



Response of Households to ‘Armed’ Conflict - A Case Study of the Srinagar District

JAVAID IQBAL KHAN¹
Shahla Ayoub²
Nida Tahir³
University of Kashmir
Hazratbal Srinagar, India

Abstract:

Conflict involves situations in which two or more parties choose costly inputs that are adversely combined against one another and generate no positive externalities to third parties. (Stergios Skaperdas 2011). Violence is bound to inflict innumerable costs on micro and ultimately macro economy of regions. The case of Rwanda Genocide-1994 is a well-known example where the consequences were in terms of excess mortality and traumatization of women leading to insecurity in the region. Economists across the globe are engaged in conducting continuous research over the impacts of conflict and violence on micro as well as macro variables of the economy. One of the oldest reasons for interstate and intra-state tension in Asian continent is the curious issue of Kashmir Valley. Despite of the measures that were taken at the international level, vis-à-vis discussions, confrontations and ceasefire, no consensus has been reached either between India and Pakistan or with the people of Kashmir.

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, University of Kashmir, Hazratbal Srinagar. Email: khanjavaid.ku@gmail.com

² Postgraduate student, Department of Economics, University of Kashmir, Hazratbal Srinagar J&K 190006, Shahla.ayoub05@gmail.com

³ Postgraduate student, Department of Economics, University of Kashmir, Hazratbal Srinagar J&K 190006, nidatahir90@yahoo.in

Since 1989, this part of world has witnessed a huge amount of human rights abuses, thousands have been killed, the same number of children orphaned and an unaccounted number of young people disappeared, thus halting the security perception of people living in this zone of the globe. It is in this line of affairs that this study aims to understand the response of directly affected households and add to the literature the consequences of conflict over the security perception and the resultant displacement levels.

Key words: household, security, displacement, Srinagar, intra-state tension, Kashmir Valley

JEL Classification: D10, D74

War as a general economy no longer necessarily implies that those who have weapons oppose each other. It is more likely to imply a conflict between those who have weapons and those who have none.
(Mbembe 2001, 50)

Introduction

The unfortunate and devastating conflicts have stormed their hail on various facets of life, resulting in the shadowing of economies into darks. Experimental work on conflict is still at an early stage. It is a recent development that conflicts, turmoil and political disturbances got their effects translated in economic literatures. Following the trend, huge amounts of insights in the form of working papers and reports are now available. The devastating event of 09/11 was a trigger for such jobs, as was reflected too by the World Development Report 2011. A relevant example is also the presence of the “Bridge for Peace” page, still active on the WHO website. It bears no doubt that these practices paved a way for the study of different mechanisms with which conflict and security affect or get affected by the development processes both at the micro as well as at the macro level, but most of the reports and studies have

concerned their vision towards the macro aspects of impact of conflict. It is here that we document conflict within the framework of economic theory to study its micro effects, particularly at the household level.

One among the conflicts riding the Asian continent is the Kashmir Issue, which till now has robbed much of life, infrastructure and means of living from the lands. The present study is carried out to look into the security prospect of the Kashmir conflict on the households within a stratified sampled population of 160 households. The study is spread over five sections. Section I gives an account of the link between the conflict and economy. It discusses the impacts of violent conflicts over the various facets of an economy. Section II discusses the developmental path of conflict in the Kashmir valley. Section III presents some reviews of a selected set of relevant works. Section IV gives an insight into the objectives of the present study and the methodology employed. Section V provides the details of data and analysis. Section VI discusses the results in the form conclusions and comes up with certain suggestions.

Section I: A link between Conflict and Economy

There are economic factors that make some societies susceptible to conflict. Economic growth, economic inequalities, low national income, structure of the economy, levels of trade and policies that promote growth are associated with levels of conflict. (cf. Paul Collier 1999; Macartan Humphreys 2003)

Conflicts, whether small or large, external or internal, are very costly (cf. S. Brock Blomberg and Gregory D. Hess 2010), the darkness caused by conflicts having powerful direct repercussions on the development process. Beginning from market breakdowns, failing the institutional and socio-economic fabric, it reaches a stage of death and destruction. It leads to unemployment and loss of income owing to disruption of economic activity, destruction of infrastructure, uncertainty, increased cost of doing business, and capital flight. Furthermore, social spending is often cut to accommodate

increased military spending, and the economy undergoes structural changes. (cf. James R. Barth, Tong Li, Don McCarthy et al. 2006)

