



Working paper No. 8



Impact of conflict on the middle class in the Arab countries

Working paper series on the middle class

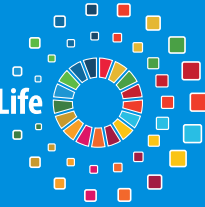


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Authors: Youssef Chaitani and Raffaele Bertini.

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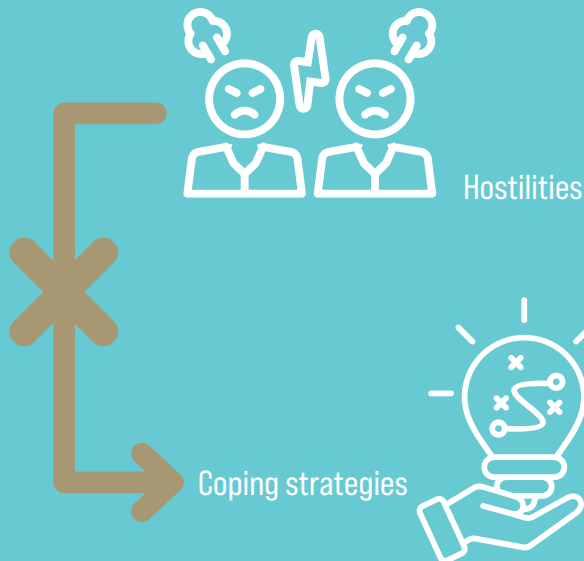
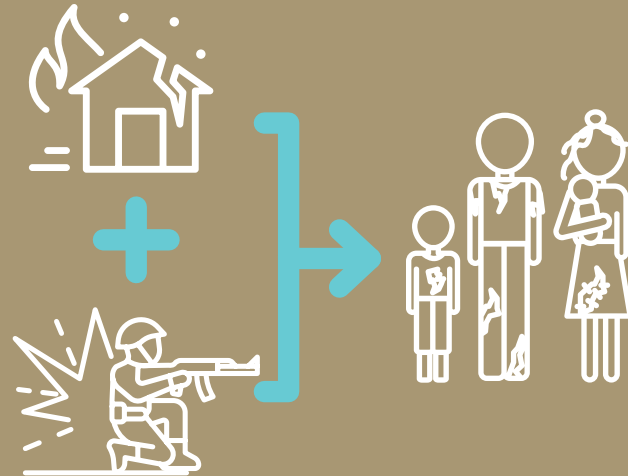
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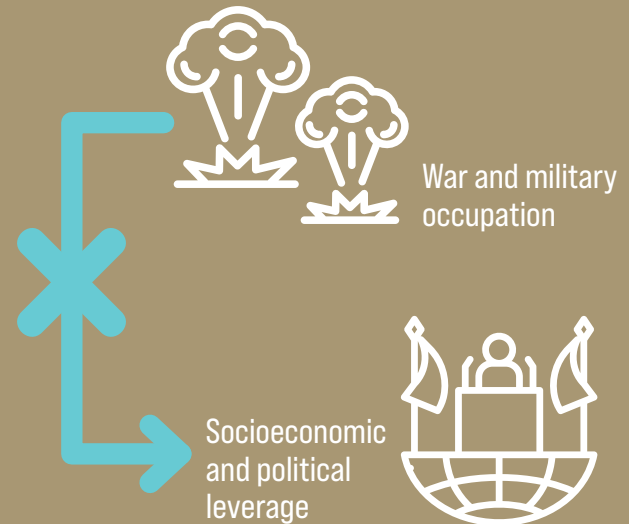


Key messages

Conflict and military occupation negatively impact the middle class by reducing access to resources, basic services and employment, **resulting in impoverishment.**



The capacity of the middle class to implement coping strategies over time **is impacted as hostilities progress.**



The socioeconomic and political leverage of the middle class is dramatically reduced by war and military occupation, resulting in weak institutions and governance and a compromised economy, all of which undermine recovery.

Introduction

The past decade has been a period of great instability and conflict in the Arab region. The number of people living in countries that are in conflict has more than doubled since 2010. In 2010, about 80 million people were living in countries at war but, between 2011 and 2022, that increased significantly to 163 million people.¹ The violent trajectories of several uprisings across the region in 2011 contributed to this tremendous increase. Several Arab countries experienced the onset of civil wars, and many remain mired in conflict today. The situation has been exacerbated by direct foreign military interventions. Those ongoing conflicts add to the disastrous legacies of wars that took place in previous decades, and, in the case of the State of Palestine, more than seven decades of occupation by Israel, including its direct effect on many aspects of life for the Palestinian population.

