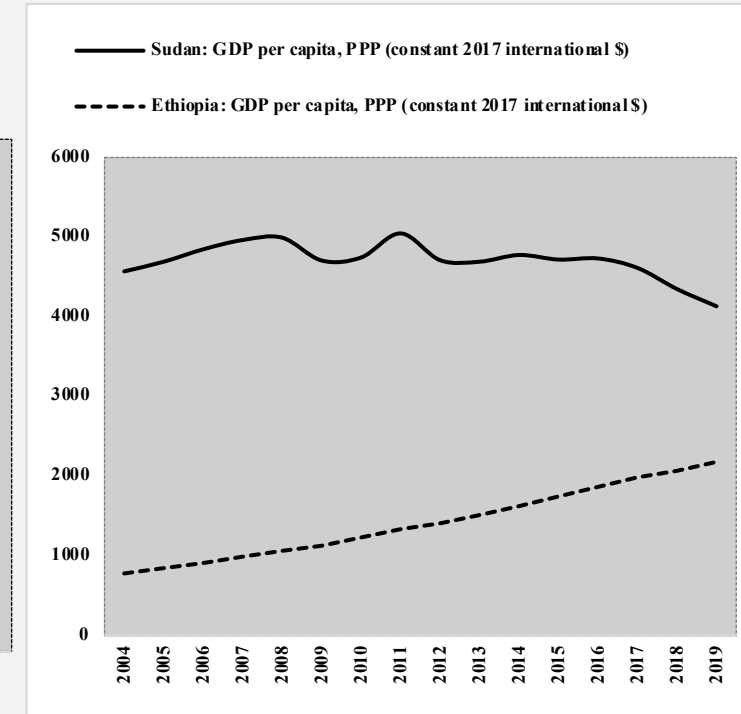
Extremely divergent growth experiences showing different cast of elites who governed the two countries. While the Sudanese economy stagnated for 15 years, the Ethiopian economy more than quadrupled. In less than one generation, the Ethiopian economy bridged the gap of more than \$60 billion that separated it from the Sudanese economy in 2004.

The Political Economy of Growth: A Tale of Two Countries

Panel A: Panel A: GDP Per Capita Trend in Sudan and Ethiopia (scaled)



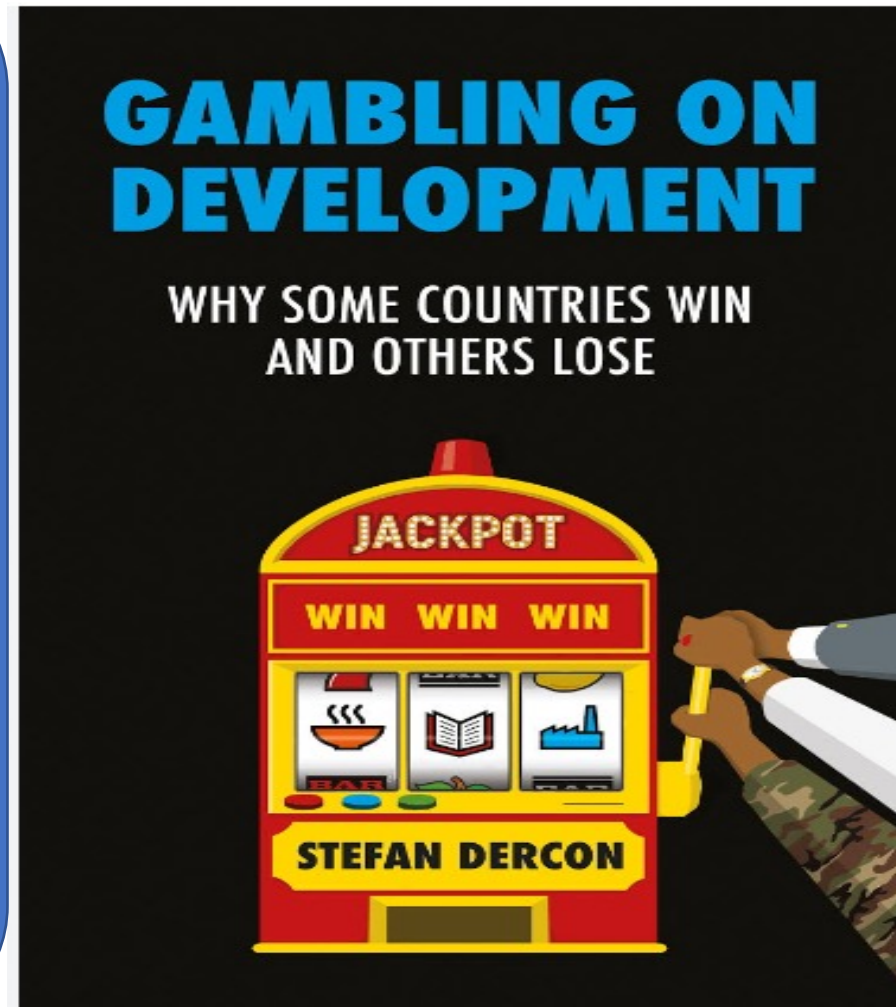
Panel B: Panel B: GDP Per Capita Trend in Sudan and Ethiopia



