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## **Economic External Interventions in Armed Conflict: An Empirical Analysis of Corruption Dynamics in the Post-Conflict Period.**

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**Economic External Interventions in Armed Conflict: An Empirical Analysis of  
Corruption Dynamics in the Post-Conflict Period.**

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## **Abstract**

My research delves into the correlation between economic external interventions during conflicts and the level of corruption in post-conflict settings. External interventions happening during a conflict are often overlooked as a source of corruption in the post-conflict period. Using a theoretical framework, I analyse the various factors that contribute to heightened corruption in these situations, including instability, misuse of foreign aid, and the absence of the rule of law. I hypothesize that external economic interventions in conflict-ridden countries may result in increased corruption in the post-conflict period. By investigating the connection between external financial aid and corruption, my study aims to shed new light on the dynamics of this previously overlooked relationship. Using quantitative analysis, I was able to conclude that economic foreign intervention during conflict onset increases the level of corruption in the aftermath. By better-understanding corruption in conflict-affected environments, my research emphasizes the importance of further investigation in this area, where corruption remains a persistent challenge. Corruption remains a persistent challenge in post-conflict settings, and policies to address this issue must consider the specific challenges posed by external economic interventions. By identifying the factors that contribute to corruption and the impact of external economic interventions, policymakers can develop more effective strategies for combating corruption and promoting sustainable development in conflict-affected regions.

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## Introduction

Corruption is a critical issue for societies transitioning from war to peace: when it becomes widespread, it can disrupt political and economic progress, weaken the government's capacity and legitimacy, worsen poverty, and fuel conflict-related grievances (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2010; Bolongoita, 2005). Transparency International defines corruption as “the misuse of public power for private benefits, e.g., the bribing of public officials, taking kickbacks in public procurement or embezzling public funds” (Heywood, 1997). The Corruption Perception Index (CPI) for 2022 shows that corruption levels remain stagnant in 124 countries, while the number of countries experiencing decline is on the rise (Transparency International, 2022). For example, In Guatemala, the post-conflict environment has worsened economic and political development (Rose-Ackerman, 2007). Nevertheless, there have been multiple efforts from the international community to curb the spread of corruption both pre- and post-conflict (Boucher et al., 2007; Philp, 2008; Cheng and Zaum, 2012). However, despite substantial assistance, these countries face critical challenges stemming from the effects of the destruction of economic activity and the deterioration of state capacity and national institutions sustained during conflict (Ndikumana, 2016). In addition, even though foreign powers intervene to assist countries in difficult situations, these interventions can sunder the very state they seek to resurrect (Ahmad, 2012).

Many scholars have studied corruption in post-conflict situations and its causes (e.g., Lindberg and Orjuela, 2014; Cheng and Zaum, 2012; Rose-Ackerman, 2008). In post-conflict periods there is often an intensification and entrenchment of corruption-related problems (e.g., Cheng and Zaum, 2008; Rose-Ackerman, 2008; Kartoglu-Eskisar, 2015; United States Institute of Peace, 2010). Consequently, diverse theoretical perspectives have emerged to analyse the causes of corruption in the post-conflict environment (Lindberg and Orjuela, 2014). One school of thought emphasizes that how an armed conflict is resolved determines the post-conflict

corruption landscape (e.g., Richards, 2005; Rose-Ackerman, 2008; Lindberg and Orjuela, 2014) and that the conflict duration can indirectly influence the level of corruption (Brandt et al., 2008; Mason and Fett, 1996). Another prioritizes the lack of the rule of law, a typical feature of post-conflict countries, as one of the main causes of corruption (Lyday and Stromsem, 2005; Cheng and Zaum, 2012; Haggard and Tiede, 2014; Kartoglu-Eskisar, 2015). The third strand explored the role that natural resources play in increasing corruption in the post-conflict period (e.g., Johnson, Kaufman, and Shleifer, 1997; Le Billon, 2000; Kaufman and Kraay, 2002; Leite and Weidmann, 2002; Ross, 2004a; Andreas, 2005; Cheng and Zaum, 2016). Notably, limited research explores the link between economic external interventions and corruption in the post-conflict period, a critical aspect requiring further investigation to understand better the efficiency of foreign assistance. This creates a puzzle: Do economic external interventions increase the likelihood of corruption in conflict-affected countries?