There are numerous reasons for the Arab uprisings, but one of the primary causes was a middle class angry about their circumstances. Declining living standards due to a scarcity of jobs in formal sectors, the poor quality of public services and the unaccountability of government all contributed to great discontent. The established social contract of redistribution with limited voice had stopped working, especially for the middle class, prior to 2011. People wanted to have a say in decision-making, and they desired access to real opportunities for economic advancement.² The circumstances of the social contract were also referred to by Gelvin as the “benefits-for-compliance ruling bargain”³ and as the “patron state” by Kamrava.⁴ As noted in “The middle class in the Arab region and their political participation”, political space (in the form of political parties, trade unions, the media, and civil society) in Arab countries remains controlled, constrained and restrictive, thus leading to social and

political tensions or even full-blown conflict.⁵ Opposition to any kind of reform by the ruling elite and pervasive weakness in education further exacerbated the path towards conflict in several Arab States.⁶

Social scientists have argued that there is a strong relationship between higher levels of education and the likelihood of participating in opposition activities and demanding political change. Kamrava notes: “Those countries that would later experience the Arab Spring saw particularly impressive rises in levels of education combined with chronically poor job prospects. The combination of highly skilled, urban middle class with uncertain or precarious employment prospects proved lethal for regimes with little



or no legitimacy”⁷ Gerges elaborates on the deficiencies of regimes: “The inability of the regime to heed the rapidly growing new urban working and middle classes, coupled with the failure to provide jobs, set in motion the events leading to the 2011 uprising.”⁸

A critical determinant of whether an Arab State disintegrated into civil war over the time period examined was the cohesiveness and strength of the security sector and the State bureaucracy. In particular, the presence of military forces that functioned independently and were not tied to the head of State determined whether States remained stable.⁹ An additional factor was whether a country’s military forces were organized along patrimonial lines.¹⁰

The following conclusions quoted from a review of studies on Arab class structure are important to consider in light of the fact that the middle class in many Arab countries is loosely comprised of two broad categories: public-sector employees and employees of security institutions:¹¹

- a. In contrast to Western countries, where ownership of the means of production is the main source of power and wealth, inherited political power, whether tribal, sectarian or ethnic, may be a main source of wealth in many Arab countries.
- b. The military elite plays too big a role in Arab class structures due to its significant role in economic and political spheres and its ability to impose force on the population.¹²

This paper provides an analytical framework for understanding the impact of conflict on the middle class across the region, with a focus on Iraq, Libya, the State of Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan, and Yemen, in addition to countries that have been indirectly affected by conflict, including Jordan and Lebanon. The paper begins by briefly contextualizing the topic and introducing the framework. Evidence regarding the impact of conflicts on the middle class in the region, especially for the period immediately following the Arab Spring uprisings, will be presented in line with the conceptual framework.

Conflict in Arab countries

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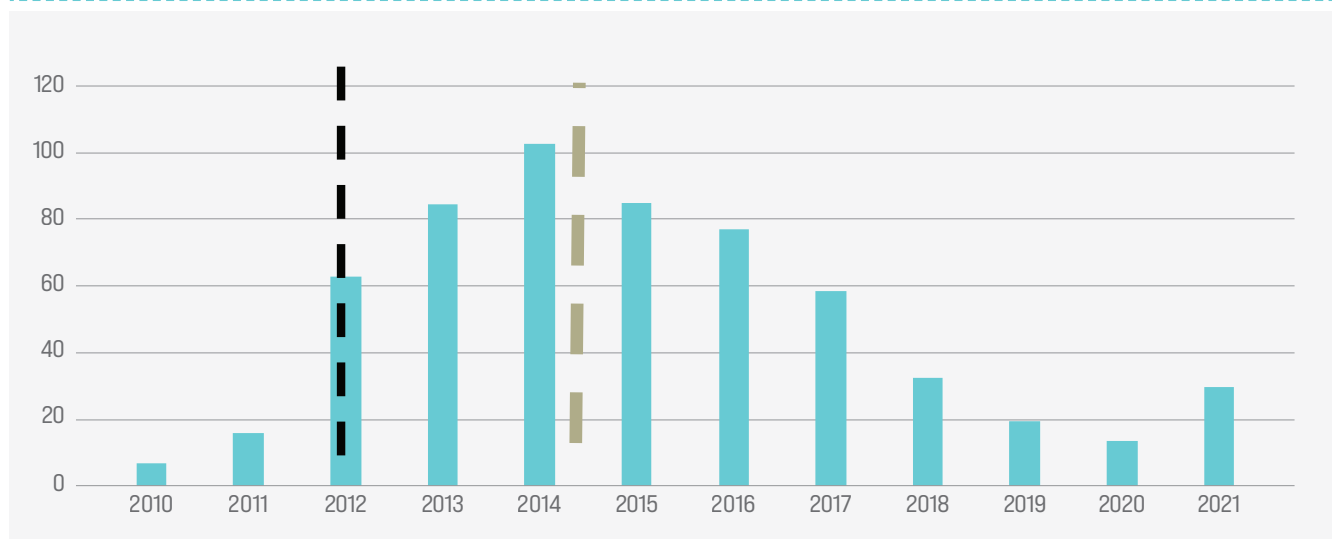
Conflict affects all aspects of life at the individual, household and country levels, and has an impact on all social classes.¹³ Conflict can destroy social and family links, as well as connections among social and economic entities. At the social level, that results in the deterioration of trust in formal institutions, the core of pre-war societies, and an increased reliance on inner social circles, including family, tribe, region, ethnicity, or sect. That reliance enables the sustaining of livelihoods in the initial phase of conflicts.¹⁴ Moreover, conflict negatively impacts the rule of law and the attainment of social justice, thus impeding stable and sustainable growth for the middle class in terms of access to resources, opportunities and basic services. Conflict dynamics can have the effect of concentrating resources in the hands of the few, for example, warlords or high-ranking State officials. Members of the middle class may lose control over resources and a share of power. In addition, the lack of functional institutions able to directly address the consequences of conflict directly affects the ability of the middle class to influence the social and political order. The short-term impact of conflict on institutions and governance dimensions leads to a marked change

in governance indicators for conflict-affected countries. Those indicators include a decline in institutional effectiveness, the rule of law and accountability.¹⁵

By the early 2010s, the number of countries in conflict in the Arab region was already increasing.¹⁶ That trend and those of the past show the persistence of conflict in the region, with implications for the livelihoods of middle-class households.

