

RESEARCH STRATEGY

2025 – 2029

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The ReCIPE Programme

For the first time since World War II the threshold of over 50 conflicts in a given year has now been reached for several years in a row, many of which are taking place in the world's poorest countries. With the world witnessing this record level, understanding and alleviating armed conflict has become an ever more pressing concern.

Academic research on conflict has grown rapidly as well, as highlighted in recent literature surveys (Anderton and Brauer, 2021; Rohner and Thoenig, 2021; Rohner, 2023). While conflict research has seen significant advances, it is still a relatively young field, with numerous research gaps and shortcomings. Novel, cutting-edge research can therefore create significant value added. In particular, there are nine key themes that can be seen as areas of achievable impact, in the sense that many key questions therein have not yet been answered and new, rigorous research can make an important contribution. A major focus will lie on the positive feedback loops between peace and prosperity (Rohner and Thoenig, 2021; Marcucci et al., 2023), as investments in enhanced economic productivity are key factors to foster peace, which in turn helps to further combat poverty. Policies that build on complementarities between peace and prosperity have the potential to address both reducing conflict and boosting economic productivity.

The *Reducing Conflict and Improving Performance in the Economy* (ReCIPE) programme supports rigorous research looking at the underlying relationship between economic growth and conflict and fragility. This includes a focus on conventional armed conflict as well as terrorism and extremism. ReCIPE will move beyond a purely state-centric level of analysis, studying the behaviour of various actors, including states, non-state actors, armed groups, alliances etc. Thus, we will also analyse conflict between the state and armed groups, between non-state groups, and between criminal actors. While some analyses will take place at the country or country pair level, many investigations will also take place at a very disaggregate level, with for example an ethnic group, armed actor, a village or a small cell as a unit of analysis. The programme intends to achieve the outcome of improvements in policies, strategies and interventions which better facilitate investment, firm productivity gains, structural change and sustained growth in conflict-affected economies.

ReCIPE will fund research in a variety of ways, principally via a series of open calls for proposals. A crucial criterion for the selection of proposals for funding will be their relevance to the themes outlined in the programme's research strategy. Successful proposals should also be able to demonstrate a connection to one or more of the programme's three cross-cutting development issues.

ReCIPE promotes inter-disciplinary research and dialogue. While the programme is rooted in economics, it will also branch out to other disciplines. Several members of the leadership team are from other disciplines (such as political science). We intend to fund various inter-disciplinary proposals, as well as economic research that incorporates key findings and approaches from other disciplines. What ReCIPE cares about is pairing methodological rigour with policy relevance, while being resolutely open to various disciplines.

The programme is focused around the nine key themes that represent areas of achievable impact. These themes are not mutually exclusive, but they each provide a specific angle. **The**

themes aim at investigating how *incentives* for conflict are shaped and how potent *economic policies* can reduce the scope for fighting and thereby promote prosperity:

1. Public policies for peace
2. Private and public investments and peace
3. Institutions, democracy and peace
4. Geoeconomics
5. Climate change, natural resources and conflict
6. Information and conflict: From the role of (social) media and public opinion to big data and forecasting
7. Ethnic diversity and nation-building
8. Peacemaking, peacebuilding and reconstruction
9. Gender, inequality and conflict

The targeted and high-quality evidence produced as part of the ReCIPE programme will build a strong and comprehensive evidence base which can then be used to inform decision making and enable better policy interventions that promote inclusive growth in the presence of conflict.

Research Strategy

The ReCIPE programme aims for an overarching intellectual framework that highlights the key risk factors for conflict, as well as the key remedies for both curbing acute fighting and building lasting peace.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the intellectual framework we draw on, adapted from Rohner (2024), and showing how various key factors match the nine themes of ReCIPE.

Let us start with the risk factors for conflict. As highlighted in key bargaining models of conflict (Fearon, 1995), in most circumstances we would typically expect bargaining to succeed to prevent the onset of armed fighting. The reason is simple: Armed conflict and war destroy resources, and hence typically a settlement should exist that makes everybody better off than under the “risky lottery” of war, where a substantial part of the “prize” gets destroyed. However, despite this so-called “peace dividend”, there are situations where wars break out, which is often referred to as the “war inefficiency puzzle”. The key risk factors highlighted in the academic literature include “asymmetric information” (which makes it harder to figure out winning chances), “commitment problems” (which make settlements shaky) and low opportunity costs (which make it cheaper for ruthless politicians and warlords to wage war).