There are other indirect ravaging effects of conflict as well. Educational foundations and health infrastructure collapse during conflicts and do not recover until long after they end. Economic sectors that depend on capital and high levels of internal trade (for example, construction, finance, and manufacturing) are likely to be hit the hardest. (cf. Macartan Humphreys 2003)

Conflicts are characterized by a total breakdown of law, security and community structures, with gross human rights violations perpetrated against civilian populations. In case of conflict zones, security, both national and personal, is the first casualty. Over 90% of the population in the Acholi (and later Lango) region was displaced, and insecurity constrained the number and types of activities that individuals could resort to in order to survive. (cf. Carlos Bozzoli, Tilman Brück and Tony Muhumuza 2010).

Gun culture results into insecurity and insecurity forces mass migration. Globally, the number of persons internally displaced by conflict has steadily increased from 17 million in 1997 to 27.5 million in 2010, with 40% living in Africa (IDMC 2011). In addition to executions, disappearances, kidnapping, and abduction, three to four million have been displaced in Colombia since 1984 (ICRC 2009). Such frequencies of displacement have an impact on labour allocations, a prominent part to any production possibility. In addition, there is evidence of human capital depreciation manifested by loss of occupation at point of origin and difficulties in income generation (cf. Ibanez and Moya 2010)

Section II: Conflict in Jammu and Kashmir

Contemporary Kashmir imbroglio dates back to 1947. However a deeper understanding of its history reveals that this land, at least since the 7th century AD (except a very brief period in-between) has been ruled by alien rulers who gave

paramount importance and room to their self-interest even if it meant suffering of the entire populace⁴. In 1846, under the terms of the Treaty of Amritsar, the British sold the beautiful valley of Kashmir to the Hindu Dogra ruler, Gulab Singh⁵. When, a century later, the sub-continent was partitioned at independence in 1947 Maharaja Hari Singh, Gulab Singh's great-grandson agreed to join India. This way Hari Singh, the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, committed what has been labeled as one of the most controversial political acts of the twentieth century. He handed over control of the coveted kingdom of Jammu and Kashmir to India, despite allowing the people of Jammu and Kashmir to decide whether they would rather accede to India or the newly created Pakistan. The following day (October 27, 1947) Lord Mountbatten, the then Governor General of India, formally accepted the accession and the first contingent of Indian soldiers landed at the Srinagar airport in the morning. Meanwhile, the legality of accession of Kashmir to India led to a dispute between India and Pakistan with Kashmiris struggling in the middle. This way the Kashmir conflict remains both a struggle for land as well as for the rights of people to determine their future.

Due to the persistent reports of irregularities in 1987 J&K elections, the Kashmir conflict took the form of violent insurgency. The grievances of these insurgents according to United Nations are with the Indian government, specifically the Indian Military, which has committed human rights violations. An unacknowledged status quo, to which there appears to be a curious attachment lest any alteration causes even greater trauma to the region. The people, irrespective of class creed and sex have suffered and continue to suffer both physically and psychologically. In the crossfire of multiple

⁴For example Dogra rule, "A classic example of clash of interests between the ruler and the general population, with the ruler's self-interest taking the final call is the "Contested Instrument of Accession" where in a Hindu ruler ruling a Muslim majority entered into with India against the populist view".

⁵The treaty of Amritsar signed on March 16, 1846, by virtue of which British Government of India "made over for ever" Kashmir to Maharaja Gulab Singh and male heirs of his body in lieu of Rs 75 lakh Nanak Shahis.

objectives there remain the lives and sadly often violent deaths of men, women and children who have been caught up in a deadly war of words and weapons, which seems unending. This way the so called “paradise on earth” got transformed into the “most dangerous place on earth”.

Section III: Literature Review

Security is considered a prototypical public good and is non-rival in consumption; each citizen enjoys the full amount it, without restricting the consumption of other citizens. Furthermore, it is impossible to exclude citizens from the provision of national security. In case of conflict zones, security both national and personal is the first casualty. Even long after the official end of conflict, people might be threatened or feel threatened. Thus capturing these perceptions is important as they might explain why some choices over coping strategies are made by individuals and household in areas affected by violent conflict.