Figure 1 shows the number of fatalities as a proxy for the intensity of conflicts in the Arab region. An upward trend is recorded with the outbreak of the Arab Spring, especially in Iraq, Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen. The year 2014 coincided with the peak of violence in the Arab region. A downward trend in violence followed, which continued until the end of the decade when a rebound in fatalities, mostly in Yemen, was recorded in 2021. For the purposes of this paper, 2010 is considered pre-war, followed by the peak of violence in 2014, the year considered to be a turning point between the conflict onset and protracted crisis periods.

Figure 1. Fatalities in the Arab region (2010 to 2021) (Thousands)



Source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) (n. d.). Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED). Available at <https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/>.

Note: No data are available for the State of Palestine. Black dotted line indicates initial phase of conflict and blue dotted line indicates peak of violence and fatalities.

Conceptual framework

8

02

As previously mentioned, conflict dominates the lives of millions of people in several Arab countries. Conflict has, however, affected the populations of various countries differently and with varying intensity depending on their social class and their socioeconomic, institutional and political situations in the period before the outbreak of conflict. The following analytical framework is presented to enhance understanding of the impact of conflict on the middle class in the region, as well as the different types of conflicts that have characterized the region in recent decades.

A large proportion of the middle class in many Arab countries is employed in public institutions.¹⁷ This group comprises some of the most educated and influential citizens in their countries, but their standard of living has been declining because many Governments have recently implemented reforms that have reduced spending on essential

The following analytical framework is presented to enhance understanding of the impact of conflict on the middle class in the region, as well as the different types of conflicts that have characterized the region in recent decades.

public services, which the middle class rely on. As a result, the middle class has lost access to many previously available services.¹⁸ In the Arab region, governance systems play a major role in shaping the dynamics of class relations, including the rise and fall of certain social classes.



Impact of conflict
on the middle class

10

03

The following framework, which has been elaborated to enhance understanding of the impact of conflict in the region, is divided into three parts reflecting the three main phases of conflict:

- a. The onset of conflict and its impact, which has different effects across societies;¹⁹
- b. Medium-term impacts, when a conflict becomes protracted with recurrent episodes of violence and when differences are observable for the middle class compared with other social classes;²⁰
- c. Long-term impacts characterized either by a reassessment of previous circumstances that

have been greatly affected by conflict and other forms of violence, or by the end of the conflict.²¹

The three phases of conflict are usually sequential, but can also be context-specific. The middle class in conflict-affected countries have been and continue to be affected in different ways. Arab States that have not directly experienced the consequences of conflict in terms of destruction and loss of life, as in Jordan and Lebanon for example, have experienced the resulting spillover effects of conflict. The war in the Syrian Arab Republic has had a large impact on the economic, social and health-care systems of those countries due to the massive influx of refugees and asylum seekers and because of other direct and indirect factors.²²

Figure 2. Impact of conflict on the middle classes in the Arab region

Pre-conflict situation	Short term	Medium term	Long term
Conflict affected countries	Acute violence	Lack of access to basic goods and services and job opportunities	Detioration of socioeconomic conditions of the hurban and rural middle classes and destruction of public services and assets
	Destruction of house, assets and infrastructure	Persistent conflict and clashes over power and control of resources	Lack of job opportunities and migration as the only possibility
	Mobility restrictions	Persistent pressure on prices and inflation, especially for basic items and services, and a reduced purchasing power	Rising corruption and disintegration of state institutions and capacities
	Lack of intermittent access to workplace	Currency devaluation	Progressive division of power and concetration of resources and wealth within the society
	Forced displacements	Accumulation of assets, wealth and power in the hands of few	Macroeconomic structural issues and consequent detioration of living conditions for many in the middle class
	Inflation and reduced access to certain commodities		
Countries not directly affected by conflict	Arrivals of refugees and asylum seekers in border areas	Increasing expenditure on humanitarian assistance from public budget	Increasing competition in the local markets of migrants and refugees, deterioration of public expenditure
	Immediate need for humanitarian actions including provision of basic services (shelters, camps, water, sanitation and food)	Entry in the local markets, including labour markets, of newly arrived population thus increasing competition with local middle class workers	Increasing conflicts between local and refugee communities

Source: Authors' elaboration.