All of these key risk factors are studied under ReCIPE’s themes. If asymmetric information is at the heart of geoeconomics (Theme 4), more recently the attacks on press freedom and academic liberty by populists contribute to a surge in asymmetric information, as studied in Theme 6. Democracy being famously a “commitment device” (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2006), sound institutions (Theme 3) are an important defence against commitment problems, the second key source of bargaining failure. This is perfectly in line with the work stressing the paramount importance of state capacity and good governance (Besley and Persson, 2011; Gisselquist, 2012; Besley et al., 2023). Also, topics in geoeconomics (Theme 4), such as defensive alliances,

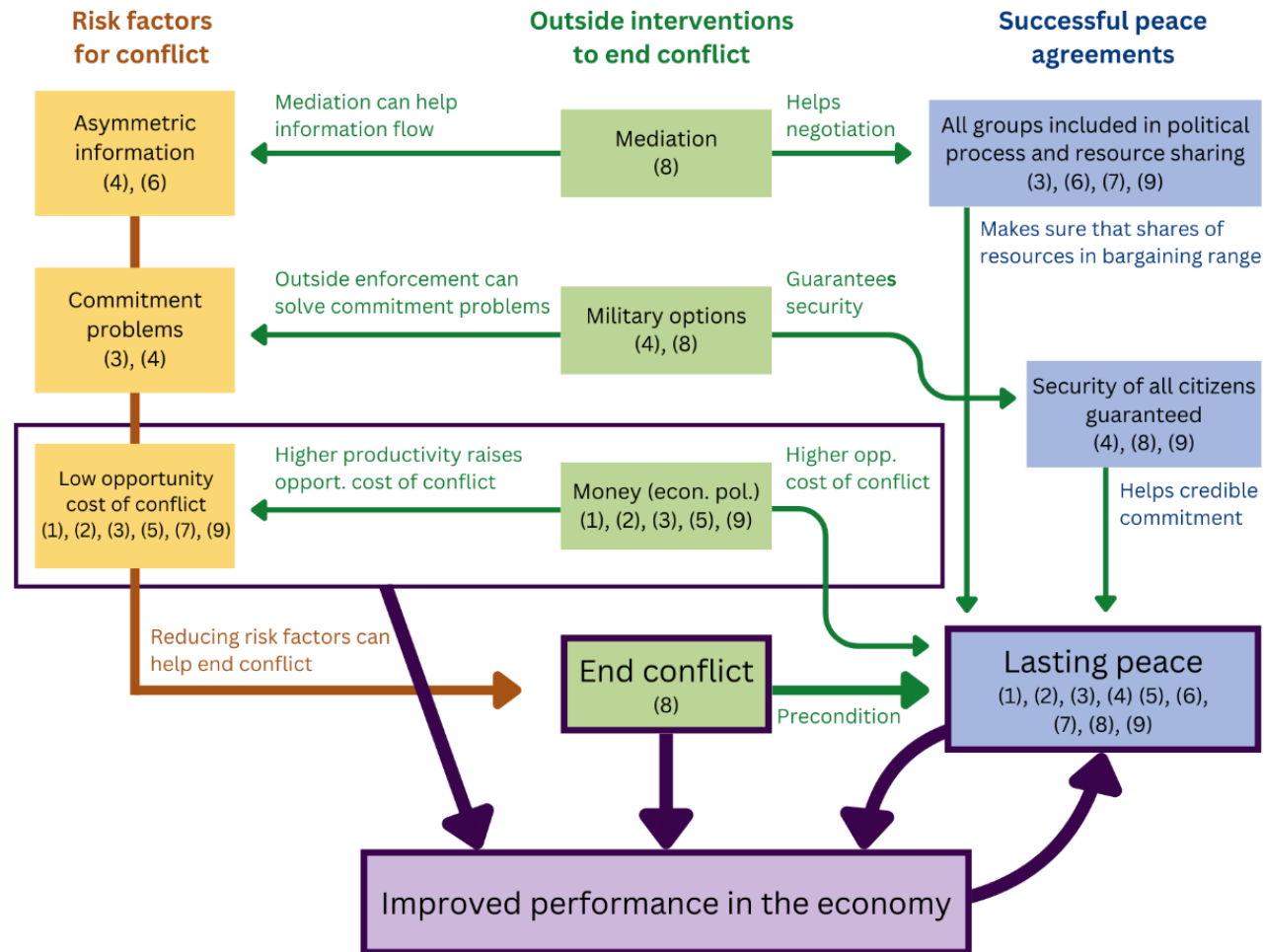


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Adapted from Rohner 2024), with each of ReCIPE's research themes denoted by their number.

contribute to guaranteed credible commitment. Finally, policies which increase productivity and foster prosperity contribute to making conflict prohibitively costly, and thereby raise the opportunity cost of armed violence (Collier et al., 2009; Rohner and Thoenig, 2021). This is at the core of ReCIPE, with various themes devoted to this, including public policies (Theme 1), private and public investment (Theme 2), institutions (Theme 3), combatting climate change and the natural resource curse (Theme 5), managing ethnic diversity (Theme 7) and promoting inclusiveness across gender and other dimensions (Theme 9).