The report based on research conducted by the Amnesty International team during a visit to Srinagar in May 2010 showed that the rate of conviction for possession of unlawful weapons – one of the most common charges brought against alleged supporters or members of armed groups – is 0.5 per 100 cases in Kashmir: over 130 times lower than the national average in India. Similarly the conviction rate for attempt to murder in J&K is eight times lower than the national average, seven times lower for rioting and five times lower for arson. In contrast, the number of persons in administrative detention without trial in J&K is 14 times higher than the national average – a possible result of the monthly / quarterly “targets” or quotas of detentions apparently followed by the J&K police.

Again one more report of Amnesty (1999) reveals ‘The Jammu and Kashmir Disturbed Areas Act- 1992’ which gives powers to police in areas that the State government considers to be “disturbed”. In disturbed areas, any magistrate or police officer of a certain rank, may “fire upon or use force even to the

causing of death against any person” who is committing any act which may result in a serious breach of public order.

A well-established notion regarding conflict and insecurity is that both are knotted together in almost every conflict affected place. Another most visible impact of modern conflicts is the level of population displacement. Many of the world's refugees have fled their homeland due to armed conflict. In addition to executions, disappearances, kidnapping, and abduction, three to four million have been displaced in Colombia since 1984 (ICRC 2009). Violence, according to Moore and Shellman, is a significant motivation for migration. Engel and Ibanez have delineated the fact that in conflict areas economic incentives may also lead households to migrate, either as an ex-ante reaction to the threat of conflict, or an ex-post response to unstable economic and political conditions. Again Moore and Shellman emphasized in their studies that at the cross-country level, violence is the major push factor of forced migration flows, indicating that institutional or economic factors have a relatively small impact. One of the devastating effects of conflict is the displacement of civilians from their homes. Thus explaining and identifying changes in displacement as a result of insecurity felt during the outbreak of conflict is the focus of literature strands we reviewed over here.

However in the existing literature the linkages between violent conflicts and household response to it for example, the perception of security and displacements seems to be missing. More specifically, how the households have responded to and coped up with the sense of insecurity needs to be assessed even properly, particularly in case of Kashmir. Although huge chunk of such studies has been carried out in a number of conflict affected zones, yet to the best of our knowledge is the fact that no such study has been carried on in case of Jammu and Kashmir. It is in line with these provisions that the present study identifies and understands the perception of security and displacements of people living in Jammu and Kashmir and thus exactly forms the twin objective of this paper.

Section IV: Objectives of the study

A key objective of this study is to untwist and understand the impact of armed conflict on household security perception and displacement levels in the valley of Kashmir. As such the paper concerns to study

- a. Perception of security at household level and various steps undertaken to improve security.
- b. Level of displacement during the conflict.

Methodology:

The basis of the study is the primary data collected by the researchers in district Srinagar. The researchers, by means of a well-structured questionnaire examined the reactions of sampled households towards the ongoing conflict. In the first phase, the sampling technique used is stratified in nature. The researchers divided the Srinagar district into north, south, east and west zones. From each zone households were selected systematically and as the number of households was found adequate (160) each household was administered with the well-structured questionnaire. This gave the clear vision of what actually happened to the household and what were the respective strategies adopted by different family members across the district. The responses were recorded and later processed with SPSS. The major database in terms of research articles, academic journals and documents of eminent scholars in general and Working Papers from HICN⁶ and AMNESTY⁷ in particular have served as the secondary source of data.

⁶Households in Conflict Network-The Institute of Development Studies - at the University of Sussex - Falmer - Brighton - BN1 9RE www.hicn.org

⁷Amnesty international is a global movement of more than 3 million supporters, members and activists in more than 150 countries and territories who campaign to end grave abuses of human rights.

Section V: Data Analysis

I. Perception of Security and conflict

As a growth without development looks ugly, so a development with no sense of security to the society has no charm. People who personally witness or are victims or survivors of shooting and physical violence are well aware of the pain, suffering and trauma these generate. They understand how a death in the family has spiral effects shaping everything from emotional wellbeing to financial stability and access to credit. Shortfalls in security and justice are at the heart of poverty and underdevelopment and setbacks in meeting MDGs⁸. Economic activities have been found to be a function of a sense of security. Any absence of security and hence an interruption perform as stumbling blocks to welfare growth⁹. Thus there forms an open ground to search the factors behind the “being insecure” and the “being secure” senses, vis-à-vis looking into the coping strategies adapted by the conflict hit households.