In the same vein, while per capita income of the Sudanese remained stagnant for 15 years, Ethiopia's income per person increased by nearly three times, which allowed the latter abjectly poorer Ethiopia to reduce the income gap from nearly a fifth of the Sudanese per capita income in 2004 to a half in 2019

Betting on Development: A Tale of two Elites (INGAZ, EPRDF)

- So why take the risk?
 - Access to power after civil wars or the total collapse of the state (EPRDF)
 - Threats to the Existing System (The Chinese Communist Party after the Cultural Revolution)
 - The ability of the elite to learn and correct the course (Meles Zenawi and the economic transformation in 2004 after a decade of Marxism)



- The basis for the emergence of states:
 - the agreement of the elites to share the rent available under the existing power
 - No matter how small
- Few elites bet on development:
 - Sacrifice available rent for future growth and development
 - But there is no recipe, just general principles and success is not guaranteed

Betting on Development: A Tale of two Elites (INGAZ, EPRDF)

INGAZ Regime

- Adopting "empowerment" as a basis for the regime's survival
- Tribal clientelism (states) to share the rent
- The project: the disappearance of oil and the survival of the rentier approach (gold, the political money market)
- Lessons and Lessons: Avoid reproducing the Ingaz system under other slogans



EPRDF Regime

- Adopting "economic legitimacy" as the basis for the regime's survival
- Development Federalism
- The project:
 - Agriculture, food security
 - Infrastructure and energy
 - Special economic zones: agricultural manufacturing
- Civil War: In the end, though "*developmental authoritarianism*" is better than "*kleptocracy*"
- Democracy is a must for civil peace in divided societies

The making of conflicts in the aftermath of uprisings: elites strategies

Strategies of Authoritarian Elites Facing Popular Uprisings (e.g. Hodler, 2018)		
	Highly Affluent Rentier Society (Rents per capita)	Low or Moderately Affluent Rentier Society (Rents per capita)
High Proportion of Excluded Society	Highly Likely: Pre-emptive strategy through rents/public goods distribution	Highly Likely: spoil for conflict
Low Proportion of Excluded Society	Highly Likely: Pre-emptive strategy through rents/public goods distribution	Likely: spoil for conflict/transition to democracy
Relatively Homogeneous Society	Highly likely: Pre-emptive strategy through rents/public goods distribution	Highly Likely: transition to democracy

Future Direction of Research: A Macro-institutional Perspective

Three Fundamental Research Discoveries:

- *“...First, ... Higher-intensity conflicts, in terms of battle-related fatalities, and conflicts involving issues about government power may be more disruptive, as illustrated by larger reductions in the average dietary energy supply. In contrast, conflicts where the territory is the main incompatibility may have little to no effect on the average dietary energy supply at the country level.”*
- *“Second, it is not enough only to consider ‘active’ conflicts. Instead, it can also be fruitful to consider fragile states or fragile sub-state settings as possible precursors to violent conflicts – or to view fragility as a possible legacy of violence.”*
- *“Third, institutions are a key issue, as they can help improve physical security and food security but may do so differently for different people....”*

(Brück, Tilman and Marco d’Errico (2019: p. 168, 169)

Idea for Future Research:

- Theoretical and empirical research on elites strategy facing popular uprisings:
 - Prob of post-uprising FCD outcomes
 - Role of rents and social characteristics
 - Political settlement and development agenda
 - The int. community: finance, repatriation of refugees, finance and reconstruction
 - Implications for lives, livelihood, coping capacity, social capital and resilience
- Research methodology & data
 - Accounting for HH invariant, cross country factors to assess the external validity of HiC findings
 - Build hybrid databases integrating HiC data with geocoded as well as national data

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Thank
You!