In essence, the considerable focus of several themes on addressing risk factors of conflict serves a purpose of *prevention*. By reducing the key risk factors for conflict, well-designed policies can prevent fragile countries from falling into conflict, and in this way foster both peace as well as long-run economic development. In terms of key interventions and policies to curb fighting in the short run, the role of mediation, military options and economic policies (money) has been highlighted (see Rohner, 2024, for a detailed literature survey). Again, these are well captured by the themes of ReCIPE. First of all, mediation lies at the core of Theme 8 on peacemaking and peacekeeping, while military options are studied under both Theme 4 (geoeconomics) and Theme 8 (peacemaking and peacekeeping). Economic policies for achieving peace receive, as mentioned, a special place in ReCIPE, with public policies (Theme 1), private and public investment (Theme 2), institutions (Theme 3), climate change and natural resource abundance (Theme 5) and gender and inequality (Theme 9) all focusing on ways to increase the opportunity cost of war and thereby put an end to fighting.

Once the shooting has stopped, the process is by no means over, as recurrence of war is an important risk (Rohner et al., 2013), and the fundamentals for lasting peace must be built. A first key factor is to guarantee a fair representation of all groups and individuals. This is investigated in Themes 3 (institutions), 6 (information and social media), 7 (ethnic diversity) and 9 (gender and inequality). Beyond representation, security guarantees are also of paramount importance, and understanding them better is a key goal of ReCIPE. In particular, Themes 4 (geoeconomics), 8 (peacemaking and peacekeeping) and 9 (gender and inequality) are devoted to fostering our understanding on how security guarantees can help to foster credible commitment to peace.

In a nutshell, this illustrates how all nine themes are of major importance for understanding the process of conflict and peace at the various stages of risk factors, interventions to stop the fighting, as well as long-term investments in building lasting peace.

Obviously, the story does not end there. One critical factor that pervades all this framework is the bi-directional nexus between peace and prosperity. As highlighted above, various economic factors affect the risk of conflict. By putting in place institutions and policies that promote productive investments and an improved performance of the economy, this curbs the risk of conflict. In the medium term, less conflict means that the conditions for investment and productivity are better met, and this results in a further surge of economic activity. This positive feedback loop constitutes a powerful virtuous cycle, where economic investments foster peace which in turn further improves economic performance. As stressed in Thoenig and Rohner (2021) these feedback loops create a powerful complementarity, where peace promotion constitutes a potent avenue for economic growth in poor countries, while economic investment programs can be among the best defences against the outbreak of hostilities.

While the framework described above guides our Research Strategy, we enriched this framework by embedding it in a classification of countries and conflict types. In a paper commissioned for ReCIPE and to be released in summer/autumn 2025, Dominic Rohner, Oliver Vanden Eynde and Emma Verhille propose a 3-dimensional classification of countries based on income, democratic institutions, and the baseline strength of the security operations. They use this classification to shed light on the incidence and nature of conflict. Clear evidence is found that moves from rich to poor, from democratic to non-democratic, and from secure to non-secure all increase conflict risk. They document how different constellations of these factors are associated with varying conflict risks and differences in the dominant type of conflict experienced by countries: rich, democratic and secure countries are mostly vulnerable to terrorism; non-democratic but secure countries are more likely to experience repression; and poor, non-democratic, and non-secure countries see rebellion as the dominant conflict type.

This means that there are complementarities in policies: for example, in poor, non-secure and non-democratic countries improving state capacity would only significantly reduce conflict, if at the same time institutions become more inclusive, as otherwise the type of conflict would simply shift from rebellion to repression. In this framework, conflict reduction can be thought of as shifting countries to cells with lower conflict risk, and each of the nine ReCIPE themes presents policies that contribute to such shifts. Of course, the classification proposed (with only 8 categories) does not capture the full heterogeneity of conflict settings. In this sense, the work undertaken within the different ReCIPE themes allows for a further breakdown of relevant conditions. At the same time, the classification framework highlights the complementarities that exist between different policy dimensions, as well as the need to tailor interventions to the specific characteristics of a particular conflict zone.

Research Themes

ReCIPE will approach the broad research area of economies in conflict and fragile settings through nine research themes. These research themes are chosen in light of knowledge of both what we already know, and what important questions remain open or even yet largely unexplored. The themes aim to investigate how incentives for conflict are shaped and how potent economic policies can reduce the scope for fighting and each theme is directed by two Theme Leaders. The following paragraphs describe the research themes and give a brief sense of relevant literature.

Theme 1: Public policies for peace

Theme 1 is led by Elena Esposito and Austin Wright.