Do you feel secure or insecure as a result of the conflict? What are the main reasons behind the feeling of insecurity?

Keeping in view the above studies, researchers generated a chart analyzing the security perception of selected households. As it is evident from the compiled literatures that conflict brings a sense of insecurity within the social fabric, the same was also proved by the household responses. During the field survey a huge number of 128 i.e. 80% households reported insecurity. A better analysis was brought out by the reasons behind the insecure feeling. One of the reasons behind insecurity was found to be the presence of military camps. This is because there was a mass flight of military personnel into the state since the onset of the conflict in order to combat the rebel groups. Although such camps should have inflicted a sense to security to the masses, the fact that anyone could be held a rebel on account of a simple mischief led to an aggravation of

⁸ Commission on Human Security (2003), Sen (2008).

⁹ Various LSMS Iraq surveys (2006).

insecure feeling. A huge number of extra judicial executions, disappearances, torture and abductions have also caused violation of human rights (Human Rights Watch). More interesting, about 27 (21.093%) households reported the higher number of female members in the family as a major reason behind the insecure feeling. Another reason put forth is the increasing unemployment which results in the increased crime rate. While people found no good opportunities during the conflict, there was a marked increase in thefts and loots. The collected responses are tabulated in Table 1.1

Table 1.1 (Reasons for feeling insecure)

Reasons for feeling insecure	Frequency n*=128	Percent
Presence of military camps	89	69.53
Presence of more females in the household	27	21.093
Increasing unemployment and crime	12	9.37
Total	128	100.0

Source: field survey;

**Only those household are included who favor the perception of insecurity*

What steps are undertaken to improve the security?

Long lasting civil wars and a post war context have generated widespread threats with far reaching and long standing repercussions on the social fabrics. In the case of Kashmir, households have usually switched to certain measures in order to increase security. More so while moving out of the homes was no less than a threat to life, people usually reduced their visits to the market places. But such a strategy halted the economic perspective of the households. The decrease in the market demand as a result of reduced visits put a check on the market supply. This caused the production sector to clip its wings; therefore people generally tied up their

hands and hence had a decreased purchasing power. Besides the prevalence of thefts, burglary and housebreaking, households strengthened their house security by steps like iron barring the windows. Meanwhile people started social organizations and increased their involvement in the communities in order to increase the security levels. The recorded responses for the steps taken by the households to increase security are presented in the Table 1.2. The tabulated data reveals that 33.8% of the households reported to have reduced their visits to market, 25.6% of the households reported to have improved the house security and 40.6% households reported to have increased their involvement in community relationships, all as steps to increase their security during the conflict.

Table 1.2 (Steps taken to increase security)

Reasons for feeling secure	Frequency N=160	Percent
Increase community relationships	65	40.6
Reduce market visits	54	33.8
Improve house security	41	25.6
Total	160	100.0

Source: field survey

II. Conflict and displacement

The most common outcome that occurs quite frequently in modern conflicts is the displacement of population. Reviewing the existing literature on displacement, it was observed that there is a clear cut positive relation between conflict and its impact on displacement of households. But a different picture was observed by researchers in case of selected households of Kashmir. During the field survey only 26 households i.e. 15% reported to have been displaced and a higher number of 136 households i.e. 85% denied any displacement during the conflict time period. An enquiry has

been made by the researchers to find out reasons behind this issue i.e. why people have not moved out of conflict zones during the outbreak of conflict?

Why did you not leave the place despite the outbreak of conflict?

One innovative aspect of this paper is the question of why people did not migrate despite the outbreak of the conflict. Justino, in 2009, worked on this issue and emphasized that household's vulnerability to poverty is one of the considerable reasons for its inability to move. It is clearly revealed by the tabulated data in Table 2.1 that despite the ongoing conflict and violence, a major portion of 44.12% of households reported poverty as a basic factor for not moving out of the conflict areas. This percentage is very high and sufficient enough to enlighten the vulnerability of people living in the valley towards deprivations and distress. 31.62% of households prefer not to migrate because of 'family responsibilities'. On an enquiry to this factor i.e. family responsibility, it was observed that displacement during conflict period has a serious impact on household welfare in terms of resultant unemployment leading to decreased purchasing power followed by failure of people to face price changes as a result of which people prefer to ignore any displacement. 16.17% of household reported 'work engagement' as a reason for not migrating from their respective places. These households believed that the productivity levels of migrants tend to be lower than those that had already been staying in the respective regions. This may cause difficulties in terms of integration of these individuals to newly adopted areas. Finally 8.09% believed illness as the basic reason for not changing their living areas. Injuries, the spread of infectious disease and increases in permanent disabilities caused by violence and conflict may result in long-term decreases in household welfare.