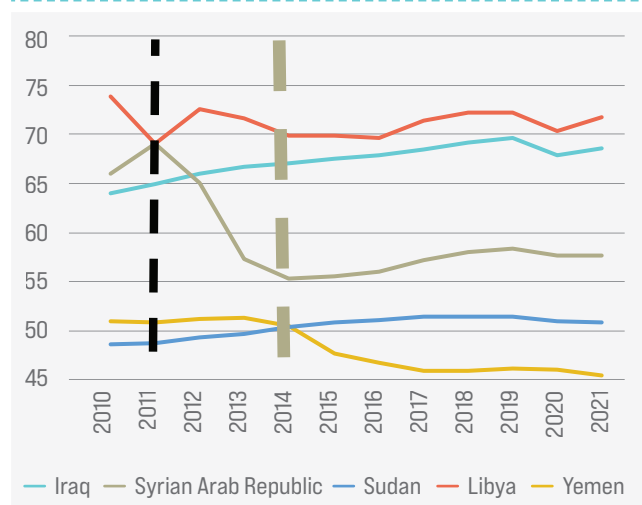
Figure 2 shows both impact types in the Arab region, namely direct and indirect impacts. Starting from left to right and following the timeline arrow, the short-, medium- and long-term effects of conflict on the middle class are examined by simply reporting the main events. Three main dimensions are used to build the analytical framework: livelihood and direct socioeconomic impacts on the middle class; coping strategies generally used by these social groups, including classes to cope with the situation; and the impact of power-sharing and institutional integrity on social and economic systems.

Before looking at the three phases of conflict, an overview of the impact of conflict on selected Arab countries is presented using the human development index (HDI), developed by the United Nations Development Programme. Figures 3 and 4 show that the selected Arab countries have experienced a decline in their HDI scores due to conflict outbreak and its spillover effects into neighbouring countries (dotted black line). In the short and medium term, the HDI scores declined sharply in the conflict-affected countries of Libya, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen but not in Iraq (between the two dotted lines). In the

medium and long term, the Syrian Arab Republic shows an overall dramatic decrease in its HDI score, which never again reaches values close to those of the pre-crisis period after the sharp decrease following the outbreak of conflict (after the blue dotted line).

As an example of the impact of conflict on inequality, evidence shows that the 2003 war in Iraq had a significant impact on income distribution in that country,²³ while survey data from 2007 to 2020 show dramatic changes in the welfare of the three social classes in Iraq. While the middle class represented most of the population in 2007, on the one hand, it experienced a significant reduction in the years from 2014 to 2020, reaching a low of 30 per cent in 2020. On the other hand, estimates indicate that the working class expanded steadily during the same period, increasing from less than one quarter of the Iraqi population in 2007 to around three fifths of the total population at the end of the considered period.²⁴ That type of downward class mobility occurred not just in the short and medium term but also in the long term, largely as consequence of the limited capacity of many Iraqis to cope with increasing challenges.

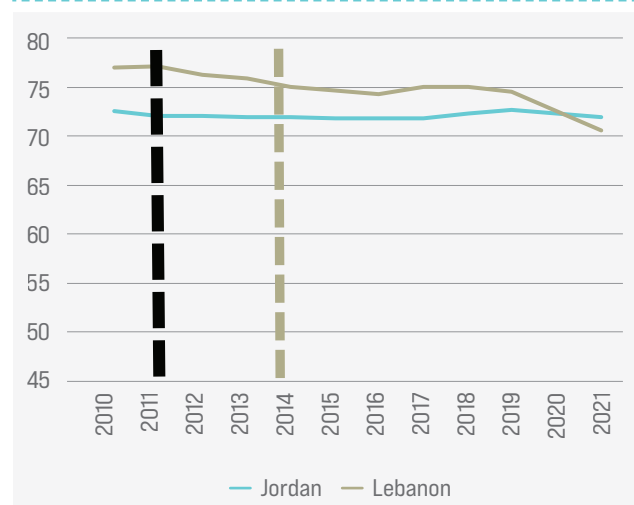
Figure 3. Human Development Index in Arab countries directly affected by conflict (2010 to 2021) (Percentage)



Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2022.

Note: Black dotted line refers to 2011 as the initial phase of conflict and blue dotted line refers to 2014 as the peak of violence and fatalities in the region.

Figure 4. Human Development Index in Arab countries indirectly affected by conflict (2010 to 2021) (Percentage)