Can public policy shape the incentives for violence? Can governments design economic and security strategies that effectively reduce conflict, terrorism, and crime? This research theme explores how public policies can influence the incentives that drive individuals and groups to engage in violence — whether in the form of armed conflict, terrorism, or organised crime. The theme adopts a deliberately broad definition of conflict-related violence, encompassing a spectrum of outcomes ranging from large-scale political instability and civil war to localised violence and individual aggression.

Specifically, this theme examines the role of public policies across six key areas:

- (i) **Labour Market Policies** investigates how employment programmes can prevent violence, with emerging evidence highlighting the promise of combining jobs with soft-skills training and behavioural therapy.
- (ii) **Educational Policies and Programmes** explores how education — particularly early interventions and cognitive-behavioural approaches in schools — can mitigate violence and promote pro-social behaviour.
- (iii) **Welfare Policies** examines how social protection systems can buffer individuals and communities from economic shocks that might otherwise trigger violence.
- (iv) **Foreign Aid and Cash Transfers** studies the impact of international aid and cash transfers on conflict dynamics.
- (v) **Illicit Economies and Conflict** analyses how natural resources, drug markets, and criminal economies can fuel violence and undermine state institutions.
- (vi) **Deterring Conflict and Enforcing Peace** explores enforcement-based strategies, including policing, information campaigns, border controls, and refugee management, to prevent violence and promote stability.

Theme 2: Private and public investment and peace

The Theme Leaders of Theme 2 are Michele di Maio and Uwe Sunde.

Despite the recent increase in international and internationalised wars, most violent conflicts in the world remain domestic, or civil wars. These conflicts have large impacts on firms, workers,

households, and governments. The economic impact of conflict is heterogeneous across countries and types of conflict, operates through different mechanisms, and leads to different adjustment strategies depending on the individual and local conditions. The ultimate question is whether and how private and public investments can help to mitigate or prevent violence of any form. Knowledge about the drivers and mechanisms behind conflict will ultimately be indispensable for the design of policies that can help prevent conflict and maintain peace.

The goal of this theme is to foster a better understanding of the underlying mechanisms and drivers that lead individual actors – households and firms – to engage in, or cope with, violent conflicts. The objective is the generation of empirical evidence that can help our understanding of both the economic effects of conflict and its drivers. The main motifs and drivers of these conflicts are related to the incentives associated with different actors to engage in violent, often predatory, activities, rather than productive activities. These activities typically require investments of some form, by firms and by individuals. This theme is devoted to generate evidence on the consequences of conflict for investment decisions in the private and public sectors, as well as on the effects of investment in various domains on the prevalence of conflict.

The research carried out under this theme will mainly address the following topics:

(i) Population, demography, and conflict

- Mortality
- Fertility behaviour and investments in child health and education
- Migration

(ii) Health investments and conflict

- Health, especially child and maternal health
- Public health investments

(iii) Investment in education and conflict

(iv) Economic activity and conflict

- Macroeconomic perspective
- Microeconomic perspective
- Domestic investments and FDI
- Infrastructure investment

Several insights have emerged from a review of the relevant literature already conducted by ReCIPE. First, the relationship between conflict and private and public investment in any of the topics considered is bi-directional. With causality running both ways, empirical research in this theme will provide insights regarding the potentially reinforcing effects of the conflict-investment nexus. Second, the effects of conflict on investment — and the reverse — vary considerably across sectors, geographic contexts, and time. Large knowledge gaps remain in the literature regarding the external validity of existing results. The prevalence of effect heterogeneity also points at the need for isolating robust regularities - in the sense of robust associations and causal pathways – as prerequisite for the design of policy interventions. Finally, existing evidence suggests that private and public investments may entail spillovers and double dividends across different domains, such as the potential of public health interventions for conflict prevention. Such spillovers across domains remain imperfectly understood.

Theme 3: Institutions, democracy, and peace

Theme 3 is led by Laura Mayoral and Hannes Mueller.

Recent years have seen troubling shifts in global patterns of governance and conflict. Democracy is in decline worldwide, with weakening checks and balances and eroding norms. At the same time, armed conflicts have increased in both incidence and severity after a period of relative stability in the post–Cold War era. These parallel trends—democratic erosion and rising armed violence—underscore the critical role of institutions in averting conflict by managing social tensions, shaping political competition, and delivering essential public goods.

Building on pioneering contributions by North (1990), Weingast (1995), Acemoglu and Robinson (2001), and Besley and Persson (2011), this theme investigates how different institutional arrangements—political, economic, and administrative—can reduce the risk and intensity of violent conflict. It is important to emphasise that institutions not only structure incentives but also influence power dynamics, resource allocation, and the capacity of the state to enforce laws and provide services. Inclusive and transparent rules of the game help societies negotiate grievances peacefully rather than resort to violence; conversely, weak or exclusionary institutions often fuel escalation and entrench fragility.