Drawing from complex literature connecting corruption and the post-conflict period (e.g., Johnson, Kaufman, and Shleifer, 1997; Le Billon, 2000; Leite and Weidmann, 2002; Kaufman and Kraay, 2002; Ross, 2004a; Andreas, 2005; Lyday and Stromsem, 2005; Richards, 2005; Rose-Ackerman, 2008; Cheng and Zaum, 2012; Lindberg and Orjuela, 2014; Haggard and Tiede, 2014; Kartoglu-Eskisar, 2015; Cheng and Zaum, 2016), this study explores four steps that build up the causal mechanism, linking the increase in corruption in post-conflict countries in the aftermath of economic external interventions during conflict. To answer the research question, I begin by explaining the role of economic interventions that in conflict situations can be easily diverted into the pockets of corrupt people, leading to an increase in corruption in the post-conflict period. (Fyzioglu, Swaroop, and Zhu, 1998; Rose-Ackerman, 2008). Second, I delve into the features of post-conflict states. For instance, states emerging from a conflict are particularly unstable and fragile due to the lack of central authority and the lack of the rule of law (Kaplan, 2008; Zoellick, 2008; Kurtoglu-Eskisar, 2015). Thirdly, I



examine why the poor governance conditions of post-conflict states lead to the misuse of foreign aid. Finally, I conclude by analysing why the misuse of economic interventions from foreign countries leads to an increase in corruption. Empirically, I will examine this link by drawing on data from the UCDP External Support Dataset (ESD) (version 18.1, 2021; Meier et al., 2023), the V-Dem dataset (version 13; Coppedge et al., 2023), the UCDP Conflict Termination dataset (version 3, 2021; Kreutz, 2021). I will analyse the correlation between the level of corruption resulting from the aftermath of economic external interventions. Combining the above-mentioned datasets, I expect that an increase in external financial aid will lead to an increase in the level of corruption.

This thesis is structured as follows. I begin my analysis with an overview of the causes of corruption in post-conflict situations and explain why there is a lack of focus on external economic interventions as a cause of post-conflict corruption. I then turn to explain the causal mechanisms that link economic external interventions during a conflict to the levels of corruption in the post-conflict period. The section that follows describes my data and research design. I conclude with a discussion of my results and their relevance to theoretical debates about foreign interventions and corruption in the aftermath of conflicts.

## **Literature review**

Corruption is a pervasive topic affecting nations regardless of their level of development or political stability, but it is especially pronounced in countries emerging from conflict (Cheng and Zaum, 2016). Though there are many similarities between the causes, processes, and impacts of corruption in other societies and those in post-conflict settings, post-conflict conditions frequently lead to the escalation and entrenchment of corruption-related issues (Lindberg and Orjuela, 2014). The dynamics of corruption in post-conflict societies are complex, but three distinct strands can be identified.

First, some scholars argue that how an armed conflict is resolved determines the post-conflict corruption landscape (e.g., Richards, 2005; Rose-Ackerman, 2008; Lindberg and Orjuela, 2014) and that the conflict duration can indirectly influence the level of corruption. For instance, Jabbi and Kpaka (2007) show that in the case of an old regime continuing in power after the conflict ends, such as in the case of Sierra Leone, state institutions are carried over as well as old patterns of corruption. Other scenarios can be those in which a peace agreement is reached, there has been a ceasefire, the government side or the non-state won, or one of the actors ceases to exist. For instance, Cheng and Zaum (2016) discuss that conflicts ending in a decisive military victory should lead to less corruption compared to those in which the incumbent government prevails. Moreover, they also found that if the opposition is victorious and takes control, the level of corruption should decline in the post-conflict period (Cheng and Zaum, 2016: 464-465). Furthermore, grievances along ethnic lines developed pre- or during conflict can affect the conflict's resolution and translate into the post-conflict period, increasing corruption (UNDP, 2010): for example, Mauro (1995) explains that economic grievances can result from a negative impact of corruption on economic growth. In addition, Brandt et al. (2008) and Mason and Fett (1996) point out that the conflict duration affects the conflict outcome: the longer a war lasts, the more likely it is that there is a negotiated settlement. Consequently, the level of corruption in the post-conflict period is directly influenced by the conflict termination and indirectly by the conflict duration.