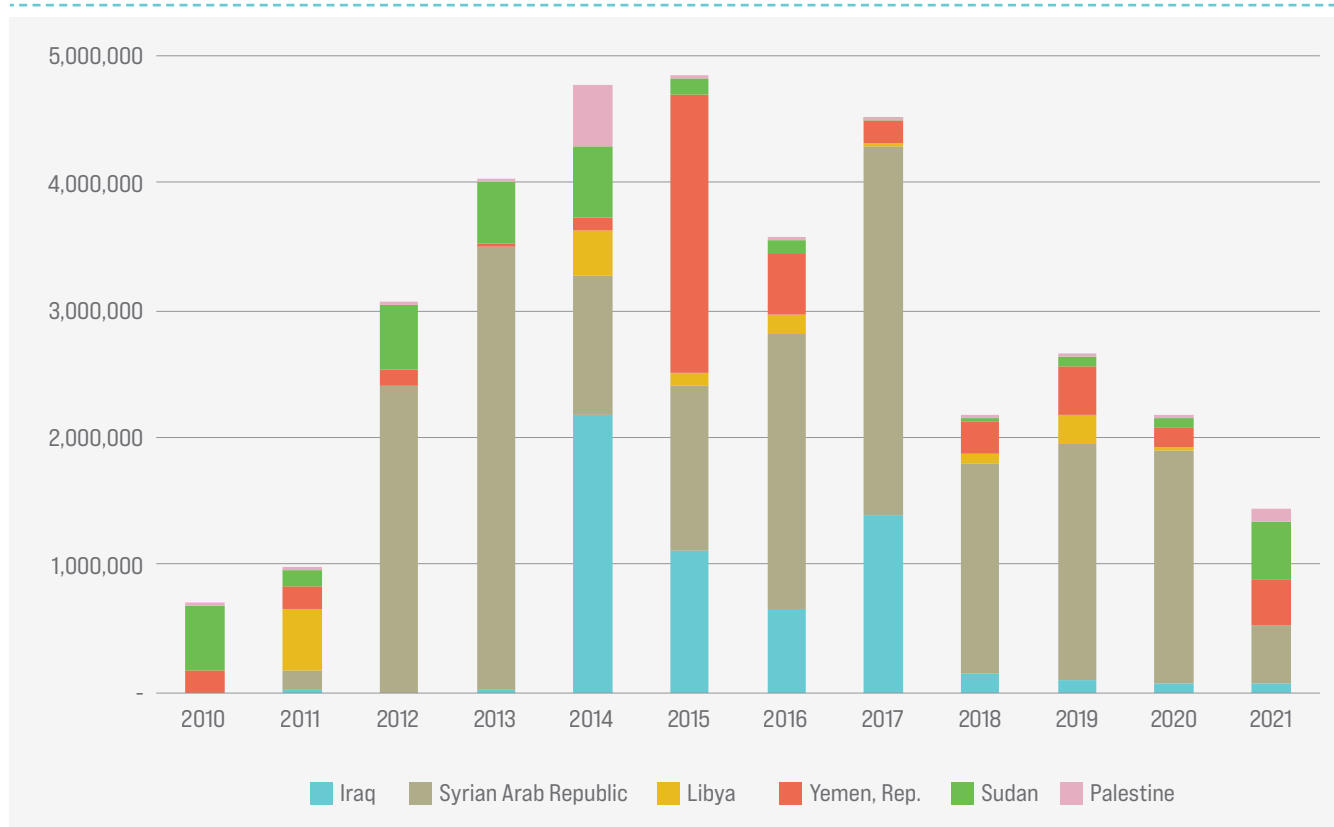


A. Shock of conflict onset

Conflict onset impacts several aspects of the lives of the middle class in the region. The effects of conflict on local populations may be similar across social classes regardless of their respective wealth, occupations and socioeconomic characteristics. Events that characterize the outbreak of conflict include brutal impacts such as death, disappearances and injuries. In addition to those impacts on survival and safety, other relevant ramifications include a loss of livelihood and the destruction of durable and non-durable assets, as well as impeded access to infrastructure.²⁵ World Bank data show that during the initial period of conflict, gross domestic product per capita sharply decreased in affected Arab countries, including in Iraq in 2014 and 2015, in Libya in 2011, in the Syrian Arab Republic

between 2011 and 2016, and in Yemen in 2015. Conflict also affects the provision of essential services such as health, education, security, water, and sanitation. Data also indicates that the population share with access to basic services remained stable or slightly decreased in a number of conflict-affected countries, including Libya and the Syrian Arab Republic.²⁶ When looking at education, for example, the school enrolment rate in the Syrian Arab Republic decreased sharply as both a direct and indirect consequence of the conflict.²⁷ Conflict also affects health conditions and, as such, a proxy for whether a health system is functioning is the under-five mortality rate. This indicator sharply increased at the outbreak of wars in both Libya in 2011 and the Syrian Arab Republic in 2012.

Figure 5. Number of people displaced internally as a result of conflict in Arab States (2010 to 2021)



Source: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), n. d. Global Internal Displacement Dataset (GIDD). Available at www.internal-displacement.org/database.

Potential coping strategies for dealing with immediate threats to life include internal displacement, and seeking protection or safety outside the country. Large numbers of new refugees and internally displaced persons were recorded in waves in countries affected by conflict and are shown in figure 5. Waves occurred, for example, in Iraq between 2014 and 2017, in Libya in 2011 and in the Syrian Arab Republic in 2012 and 2013 and again in 2016 and 2017.²⁸ According

to survey analyses done by the Beirut Center for Studies and Innovation in 2013, the Syrian Arab Republic refugee community in Lebanon tends to be slightly overrepresented in the urban middle and lower-middle classes than is typical within the Syrian Arab Republic. Furthermore, there are great variations in terms of the personal savings and skills of refugees in Lebanon, affecting their capacity to make ends meet.