Recent empirical work (Sanchez De La Sierra (2020), Mueller and Rauh (2024), Fetzer and Kyburz (2024), Laurent-Lucchetti et al. (2023)) has provided innovative designs to identify these institutional effects, clarifying the causal pathways through which democracy, state capacity, and economic structures either reduce or exacerbate conflict. Specifically, robust political institutions help mitigate bargaining failures and power imbalances; strong state capacity deters insurgencies by delivering security and services; and inclusive economic institutions lower the scope for rent-seeking and grievances. Yet these frameworks must also grapple with feedback loops—conflict itself undermines institutions, creating self-reinforcing traps of violence and fragility.

Building on this evidence base, Theme 3 of ReCIPE explores the vital role of institutions in preventing and mitigating armed conflict. This theme’s research agenda highlights four focal areas:

- (i) **Political Institutions that Constrain and Share Power.** How can constitutions, electoral systems, checks and balances, and power-sharing agreements reduce the risk of conflict? Are there institutional innovations that can defuse the risk of violence?
- (ii) **Enhancing State Capacity in Volatile and Post-Conflict Contexts.** Fragile states often lack both fiscal and legal capacity to enforce the law, provide public goods, or deter armed groups. What policy designs—tax reforms, administrative overhauls, public goods provision—most effectively prevent or de-escalate violence?
- (iii) **Economic Institutions for Inclusive Development and Reduced Fragility.** Institutions governing property rights, market competition, and resource management shape the distribution of economic opportunities, which in turn influence conflict risks. How can well-designed economic institutions, including at the international level, foster equitable development and prevent violent rent-seeking?

- (iv) **New Methods and Data for Institutional Analysis.** Recent advances—such as machine learning techniques, natural language processing and high-resolution conflict event data—open innovative research avenues. How can these tools improve causal identification, shed light on micro-mechanisms, and enable more precise policy interventions?

Theme 4: Geoeconomics

The geoeconomics theme is led by Eoin McGuirk and Christoph Trebesch.

We are witnessing the return of international war and conflict. From 1989-2015, fatalities from purely domestic civil conflicts exceeded those from international conflicts in all but two years. Since 2015, however, fatalities from international conflict have been greater. The goal of this theme is to generate, coordinate and disseminate policy-relevant research on geoeconomics and conflict, focusing on inter-state conflict and the international dimension of civil conflicts.

Major topics at this intersection include the relationship between globalisation and conflict; the “toolkit” of policies used by states to achieve geopolitical objectives related to conflict; and the cross-border causes and consequences of conflict. This theme is especially interested in documenting international spillovers from conflict and understanding how external third-party actors (be they states or multilateral institutions) can influence conflict outcomes within or between other states.

Some specific topics include:

- (i) **Economic complementarities and conflict across borders.**
- (ii) **Quantifying cross-border externalities generated by conflict and the risk of conflict.**
- (iii) **External policies that influence the expected costs and benefits of conflict.**
- (iv) **External policies that influence the origins of bargaining failures related to conflict, e.g.,**
 - Mediation for informational problems;
 - Security guarantees for commitment problems;
 - Measures to resolve political agency frictions.
- (v) **Understanding the broader geoeconomic toolkit used by states to coerce external actors, e.g.,**
 - Economic incentives and sanctions;
 - Other unarmed and armed interventions.

Theme 5: Climate change, natural resources, and conflict

The Theme Leaders for Theme 5 are Oliver Vanden Eynde and Juan Vargas.

Extreme weather spurs conflict. One of the most robust findings in the conflict literature is that high temperatures, poor rainfall, droughts, and floods lead to an intensification of violence (e.g., Burke et al., 2015; Harari and La Ferrara, 2018; Crisis Group, 2022; McGuirk and Nunn, 2024). Several mechanisms could explain this relationship, and these are some of the most prominent

ones. First and foremost, extreme climate shocks wreck agricultural productivity and generate livelihood insecurity in rural households. Hence, distressed people may find joining armed groups more attractive - a logic that is referred to as the “opportunity cost channel” (e.g., Dube and Vargas, 2013; Vanden Eynde, 2018). Affected communities may also struggle with one another for control of scarce resources. For instance, water disputes are becoming more likely in several parts of the Global South. However, the impact of extreme weather does not run exclusively through economic channels, as psychological factors could make individuals more aggressive during heat waves (Jacob et al., 2007). Fourth, climate-driven economic distress may create displacement, aggravating existing ethnic and political cleavages. Fifth, rising sea levels are also a source of land scarcity, displacement and violent disputes.

The reverse relationship is also important: violent conflict creates environmental degradation. For instance, the territorial expansion of armed groups which rely on land-extractive (legal or illegal) economic activities creates deforestation (Fergusson et al., 2014). This suggests that the relationship between climate change and conflict is self-reinforcing, in a vicious cycle that can only be broken by identifying causal micro-mechanisms and designing effective policy interventions.