Second, some scholars link the lack of the rule of law, a typical feature of post-conflict countries, as one of the main causes of corruption. Some forms of corruption, prevalent in most post-conflict settings, have an impact on the order, calibre, and effectiveness of the rule of law (Lyday and Stromsem, 2005) and vice versa, low levels of the rule of law can allow corruption to flourish (Kartoglu-Eskisar, 2015). Lyday and Stromsen (2005) put evidence on the fact that corruption in the post-conflict period flourishes because of the unchecked environments that

work as the perfect soil for spoilers with strong incentives and means to destabilise and discredit new governments. Because the rule of law can break down not because of the abuse of executive power but because of the collapse of the central authority (Haggard and Tiede, 2014), therefore leading to corruption, Cheng and Zaum (2012) argue that while corruption might be tolerated in the short term, the foundations for the long-term development of state institutions and the rule of law are undermined as the capacity and legitimacy of the state suffer damage. As a result, in post-conflict states, poor legal conditions, weak, underfunded, and inefficient judiciaries, as well as security challenges, create an environment where both war-related human rights abuses and corruption can flourish without consequences (O'Donnel, 2006). Although Haggard and Tiede (2014) focus their analysis on the rule of law in the post-conflict setting without considering the corruption factor, it is relevant to notice their main finding: in countries affected by civil war, there is not a striking difference between the pre-, during and post-conflict level of rule of law. This means, in their opinion, that even if countries improve their rule of law in the post-conflict period, other factors are not influenced by it, such as the level of corruption.

Third, a group of scholars explored the role that natural resources play in increasing corruption in the post-conflict period (e.g., Johnson, Kaufman, and Shleifer, 1997; Le Billon, 2000; Kaufman and Kraay, 2002; Leite and Weidmann, 2002; Ross, 2004a; Andreas, 2005; Cheng and Zaum, 2016). Natural resources are an incredibly valuable asset in the post-conflict period because of the substantial rent that can be extracted from them (Soares de Oliveira, 2007; Gillies, 2010; Cheng and Zaum, 2016), therefore making them an important medium for corrupted activities. Johnson, Kaufman, and Shleifer (1997) and Kaufman and Kraay (2002) explore the domestic aspect of this relationship: when state revenues are diverted by corruption, the population is lacking in public services and development projects. Therefore, corruption reduces economic growth (Kaufman and Kraay, 2002) and reduces private sector development

projects (Johnson, Kaufman, and Shleifer, 1997). For instance, Le Billon (2000) describes how the timber industry in Cambodia became politicized during the post-conflict period. Instead, Le Billon (2000), Andreas (2005), and Pugh (2007) focus on the international aspect: most of the demand for commodities comes from outside (Cheng and Zaum, 2016) and international policy choices could create opportunities for corruption (Pugh, 2007). For instance, according to Andreas (2005), corrupt practices have been made more prevalent by the application of sanctions on internationally traded commodities. While also other studies (e.g., Leite and Weidmann, 2002) have found that resource wealth and resource dependence are positively correlated with an increase in corruption level in the post-conflict period, Le Billon (2000) point out different factors linked to natural resources that make the post-conflict environment prone to corruption, such as the extractor sector having a high level discretionary political control or the blurring of public, shareholders, and personal interest.

Many scholars (e.g., Le Billon, 2003; O'Donnel, 2006; Jabbi and Kpaka, 2007; Rose-Ackerman, 2008; Cheng and Zaum, 2012; Lindberg and Orjuela, 2014; Haggard and Tiede, 2014; Kartoglu-Eskisar, 2015) have tried to address the causes and consequences of corruption in the post-conflict period. However, one factor that is often overlooked as a source of corruption is that of external intervention. Those who have examined it failed to consider foreign interventions happening during the conflict as a source of corruption. For example, Cheng and Zaum (2012), Philp (2008), Rose-Ackerman (2008), and Lohaus and Bussmann (2020) largely discuss this topic but consider exclusively external interventions in the aftermath of a conflict and not the conflict onset. In addition, Lohaus and Bussmann (2020), while exploring the effects of armed conflict on corruption, include in their discussion the effect of external actors on corruption. Their testing though, failed to reach statistical significance. Furthermore, other scholars (e.g., Menard and Weill, 2016; Krasniqi and Demukaj, 2021) discuss the correlation between external intervention and corruption but limit their study area

to less developed countries that do not necessarily involve conflict scenarios. For instance, Krasniqi and Emukaj (2021) discuss how foreign aid influences corruption. Although they focus only on less developed countries, they find no significant impact of external interventions on corruption.