B. Protracted conflict

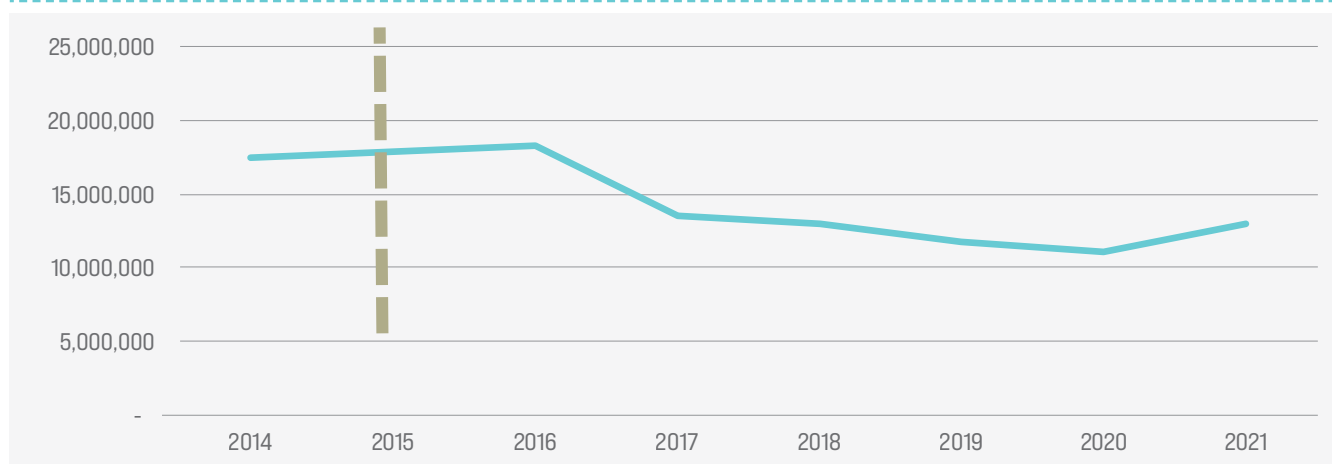
Following the outbreak of hostilities, the trend in the Arab region has been one of protracted conflict. Indeed, once conflicts begin, they tend to continue for many years. Even though conflict may be intermittent or localized, persistent violence among State-led forces and rebel groups, or even among different rebel groups over the control of territory and the country's natural resources is a prevailing characteristic.

Destruction of infrastructure and the collapse of institutions drastically reduce access to basic services and goods, including health care and education. The medium- and long-term impact of conflict on institutional effectiveness, accountability and the rule of law are transmitted through several mechanisms, such as increasing corruption, inefficiency in the provision of public services and loss of employment opportunities caused by the mismanagement of limited financial resources. Indicators of government effectiveness record a sharp decline in directly and indirectly conflict-affected countries.²⁹ Medium-term socioeconomic consequences of conflict include a sharp reduction in wealth and a more fragile public administration system with reduced capacities and resources and circumstances in which it is less able to absorb internal and external shocks.³⁰ For instance, in the Syrian Arab Republic, the conflict has caused

Even though conflict may be intermittent or localized, persistent violence among State-led forces and rebel groups, or even among different rebel groups over the control of territory and the country's natural resources is a prevailing characteristic.

a severe socioeconomic contraction that has resulted in a sharp contraction in the number of middle-class households. Millions of people have been pushed into multidimensional poverty, and vulnerability rates have increased drastically.³¹

Looking at the impact of conflict on key social indicators, a sharp increase in child mortality rates, which can serve as a proxy for the effectiveness of the public health system, has been recorded in the Syrian Arab Republic, Libya and Yemen in the medium to long term.³² This indicator is particularly relevant for countries where the middle class is largely employed in the public sector and highly dependent on services provided by the State.

Figure 6. Number of people in need of humanitarian assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic (2014 to 2021)

Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2022. Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment, Gaza.

Note: Blue dotted line indicates the peak of violence and fatalities in the region, which occurred in 2014.

When examining the impact of conflict on food security, it is evident that Arab countries indirectly affected by conflict have experienced an increase in the number of undernourished people in the medium to long term.³³ For instance, after eight years of war, for two out of five households in the Syrian Arab Republic, expenditure on food exceeded 65 per cent of total earnings. This spending pattern has squeezed middle-class budgets and is pushing more people into poverty and food insecurity.³⁴ Based on OCHA data detailing the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance for 2021,³⁵ figure 6 shows that the Syrian Arab Republic is home to a large number of people, including many former members of the middle class, who are in need of humanitarian assistance.³⁶ Net official development assistance has been increasing in countries directly or indirectly affected by conflict. This increase is particularly evident in countries struggling with weak public finances, underperforming internal and external accounts, and deteriorating trade terms. Several Arab countries are increasingly dependent on international aid and are characterized by a reduced capacity to sustain the needs of their middle and working classes.³⁷