At a global level, governments try to limit temperature rises through green transition policies. These policies aim at reducing the demand for natural resources, which are incidentally another major cause of armed conflict, as we know from a large literature (Dube and Vargas, 2013; Berman et al., 2017). Building on the insights from this work, this theme will highlight how an effective and coordinated green transition could reshape the relationship between natural resources and conflict, saving both the planet and the lives of countless conflict victims.

In early work on this theme commissioned by ReCIPE, two related topics came to our attention and deserve more research. The first one is the role of biodiversity. Biodiversity is a (renewable) natural resource that could contribute to economic livelihoods, but it is under threat of climate change and degradation of the natural environment. Its role in shaping conflict dynamics is still poorly understood. The second (and closely related) topic is how pollution linked to mining activity affects conflict risk. For both topics, there is a need for research that helps identify policy interventions that can prevent and reduce conflict.

More generally, these are the main topics of focus in this theme are:

- (i) **Climate Change and conflict:** causal mechanisms and prediction
- (ii) **Climate Change Policies:** insurance, adaptation, humanitarian assistance, institutional reform
- (iii) **Natural resources and conflict:** causal mechanisms and prediction in the context of the Green Transition
- (iv) **Policies to turn the Natural Resource Curse into a blessing:** international regulation, domestic regulation, and institutional development

Theme 6: Information and conflict: From the role of (social) media and public opinion to big data and forecasting

Theme 6 is led by Maria Petrova and Augustin Tapsoba.

Information is an important determinant of people's behaviour, and this also holds true in the context of conflicts. The Information and Conflict theme aims to improve our understanding of how information, media, and conflict are interconnected. This theme explores the relationships between (social) media and ongoing conflicts, post-conflict reconciliation, political and social tensions, as well as the economic consequences of these dynamics. Drawing on insights from the literature in big data and artificial intelligence, the theme also includes efforts to forecast the occurrence of conflicts.

The research carried out under this theme will mainly address the following topics:

- (i) **ICT, media, and ongoing conflicts**
- (ii) **Media and post-conflict reconciliation**
- (iii) **Media, ICT, xenophobia, and ethnic tensions**
- (iv) **(Social) media and hate crime**
- (v) **(Social) media and protests**
- (vi) **(Social) media and terrorism**
- (vii) **Information and the economic impact of violence**
- (viii) **Big data, artificial intelligence, and conflict forecasting**

Theme 7: Ethnic diversity and nation-building

This theme is led by Saumitra Jha and Oyebola Motunrayo Okunogbe.

In an influential overview of the social science evidence on conflict, Chris Blattman and Edward Miguel (2010) note: “*Ethnic nationalism is popularly viewed as the leading source of group cohesion and inter-group conflict*” (italics theirs, see also Jha 2023). Indeed, around the world and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, societies polarised along ethnic lines tend to be poorer (e.g. Alesina, Baqir and Hoxby 2004, Alesina and La Ferrara 2005, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2021), provide fewer public goods to their citizens (e.g. Miguel and Gugerty 2005, Artiles 2023) and are more prone to violent civil conflict (Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2005).

The increased propensities for destructive conflict and the lack of growth-enhancing public investment in ethnically divided societies are likely to induce *ethnic growth trap*: many poor, ethnically divided societies are likely to remain poor precisely *because* they cannot overcome the political risks and challenges of investment that are accentuated by their ethnic divisions. The resulting inter-group local inequalities and poor economic perspectives both constitute major threats to peace and countrywide development. However, examples do exist of policymakers in ethnically-diverse societies that have successfully leveraged new economic and financial approaches to break out of the ethnic growth trap. Learning the generalisable lessons from the successes and failures of the past, and applying and testing new policies to leverage the benefits of ethnic diversity are the focuses of Theme 7 in ReCIPE.

Thus, Theme 7 in ReCIPE will support research that sheds new light on how developing societies can break out of such ethnic growth traps, and instead leverage the gains that can often be had from ethnic diversity, recognizing that different contexts may yield different answers. To do this requires deepening our social science understanding of a set of three pillars. These pillars include:

- (i) Diagnosing the Roots of Ethnic Divisions and Ethnic Mobilisation:**
 - Why is it that poor societies became ethnically diverse to begin with?
 - What are the roots of mobilisation along ethnic lines?
 - These questions will allow us to understand both the potential for ethnic conflict escalation and the opportunities provided by ethnic diversity in specific contexts, that feed into the next two pillars.
- (ii) Informal Institutions and Constructive Person to Person Policies**
 - Can we leverage inter-ethnic business relationships / economic complementarities between groups to induce more public goods provision and incentives for peace?
 - Can we leverage fintech to do scale up these types of opportunities?
 - Can we facilitate and institutionalise positive contact more broadly?
- (iii) Strengthening Governance Institutions and Capacity**
 - Can we investigate solutions, including financial and organisational, to mitigate 'ethnic cronyism' that can adversely impact formal governance institutions?
 - Can we evaluate the effectiveness of power sharing as a solution to accommodate ethnic divisions?