In summary, the scholars previously mentioned contributed to the literature review on corruption in post-conflict situations. However, they overlooked the role of external intervention during a conflict as a source of corruption in the post-conflict period. Moreover, most studies that examine foreign intervention tend to be qualitative and focused on external intervention in the post-conflict period (e.g., Rose-Ackerman, 2008; Phil, 2008; Cheng and Zaum, 2012; Kartoglu-Eskisar, 2015). In addition, those who use quantitative analysis do not adequately consider external intervention, treating it only as a control variable that fails to reach statistical significance (e.g., Lohaus and Bussmann, 2020). Therefore, I will conduct my analysis focusing on the role that economic external interventions in conflict onset play in shaping corruption in the post-conflict period. In addition, as many studies have been conducted qualitatively, I will approach my research from a quantitative standpoint.

## **Theory**

Drawing on a rich literature (e.g., Le Billon, 2003; O'Donnel, 2006; Jabbi and Kpaka, 2007; Philp, 2008; Rose-Ackerman, 2008; Cheng and Zaum, 2012; Lindberg and Orjuela, 2014; Haggard and Tiede, 2014; Kartoglu-Eskisar, 2015; Menard and Weill, 2016; Lohaus and Bussmann, 2020; Krasniqi and Demukaj, 2021) on the dynamics of corruption after conflict, I propose four steps that build up my causal mechanism, linking the increase in corruption in post-conflict countries in the aftermath of economic external interventions during conflict.

First, while a large part of external interventions happens in the aftermath of conflict to prevent a new outbreak of the conflict, a growing number of external interventions operate

during conflicts to curb the potential spread of the conflict (Le Billon, 2008). Specifically, economic interventions, which might take the form of severe economic penalties or positive conditionality, fall somewhere between diplomatic and military instruments (Irrera, n.d.). Economic external interventions can assume different forms, such as foreign funds, fiscal reform and management, and trade programs (Collier, 2009; Kartoglu-Eskisar, 2015). For instance, foreign funds – known as economic resources allocated to the recipient government – can take different forms, such as grants that do not require repayment, concessional loans that can be stretched over time, or technical assistance that does not directly require pecuniary elements (Collier, 2009; Kartoglu-Eskisar, 2015). Nevertheless, economic external support could also create some side effects. Because of the country's instability and fragility, external interventions acting during a conflict are short-term solutions, oriented to provide immediate assistance to the conflicting state (Le Billon, 2008). This could undermine the capacity and independence of conflict-affected societies (Maley, 2006; Easterly, 2008) and create even worse conditions in the post-conflict period: for example, in Somalia, some projects seek to reduce dependence on international assistance (Leader and Colenso, 2005). Furthermore, countries that have been long-term recipients of foreign assistance, have become increasingly dependent on aid, such as the case of Sub-Saharan Africa (Maipose, 2000). As a result, even after a conflict has ended and third parties that intervened leave the country, the challenge of building a stable society seems often insurmountable (Fiedler and Mroß, 2017).

Second, what external interventions usually leave behind when the conflict is over are post-conflict states that are often unstable and fragile (Lyday and Stromsem, 2005; Haggard and Tiede, 2014). This happens because they often have no, or a very weak administrative infrastructure and they are often unable to provide basic public goods and services (Kurtoglu-Eskisar, 2015). At the same time, states coming out of a conflict often lack functioning institutions and are recognized by a limited application of the rule of law (Kaplan, 2008;

Zoellick, 2008). Usually, post-conflict governments are typically transitional, weak, and have varying levels of legitimacy and efficiency (Cheng and Zaum, 2008). As a result, societal structures are characterised by low political will and governments formed after conflicts are often known for poor transparency and lack of accountability (Cheng and Zaum, 2008; Lewis and Sagnayeva, 2020). For example, after years of conflict, reconstruction efforts in Rwanda depended on restoring governance and reconstituting government (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA] and UNDP, 2007). Otherwise, in the absence of a strong government, the country would be left in poor governance conditions that would eventually lead to other problems, such as the collapse of the state, the exacerbation of hostilities among ethnic groups, or problems strictly related to reconstruction efforts, such as the misuse of foreign aid (UNDP, 1997).

