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Research interests

Applied microeconomics, development economics, international economics, political economy

Academic appointments

Max Planck Institute for Research on Collective Goods Senior Research Fellow	2023 - PRESENT
Stanford University Visiting scholar	2022

Education

European University Institute Ph.D. in Economics	2017 - 2023
European University Institute M.Res. in Economics	2017 - 2018
VU University M.Sc. in Economics Specialization: International and macroeconomic policy	2015 - 2016
University of Amsterdam B.Sc. in Communication Science	2009 - 2012

Teaching experience

New York University International Economics, Teaching Assistant for Prof. Giampiero Gallo	2019 - 2020
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Research and professional experience

Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies Academic Assistant for David Levine	2020
Dutch Central Bank Research Assistant for Iman van Lelyveld	2017
VU University Junior Researcher, Sociology department	2016 - 2017
VU University Research Assistant for Steven Poelhekke, Economics department	2016
LeasePlan Corporation Various corporate communication roles	2012 - 2015

Conference and seminar presentations

Stanford University Development Economics Seminar, Annual Midwest Political Science Association Conference (MPSA)	2022
University of Lausanne Public Economics and Policy Seminar, International Economics, Workshop of the Households in Conflict Network on Conflict, Migration, and Displacement, 3rd International Conference on Globalization and Development, XXIII Applied Economics Meeting (ALdE), Canadian Economic Association Conference, 69th Annual Meeting of the French Economic Association, 91st International Atlantic Economic Conference, Max Planck Summer School on the Political Economy of Conflict and Redistribution	2021
EUI Microeconometrics Working Group	2020

Academic service

Referee: European Economic Review

Grants and scholarships

Department Visiting Grant (EUI)	2021
Early Stage Research Grant (EUI)	2020
Ph.D. Completion Grant (EUI)	2020
Ph.D. Scholarship (Nuffic)	2017 - 2020

Other

Software: R, Stata, MATLAB, QGis, L^AT_EX.

Languages: Dutch (native), English (fluent), German (Advanced), Italian (basic), French (basic)

Publications

Estimating the Alliance Effect: a Synthetic Control Approach *Defence Studies*, 2022.

In a time of rising threat, recurring discussions about burden sharing within NATO and almost twenty years after the start of the ‘war on terrorism’, I explore a novel idea in the field of alliance and defense spending: the effect of alliance-membership on defense spending in response to a threat. This paper focuses on two types of states (small and large) and how alliance membership shapes their response to threat. Using the synthetic control method, I find that both types of states have stronger (positive) response to threat as NATO members, compared to if they would not have been part of the alliance.

Cultivation and competition in Colombia: disentangling the effects of coca price changes on violence *Forthcoming, Journal of International Development*.

Though evidence indicates the presence of coca increases violence, changes to the price of coca products can have both negative and positive effects on conflict. This study addresses this matter. Using novel data on local prices of coca products, production and supply chains, this study disentangles the returns to employment in the agricultural sector (cultivators) and employment in the criminal sector (guerillas and paramilitaries). I identify each agents’ respective exposure to price changes, and estimate the effect of such changes on violence. The results show the presence of the opportunity cost effect: an increase in income from coca results in a reduction in violence. This reduction comes with an increase in school attendance for rural households. An increase in the objective prize (OP) leads to more violence. Moreover, guerillas flock to the area that witnesses such an increase, resulting in higher levels of competition which coincides with the timing of the increase in violence. Additionally, increasing expected returns to joining an armed group can lead to higher school dropout rates among children.

Working papers

Education during conflict: the effect of territorial occupation by insurgents on schooling

This study shows that civilians’ behavior can be severely affected by territorial occupation by an insurgent group, and that these effects can persist after the government regains control and the occupation ends. I consider a framework of civilian cooperation with rebel governance, where civilians have the option to cooperate with, or resist, rules imposed by insurgents. I exploit the temporary occupation of territory in Nigeria by Boko Haram, an insurgent group with a strong anti-educational stance, as a quasi-natural experiment. Behavior is measured through school participation among children. Using individual-level panel data, I compare children exposed to the insurgency with children exposed to both the insurgency and occupation. The main results show (i) an immediate, negative effect on school participation, especially for those sharing a social identity with the insurgents, exposed to violent rule enforcement, and facing social pressure to conform, (ii) these negative effects persist in the long-run for the first and second group only. The effects cannot be explained by well-documented mechanisms linking conflict to lower school participation, demonstrating the need for accounting for occupation, and not solely violence, when considering the impact of insurgencies on civilians.

The Olympic effect: fact or fiction? (with Mustafa Kaba).

Hosting the Olympic Games implies tremendous costs and uncertain profits, yet countries historically have been striving to host this mega event and bidding decisively. More recently though, countries are withdrawing their bids from the election procedure. This puzzling historical interest in hosting the games and the recent trend of withdrawals cast doubt on the existence of the so-called Olympic effect: the positive impact of the Olympics on international trade. In this paper, we estimate the Olympic effect on long-term exports using the synthetic control method. We show that the Olympic effect is more pronounced for countries that stand to gain from an international publicity. The results also present the novel insight that a substantial positive Olympic effect is only associated with earlier games.

The state of democracy: fading support amid rising violence (with Tuuli Tähtinen).

Although majority of African countries hold regular elections, survey evidence shows that many citizens see them as ineffective, and commitment to democracy varies both between countries and within countries

over time. Moreover, in various countries there is data indicating that fewer young people are registered and intend to vote. Simultaneously, past two decades are marked by increasing levels of conflict events involving identity or political militias. This paper examines the relationship between conflict and democracy, in particular how exposure to violence influences citizens' perceptions of effectiveness of the government, their support for democracy, electoral participation. We provide comprehensive descriptive evidence across several African countries and spanning 20 years, suggesting that both violent events and demonstrations are associated with lower satisfaction with democracy. Additionally, exposure to violent events is significantly correlated with lower support for democracy as a political system of government. Second, to provide evidence on the direction of causality, we exploit the timing of the survey and the occurrences of violent events. By using detailed geocoded information on the occurrence of protests and political conflict together with sub-nationally geocoded Afrobarometer data across many African countries.

Work in progress

- **Reputation Signalling and Exports in Contract-Intensive Industries** (with Mustafa Kaba)
- **Shocks to international food prices: food security in sub-Saharan Africa**
- **Religious violence and the spread of ideology**

References

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