

# The Violent Legacy of Victimization: Post-Conflict Evidence on Asylum Seekers, Crimes and Public Policy in Switzerland

Mathieu Couttenier<sup>1</sup>    Veronica Preotu<sup>1</sup>  
Dominic Rohner<sup>2,3</sup>    Mathias Thoening<sup>2,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Geneva <sup>2</sup>University of Lausanne <sup>3</sup>CEPR

GDR,Unil, March 22, 2016

# Motivation

## Do individuals exposed to conflicts/wars become more violent?

- Escaping the War Trap (vicious cycles of violence/ poverty) is a key policy issue in development economics
- Understand individual-level channels of the perpetuation of violence for designing post-war reconstruction policies

Identification of a causal impact of past exposure to conflict on future proneness to violence is challenging:

- Disentangle individuals' background (past exposure to conflict) from war-promoting context (weak institutions; natural resources; ethnic cleavages).

# What we do

We study **Imported Violence** by exposed individuals out of their context of origin

- Violence by Asylum seekers (16+) in Switzerland over 2009-2012
- Original dataset- all violent crimes + reported nationalities
- Estimate a crime regression with past exposure to conflict on the RHS

## Data

Asylum seekers: OFM - Exhaustive administrative data with detailed information at the individual level

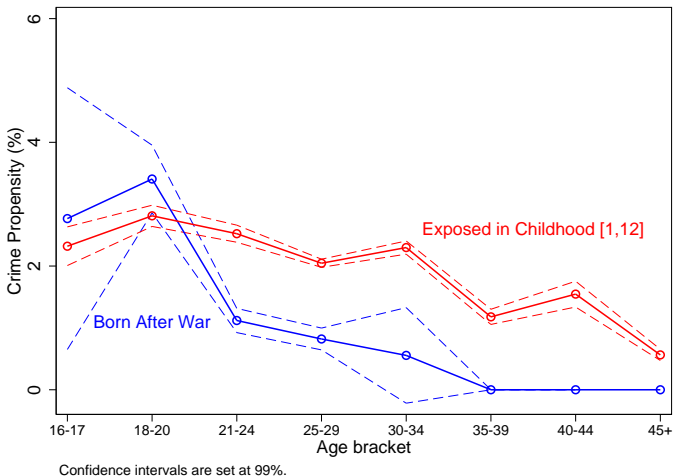
Criminality in Switzerland: OFS - Collected by local police services.

- Infractions to (federal) Penal Code. Detection, not conviction, data.
- Exhaustive data with detailed information on nationalities for **both victims and perpetrators** at the individual level.
- We are forced by the Swiss Bureau of Statistics to re-aggregate at the cohort level *Nationality × Gender × Age × Year*
- LHS variables: propensities to violent crime (murders, injuries, sexual assault, ...) or property crime (thefts, burglaries...).
- 4820 cohorts, 2009-2012, 132 nationalities of perpetrators, 14 age brackets from 16 years to 80+

Past Exposure to Violence: Civil conflicts (UCDP/PRIO) + Mass killing (Political Instability Task Force). MK events “involve the promotion, execution, and/or implied consent of sustained policies by governing elites or their agents [...] that result in the deaths of a substantial portion of a communal group or politicized non-communal group.”

# Unconditional Crime Propensity

Violent crimes, by cohort and peace/war background



# Combating the Legacy of Conflict: The Role of Policies

Make use of cross-region variations in pro-asylum policies (federal state). The “right” design of integration policies can partly or fully alleviate the risk of increased criminality for exposed individuals.

- **Open job market** = allowed to immediately apply for a job
- **No salary deduction** = no salary retained by cantonal authorities
- **Acceptation rate** = % recognized refugees among AS demands

## Quelques Pistes de Réflexion

- Retour d'expérience : la collecte des données auprès de l'OFS ainsi que les problématiques rencontrées lors de cette collecte
  - Contrainte méthodologique : Interdiction de croisement des données individuelles OFS - OFM (noms des personnes)
- Protection juridique et garantie éthique de l'institution (UNIL)

# Appendix



## Some facts on Asylum Seekers in Switzerland

- Avg stock of AS: 30'000 per year (0.4 % of Swiss pop.).
- Stringent conditions for Asylum seekers to be granted the “Political Asylum status” (permanent B permit)
  - Average processing time of the procedure of asylum request : **36 months**
  - Only 10 percent of Asylum seekers get Political asylum.

# Some facts on Asylum Seekers in Switzerland

## Cohorts of Asylum Seekers - Summary Statistics

variable (p.p.)	mean	sd	max	min
Male	56.6	49.5	100	0
Cohort Size (# individuals)	21.8	63.2	958	1
Civil Conflict & Mass Killing	84.1	36.6	100	0
Distance to last CC or MK (years)	9.6	11.9	64	0
KID [1-12]	48.3	49.9	100	0
WOMEN[1,+] (WAR. RAPE)	37.6	48.4	100	0
CP <sub>n,g,a,t</sub> (Violent Crime Propensity)	2.04	8.1	100	0

# Some facts on Asylum Seekers in Switzerland

## Age, Country of Origin and Victims

Age Class	Share	Age Class	Share	Country	Share (%)	Country	Share (%)	Victims	Share
[16-17]	3.11	[45-49]	2.94	Eritrea	13.01	Tunisia	4.78	AS	35.2
[18-20]	10.89	[50-54]	1.61	Sri Lanka	9.09	Serbia	4.33	Foreign Resid.	28.4
[21-24]	19.73	[55-59]	0.92	Nigeria	8.57	Turkey	4.26	Swiss Natives	36.4
[25-29]	24.78	[60-64]	0.57	Afghanistan	5.33	Iraq	4.15		
[30-34]	18.22	[65-69]	0.27	Somalia	5.10	Syria	3.92		
[35-39]	10.70	[70-79]	0.25						
[40-44]	6.00	[80+]	0.03						