Third, poor governance conditions in post-conflict countries that experienced economic intervention could lead to the misuse of foreign aid (Rahman and Thai, 1991; Maipose, 2000). In a system where the rule of law is absent, there is little transparency in government operations (Maipose, 2000). That is because the rule of law implies a system based on rules that are approved by authorities and justifiable in court (Gould, 1979), missing features in the post-conflict environment. As a result, if there is no system based on rules or established procedures, or if laws and regulations controlling the conduct of spending management are not implemented, aid may be misused or diverted (Maipose, 2000). Thus, in a system where the rule of law is lacking, aid, especially in the form of funding, will be easily misused. This happens because there is a rapid inflow of a large amount of funds that usually cannot be fully absorbed immediately (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004b). That is, the amount of money brought in because of external interventions is so large relative to the local economy that there is more aid money than the capacity to absorb it (Cheng and Zaum, 2012). As a result, the excess of money that cannot be absorbed will be misspent it is widely known that aid is often associated with

bureaucratic irregularities such as bribery, extortion, expropriation, favouritism, nepotism, and patronage, whether directly or indirectly (Williams, 1987). Therefore, the funding that should be implemented into development programs will be instead diverted by greed and the desire to survive and get ahead in a broken system (United States Institute of Peace, 2010). For instance, in 1995 alone, the medical aid scheme in South Africa was defrauded by 2000 police officers (Lodge, 1998). As a consequence, the heavy influx of aid, along with economic instability and resource diversion, may lead to poor management of the public sector, resulting in corrupt practices (Maipose, 2000).

Fourth, the misuse of foreign aid received during a conflict could exacerbate tendencies for corruption in post-conflict societies (Kurtoglu-Eskisar and Komsuoglu, 2015). Aid can be easily diverted for unintended purposes, leaving fewer resources for the originally intended sector (Fyzioglu, Swaroop, and Zhu, 1998). Because of the typical features of post-conflict societies, such as poor governance and a lack of institutions, parties, as well as other actors, are either attracted to some form of aid because it is easy to exploit (Grossman, 1992; Azam, 1995) or because its distribution channels and disbursement points can be threatened (Luttwak, 1999; Addison et al., 2002; Collier and Hoeffler, 2002a; Blouin and Pallage, 2008; Findley et al. 2011). For instance, financial aid may attract local players involved in corrupt activities who seek to enrich themselves with illicit spoils offered by donors (Kurtoglu-Eskisar, 2015). Therefore, aid is not used as a form of development but for private gain: parties can exploit aid through theft and looting, and local elites interested in maintaining violence can benefit from corruption or unfair business opportunities (Anderson, 1999; Webersik, 2006; Maren, 2009). Moreover, because of the excess of money from foreign funding, these funds could be diverted into the pockets of the powerful with some trickling down to the general population to keep them quiet (Rose-Ackerman, 2012).



Based on this logic, I have formulated the following hypothesis:

Economic external interventions during conflict often increase the level of corruption in post-conflict countries.

## **Methodology**

In this analysis of economic external intervention's influence on corruption in conflict-affected countries, I use data on countries that experienced at least one conflict between 1975 and 2017. I will examine this link by drawing on data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), External Support Dataset (ESD) (version 18.1, 2021; Meier et al., 2023), the V-Dem dataset (version 13; Coppedge et al., 2023), the UCDP Conflict Termination dataset (version 3, 2021; Kreutz, 2021), resulting in a dataset of 42 years consisting of 93 countries, reported in Table 1. The unit of analysis is country-year.