A protracted crisis leads to the deterioration of all macroeconomic indicators, including employment

rates, the current account balance, inflation, the balance of payments, foreign investments, and reserve ratios.³⁸ Moreover, continuous pressure on prices and inflation and the possible devaluation of a national currency can lead to the reduced purchasing power of salaries, an increase in the black market rates for international currencies and the progressive dollarization of the economy.³⁹ They can also lead to deterioration of the financial assets owned by those in the middle class as well as difficulties in accessing formal banking and financial systems.⁴⁰ A protracted crisis is characterized by increasing levels of asset accumulation and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the owning class, which impacts the size and welfare of the middle class.⁴¹ Finally, capital formation data is affected, greatly impacting the middle class.⁴² Primary coping strategies for addressing the aforementioned challenges include selling assets and other durable goods. However, that is usually not a sustainable solution given that personal assets are finite. Income diversification is another frequently adopted strategy at the household level when previously existing sources of revenue are no longer available. The use of informal banking and financial systems is another option that many households use to cope with local currency devaluation and the failure of national financial and banking systems.⁴³

The proletarianization of the Palestinian middle class under occupation

Since 1967, the Israeli occupation of the State of Palestine has caused the de-development of the economy and an increased dependency on Israel.^a The erosion of productive capital, chronic trade deficits, chronic budget deficits, high unemployment, and widespread poverty are trends resulting from the evisceration of the economy. Indeed, the economy of the State of Palestine remains extremely fragile, structurally weak and highly dependent on Israel for trade, wage employment and the provision of basic infrastructure.^b According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), one fourth of the labour force was unemployed in the third quarter of 2022 with staggering disparities between Gaza (47 per cent) and the West Bank (13 per cent). Those who are employed in the State of Palestine also face heightened vulnerabilities, with two thirds of private-sector wage employees lacking an employment contract and 40 per cent being paid below the minimum wage.^c In 2017, poverty reached almost 53 per cent in Gaza,^d and 2.1 million Palestinians across the Occupied Palestinian Territory required some form of humanitarian assistance in 2022, of which 64 per cent, or 1.3 million people, lived in Gaza.^e The occupation has also resulted in the proletarianization of the middle class.^f Middle-class worker statistics for the State of Palestine, Israel and Israeli settlements also reflect wage gaps among different areas and sectors. About 17 per cent of Palestinian adults in the West Bank work in Israel or in Israeli settlements, and many of them are skilled and educated workers.^g The prolonged occupation has resulted in a progressive reduction of opportunities for the middle class. The unemployment rates of more highly educated middle-class workers has, moreover, increased more than of those with little education, indicating the long-term impact of the Israeli occupation on the middle class in the State of Palestine.^h

^a Roy, Sara, 1999. De-development revisited: Palestinian economy and society since Oslo. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 28, No. 3, pp. 64–82; Sayigh, Yusif, 1986. The Palestinian economy under occupation: dependency and pauperization. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 46–67.

^b ESCWA, 2022. Palestine under occupation III – Mapping Israel's policies and practices and their economic repercussions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

^c PCBS, 2022. Press Report on the Labor Force Survey (July–September, 2022). Ramallah.

^d PCBS, 2017.

^e OCHA humanitarian response plan, 2022.

^f Hilal, Jamil, 2011. The pauperization of Palestinian women, men and children in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. *A Dangerous Decade*. Birzeit, State of Palestine: Birzeit University Institute for Women's Studies; Hilal, 2022. Class formation under settler colonialism. *Anthropology and Ethnology Open Journal*, vol. 5, No. 2.

^g PCBS, 2020.

^h Hilal, 2022; World Bank, 2022a. World Development Indicators. Available at <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators>.

C. Post-conflict

The main characteristics of long-term conflict impacts are related to the deterioration of socioeconomic conditions of the middle class, the destruction of public services and other assets, and the degradation of institutional capacities. Human capital will continue to deteriorate during the post-conflict phase. As observed above, the under-five mortality rate in the Syrian Arab Republic remains higher than in the period before the war, thus proxying the dramatic conditions of health services in the country. A high unemployment rate at the end of conflict is also common, as are high illiteracy rates among younger people, especially in areas directly affected by conflict.⁴⁴ Overall, the absence of the rule of law, and weak governance effectiveness and accountability are some of the long-term repercussions of conflict, with very negative implications for middle-class households, including their capacity to support national recovery and future development.⁴⁵

The impoverishment of a large proportion of the middle class, both in rural and urban areas, has been observed in the Arab region as a consequence of war and of its duration and intensity.⁴⁶ Furthermore, a general process of concentration of power in all its political, social and economic dimensions in the hands of smaller groups that do not reflect the power and economic distribution present before conflict is another long-term effect of conflict that has had serious repercussions for the middle classes.

The increasingly sectarian nature of society stems from the development of conflicts and their various phases. Over time, groups emerging during the different phases of a conflict are likely to become political, social and economic actors who may gain ownership over, and control access to, different assets, resources and territories. Furthermore, those emerging actors often become formal or informal service providers for a large part of the population.⁴⁷

Conclusion and recommendations

18



04

Post-Arab Spring governance systems have two potential pathways: (a) centralization, with limited or no participation by the population, in which regime legitimacy is steadily enhanced, and governance outcomes improved to a point where antisystem pressures eventually dissipate; or (b) the “modernization trap”, in which decision makers have built strong States, unleashed dynamic economies, liberated women, tamed religious reaction, and taught their people to think critically. They then release the forces essential to the emergence of a participatory governance system. Both scenarios require ruling authorities to increase their efforts to promoting well-functioning institutional systems, developed economies and modern citizens.⁴⁸

Those two pathways might be undertaken during the post-Arab Spring era in States that have not witnessed armed conflict. However, in countries that have experienced civil war, such pathways remain difficult, given the fact that the middle class and the infrastructure that sustains that class have been decimated. Prioritization during the post-conflict phase must therefore be given to rebuilding the infrastructure that supports human capital development and provides equitable access to quality essential services, and to strengthening the rule of law and security. It is also essential that public services are protected from power-sharing arrangements that

turn the public sector into fiefdoms of former warring elites.