Table 2.1 (Reasons for no displacement)

Reasons for no displacement	Frequenc y (n**=136)	Percent
Poverty	60	44.12
Family responsibilities	43	31.62
Work engagement	22	16.17
Illness	11	08.09
Total	136	100.0

Source: field survey

***only those households to be included that faced no displacement.*

Section VI: Conclusions and suggestions

When there arises any disagreement between various actors on some agenda, issue or even on an ideology to which all of them are a part, this is believed to be the start of conflict according to most of the literary strands. Contemporary nature of conflict is based on complicated realities, either mentally projected or real. However, if an insight into the individual level is taken, the biggest effect has been the traumatization of one's peace of mind giving rise to a circular trap of insecurity. The findings of the study reveal a distinct feature of conflict, namely the fact that, despite the occurrence of conflict, most of the people (almost 80%) ignored the option of displacement and adopted various coping strategies to sustain their livelihood.

Accepted is the notion that there exists no short cut to the resolution of such an intricate conflict of Jammu and Kashmir, yet the basic purpose of the present study is to compile and provide certain remedial measures that can be implemented at ground level in order to create a pathway to reconciliation and cooperation.

First, at the global level, it suggests that preventing violence should be given much higher priority than it has now. At the moment, the MDGs that guide as well as measure

development do not even mention aspects like justice and people's security. The state should learn from the mass of evidence about what works to reduce violence.

Building of trust is the key in order to secure peace and cooperation. If the parties in conflict are unable to learn from the dynamics of conflict, failures and successes, it becomes difficult to stabilize political, economic and security relations among the parties who are in the process of resolving the conflict. Moreover, people need to act together. They need significantly more patience—a lot more.

Technical assistance in the form of new indices measuring violence and security should be provided to the policy makers so that the policies to be formulated give a greater value to humanitarian aspects and peace building programmes.

One possible solution for dealing with this issue is the effective de-centralization of political structures so as to provide the discriminated group its identity and the opportunity of fulfilling its political needs. Decentralization, if introduced effectively, can promote local participation and self-reliance and give a sense of control to marginalized groups over their affairs.

Lastly a requirement for further advances in this area of research is the need of the hour.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

_____. 2006. *Internal Displacement: Global Review on Trends and Developments in 2005*. Discussion paper, International Displacement Monitoring Centre, Geneva.

_____. 1999. "The people on war report ICRC worldwide consultation on the rules of war." International Committee of the Red Cross.

_____. 2009. "Summary report: Afghanistan, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Georgia, Haiti, Lebanon, Liberia and the Philippines. Opinion survey and in-depth research." International Committee of the Red Cross.

Barth, James R., Tong Li, Don McCarthy, Triphon Phumiwasana and Glenn Yago. 2006. "Economic Impacts of Global Terrorism: From Munich to Bali." Milken Institute.

Bozzoli, Carlos, Tilman Brück and Tony Muhumuza. 2010. "Peace Dividends? Effect of conflict reduction on activity choices."

Collier, Paul. 1999. "On the Economic Consequences of Civil War." *Oxford Economic Papers*. 51: 168-83.

Engel, Stefanie and Ana Maria Ibáñez. 2007. "Displacement due to violence in Colombia: A household-level analysis." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 55(2): 335-365.

Hess, Gregory D. 2003. "The Economic Welfare Cost of Conflict: An Empirical Assessment." CESifo Working Paper Series No. 852. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=382929>.

Humphreys, Macartan. 2003. "Economics and Violent Conflict."

Justino, Patricia. 2009. "Poverty and violent conflict: A micro-level perspective on the causes and duration of warfare." *Journal of Peace Research*. 46 (3): 315-333.

Moore, W. and Shellman, S. 2004. "Fear of Persecution: Forced Migration 1952-95." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40 (5): 723-745.

Skaperdas, Stergios. 2011. "Guns, lawyers and money: some economic consequences of costly conflict."