Theme 8: Peacemaking, peacebuilding, and reconstruction

The Theme Leaders of Theme 8 are Lisa Hultman and Salma Mousa.

Bridging the fields of peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding requires understanding how local interventions scale to broader societal outcomes. Research on international peacemaking demonstrates that well-designed peacekeeping and mediation efforts can reduce violence and enhance stability. However, most studies focus on observational, macro-level outcomes like conflict recurrence and violence reduction, neglecting the mechanisms driving these results. Conversely, grassroots peacebuilding research provides robust, causal evidence of how interventions can improve trust and intergroup attitudes at the individual level, but struggles to show how these changes translate to sustained peace at the community level.

Some of the questions to be addressed in this theme include:

- (i) Do multiple interventions amplify the overall effectiveness, or do some forms of intervention undermine the effect of another?**
- (ii) How do international peacemaking efforts influence local intergroup relationships?**
- (iii) How do different interventions interact with aid and reconstruction programs in shaping the conflict landscape and what mechanisms are at play?**

- (iv) **Do public attitudes matter for the success of peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts?**
- (v) **Does reducing prejudice at the individual level reduce the frequency and intensity of violence at the community level?**

Theme 9: Gender inequality and conflict

Theme 9 is led by Siwan Anderson and Micaela Sviatschi.

Armed conflict is associated with high levels of gender-based violence (GBV) of all forms against women and girls. This includes murder, torture, sexual slavery and violence, as well as forced marriage, pregnancy, and sterilisation. Women and girls are targeted by the use of sexual violence, including as a tactic of war. Wartime sexual violence has occurred throughout human history and remains today a reoccurring atrocity. Gender-based violence has also been demonstrated to increase in post-conflict societies, often due to the general break-down of the rule of law as well as political, economic and social structures. The “normalisation” of GBV is an additional contributing factor. The trafficking of women and girls can likewise be exacerbated after conflict owing to this dysfunctionality of society.

Women are not just victims of conflict, they can also be actors. They have historically had and continue to have a role as combatants, as part of organised civil society, as human rights defenders, as members of resistance movements, and as active agents in both formal and informal peacebuilding and recovery processes. The global community has repeatedly committed to ensuring women’s participation in conflict prevention, resolution and recovery. However, UN Women reports that power and decision-making on peace and security matters remain overwhelmingly dominated by men.

This theme is focused on quantitative explorations into these links between gender and conflict guided by the two sub-themes of (i) women as victims of conflict, and (ii) women as actors in conflict.

Particular topics of investigation include:

- (i) **Explaining the incidence of gender-based violence in conflict zones**
- (ii) **Understanding the longer-term gender-based consequences of conflict violence in post-conflict settings**
- (iii) **Explaining the incidence and implications of female actors in conflict**
- (iv) **Understanding the role of women in peace-building processes**
- (v) **Exploring gender-based policy interventions in post-conflict settings**

Cross-Cutting Development Issues/Themes

ReCIPE emphasises three cross-cutting development issues closely related to conflict and economic performance: the generation of new data, gender equality and inclusion, and climate change and the environment. Applicants are strongly encouraged to consider these three issues in their projects, and proposals addressing these issues will have an increased chance of receiving funding.

Generation of New Data

The progress in our understanding of peace and prosperity has been intimately linked to the data available. During the Cold War period the work of International Relations scholars on explaining interstate wars was fuelled by the massive data collection effort on Military Interstate Disputes (<https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/>), in recent years the work on civil conflicts has substantially benefitted from new fine-grained datasets on conflict events at the subnational level (e.g. the Armed Conflict Location Event Data, <https://acleddata.com/>). Such subnational data allow researchers to go beyond state-centred explanations of conflict processes.

While the generation of new data is a clear goal of all themes, Theme 6 will play a key role, as it will act as a powerhouse of the booming work with big data and artificial intelligence, which play an increasingly crucial role for the study of peace and prosperity.

Yet, our understanding of the fundamentals of peace and prosperity is only very partial and much more data work is needed to gain a fuller, more robust picture. For example, a domain that clearly may require further data work is geoeconomics, with new data on natural and other resources over long historical periods strongly lacking. Gaining a better understanding of the fundamental causes of state power and the stability of the international system would be particularly timely and topical. In addition, when it comes to the impact of investments into the productive economy in contexts of fragility (both in private firms and public infrastructure), data collection may yield high returns, as it may cast light on the nexus between productivity and peace.