On the one hand, well-functioning institutional mechanisms can positively impact the socioeconomic conditions of the middle class. They can also foster inclusive development and promote private-sector initiatives. On the other hand, non-functioning institutions are likely to exacerbate tensions and stoke further conflict. In that regard, it is important to emphasize that a lack of accountability and the limited capacity of national institutions to respond to the needs of citizens were among the main causes of the Arab Spring.

In protracted conflict settings, multilateral system, donors, and international and regional organizations should prioritize strengthening the linkages among humanitarian, development and peacebuilding operations within the context of a humanitarian-development-peace “nexus”, with the collective goal of supporting essential service delivery. Linking humanitarian, development and peace efforts in programming can reduce gaps and duplications in service delivery, while effective efforts to tackle the root causes of conflict can facilitate the transition from emergency response to recovery and sustainable development.⁴⁹

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Endnotes

- 1 According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) definition, a conflict is “deemed to be active if there are at least 25 battle-related deaths per calendar year”. According to this definition, seven countries were in conflict in 2022, namely, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, the States of Palestine, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Yemen. Four countries were in conflict in 2010, namely, Iraq, Somalia, the State of Palestine and the Sudan.
- 2 World Bank, 2015.
- 3 Gelvin, James, 2012.
- 4 Kamrava, Mehran, 2014.
- 5 Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 2014.
- 6 Ghali, Amine, and others, 2012.
- 7 Kamrava, 2014.
- 8 Gerges, Fawaz, 2014.
- 9 Barany, 2011.
- 10 Bellin, Eva, 2012.
- 11 Saif, 2012.
- 12 Badawi, Ahmad, 2014.
- 13 Palik, Julia, and others, 2020.
- 14 De Juan, Alexander, 2015.
- 15 World Bank, 2022a.
- 16 Palik and others, 2020.
- 17 For a detailed discussion of this issue, see working paper No. 2 in this series.
- 18 Ianchovichina, Elena, and others, 2015.
- 19 Devarajan, Shantayanan, and Lili Mottaghi, 2016.
- 20 Sab, Randa, 2014.
- 21 Corral, Paul, and others, 2020.
- 22 Beaujouan, Juline, and Amjed Rasheed, 2020.
- 23 United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), 2020.
- 24 UNICEF, 2020.
- 25 World Bank, 2018.
- 26 World Bank, 2022a.
- 27 World Bank, 2022a.
- 28 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), n. d.
- 29 World Bank, 2022b.
- 30 Ibid.; Abi-Rached, Joelle, and Ishac Diwan, 2021.
- 31 ESCWA, 2020.
- 32 World Bank, 2022a.
- 33 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and others (2017).
- 34 ESCWA, 2020.
- 35 For further information, see <https://hum-insight.info>.
- 36 Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) 2022.
- 37 Akik, Chaza, and others, 2020.

- 38 World Bank, 2020.
- 39 Raga, Sherillyn, and others, 2021.
- 40 UNICEF, 2020.
- 41 Yousif, Bassam, and others, 2020.
- 42 World Bank, 2022a.
- 43 Raga and others, 2021.
- 44 Barsoum, Ghada, and Nada Kassem, 2019.
- 45 World Bank, 2022c.
- 46 Gobat, Jeanne, and Kristina Kostial, 2016.
- 47 Durac, Vincent, 2015.
- 48 Masoud, 2014.
- 49 ESCWA, forthcoming.



Between 2011 and 2022, people living in war-torn countries reached a total of 163 million people. Several Arab countries experienced the onset of civil wars, and many remain mired in conflict today. The situation has been exacerbated by direct foreign military interventions. Those ongoing conflicts add to the disastrous legacies of wars that took place in previous decades, and in the case of the State of Palestine, more than seven decades of occupation by Israel, including its direct effect on many aspects of life for the Palestinian population.

This paper analyses the impact of conflict on the middle class. It breaks down conflict into three phases: short-term (conflict onset), medium-term (protracted conflict) and long-term (end of hostilities and power-sharing among groups). The paper examines how each phase impacts the middle class and in what manner. Conflict ramifications in each of these phases are studied from well-being, coping strategy and governance perspectives. Recommendations are made regarding the need to increase efforts for promoting functional institutional systems during the post-conflict period, namely systems that facilitate the delivery of equitable access to essential services. In protracted conflict settings, priority should be given to strengthening the linkages among humanitarian, development and peacebuilding operations within the context of a humanitarian-development-peace “nexus”, with the collective goal of supporting essential service delivery. This will, in turn, support the survival of the middle class and prevent an increase in humanitarian aid dependency and a rise in social and political tensions.