In addition to having the generation of new data as a cross-cutting theme, ReCIPE will seek to have all new data generated with funding from the programme be made publicly available. This will include financial resources available to make all journal articles open access when allowed by the journal.

Gender Equality and Inclusion

If some of the topics have already attracted researcher attention for decades – for example, the work on the so-called “Dutch disease” and the natural resource curse – others have started to take off much more recently. This is strikingly the case for questions of gender representation and gender norms, as well as discrimination and inequality in general. Only relatively recently have these topics started to attract the attention they deserve, and researchers are still restricted by gaps in many important data series. For example, lack of representation of women and minority groups in peace negotiations and settlements has been argued by various policymakers to be a factor contributing to the recurrence of conflict. Currently available data does not, however, allow us to establish a causal relationship between representation and the recurrence of conflict, and there is a substantial need to fund further work on this. Similarly, misogynous gender norms and other patterns of discrimination based on religion, caste, ethnicity or sexual orientation may play key roles in repression and armed violence, but further research is needed to establish conditions sufficient to reduce such drains on prosperity and peace.

A key purpose of the ReCIPE programme is therefore to push forward this important work by encouraging the collection of comprehensive empirical evidence on what key factors and policies linked to gender equality and inclusion make a difference for promoting prosperity and peace. For this purpose, we have established a separate theme centred on these topics. However, we also strongly encourage applicants to signal the important gender dimensions of research submitted to other themes. Put differently, an application focusing on gender representation will be evaluated under Theme 9 (Gender, inequality and conflict), while a proposal studying health policies but containing a heterogeneity analysis on gender would be reviewed under Theme 1 (Public policies for peace). The existence of a gender dimension in a proposal would be included as one of the criteria used to evaluate the proposal.

Note also that whenever ReCIPE is funding the creation of new datasets, the standard should be for gender-disaggregating the variables when possible.

Climate Change and the Environment

While climate change is a threat to human welfare across the globe, some regions are impacted more than others. Tragically, some of the worst hit areas are places which already have high levels of poverty and which have suffered from endemic armed conflict. In particular, the Sahel zone in Africa is especially at risk of experiencing severe heat shocks in a natural habitat that is already hot and dry, and that has for decades experienced resource competition between different types of agricultural modes of

production (crop farming versus cattle herding). As shown in recent quantitative studies, there is a risk that this inter-group violence will accelerate further in the coming years (Eberle et al., 2020), with catastrophic consequences for both the prospect of poverty reduction as well as the achievement of lasting peace.

Climate change is a classic cross-cutting theme, as its impact pervades also questions embedded into other themes. If, for example, a health or labour market policy is assessed under Theme 1, it is crucial to take into account any current and future changes in the climate and environment, as these will both affect health outcomes directly and shape productivity and the likelihood of successfully implementing a given array of economic activities. Further, consider research proposals falling within the scope of Themes 7 or 8, studying inter-ethnic reconciliation, pacification or reconstruction, for which the threat of future resource competition exacerbated by climate change is of paramount importance. For these reasons, we have not only devoted a separate theme to climate change and the environment, but will also strongly encourage applicants to explain how proposals submitted to other themes have a cross-cutting link with climate change, a link that will be included in the evaluation criteria.

Scope Conditions: Taking External Validity And Heterogeneous Effects Seriously

A large proportion of research funded under the ReCIPE programme will typically fall into two categories: 1) Studies aiming for causal identification using fine-grained subnational data for a country, for a region, for an armed actor etc. 2) Studies that have a sample composed of several countries, a continent or the whole world.

In the former case, i.e. for subnational data for one country or actor, an important question is the one of external validity of the investigation. Do the results generalize to other countries or actors, and if yes, to what “type” or “group” of countries or actors? Or are the findings idiosyncratically confined to the country or actor of the study? One may refer to this issue as “scope conditions”, highlighting under what conditions a given other country is part of the scope of the policy lessons of a study. For the sake of being policy relevant, it is of paramount importance to be able to understand to what group of country specific policy lessons apply.

In the latter case, i.e. studies covering several countries, ReCIPE-funded research will typically aim at investigating heterogeneous effects, e.g. through sample splits or interaction terms, to understand for what type of setting the results of a given policy may vary. This again allows us to better grasp the potential applicability of particular policy lessons across a series of places.

It is expected that some policy lessons will be mostly relevant for specific types of countries, regions or actors, e.g. countries currently in conflict, or post-conflict countries, or countries suffering from particularly high crime rates or from multiple dimensions of severe fragility. The country classification developed for ReCIPE provides a starting point that can be useful to study external validity. However, ReCIPE does not impose one single framework in a top-down manner. The programme also encourages researchers to develop scope conditions for their findings – focusing on the dimensions that are most relevant for particular research findings.