Table 1. Country sample

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Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, China, Colombia, Comoros, Croatia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Kenya, Laos, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Moldova, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, South Yemen, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syria, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago,

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Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

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*Dependent variable: corruption*

The dependent variable is the level of corruption in a post-conflict country. Considering the nature of the phenomenon, corruption is difficult to measure (Treisman, 2007; Rohwer, 2009; Heywood and Rose, 2014). To measure it, I rely on data coming from the V-Dem dataset (version 13; Coppedge et al., 2023). The overall corruption variable, ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values signifying higher levels of corruption (McMann et al., 2016). The corruption index distinguishes between executive, legislative, and judicial corruption by measuring six forms spanning several polity domains and levels. Within the executive realm, the measures also distinguish between corruption mostly about bribery and corruption due to embezzlement (McMann et al., 2016). To account for the level of corruption only in the post-conflict period, I combined the dependent variable with the variable “*Conflict termination*” taken from the UCDP Conflict Termination dataset (version 3, 2021; Kreutz, 2021), which gives information on whether a conflict is inactive or not. If the conflict is inactive the following year(s), the variable is coded “1” and “0” if otherwise. Therefore, I take into consideration only those observations in which the conflict is inactive. Consequently, combining the corruption index only in those situations in which the conflict is inactive, allows me to consider only the post-conflict observations.

*Independent variable: external intervention*

The independent variable is economic external intervention during a conflict. To measure it I rely on data from the UCDP External Support dataset (Meier, 2022: 6). Although I am using a new data source, I follow the definition of economic external intervention as “economic

engagement by outside actors, including multilateral organizations, through large-scale loans, development projects, or foreign aid, such as ongoing budget support, control of finances, or management of the state's economic policy, creating economic dependency" (Haken, 2022). To measure economic external support, the variable is coded "1" if support was provided. Otherwise, the observation is coded "0" (Meier, 2022: 9).

### *Control variables*

To account for potential confounding variables and understand how the levels of corruption in post-conflict countries might be affected by other variables, I include a variety of control variables that I expect to be related to corruption so that omitting them might bias my results.

First, I will account for how the conflict ended (*Conflict outcome*). As Rose-Ackerman (2008), Lindberg and Orjuela (2014), and Richards (2005) argue, how an armed conflict ends, and the nature of the peace accord determines the post-conflict corruption landscape. The outcomes are based on the final year of activity and the first year of non-activity (Kreutz, 2021). Based on the UCDP Conflict Termination dataset (version 3, 2021; Kreutz, 2021), I created a dichotomous variable for whether the last armed conflict ended with a peace agreement, coded "1", with a ceasefire agreement, coded "2", with a victory from the side of the government, coded "3", with a victory from the side of the non-state actor, coded "4", with a low activity victory – meaning less than 25 battle-death –, coded "5", or if the actor ceases to exist, coded "6" (Kreutz, 2021).

Second, to account for conflict duration (*Conflict duration* in the dataset), I include the years a conflict lasted. Conflict duration can influence corruption, as argued by Brandt et al. (2008) and Mason and Fett (1996). They point out that the longer a war lasts, the more likely it is that there is a negotiated settlement. Therefore, to control for conflict duration, I used the

UCDP Conflict Termination dataset (version 3, 2021; Kreutz, 2021), and counted the number of years a conflict lasted. This variable ranges from 1 to 40.

Third, I include a measure of the rule of law. Low levels of the rule of law, a typical feature of post-conflict countries, can allow corruption to flourish because of poor governance and the absence of governmental structure (Maipose, 2000). To account for this, I use the V-Dem dataset (version 13; Coppedge et al., 2023) and I will use the Rule of Law index (*Rule of Law* in the dataset), which measures the degree to which the government operates under the rule of law, including transparency, independence, predictability, impartiality, and equality, and the degree to which its actions comply with the law (Pemstein et al., 2023). The variable ranges from 0 to 1, where values close to 1 mean high levels of the rule of law.

Fourth, to account for the impact of natural resources on corruption in the post-conflict period, I include the real value of a country's petroleum, coal, natural gas, and metal production (Haber and Menaldo, 2011). Natural resources are an incredibly valuable asset in the post-conflict period because of the substantial rent that can be extracted from them (Soares de Oliveira, 2007; Gillies, 2010; Cheng and Zaum, 2016), therefore making them an important medium for corrupted activities. To control for natural resources, I used the V-Dem dataset (version 13; Coppedge et al., 2023). The variable ranges from 0 to 35040.67.

Additionally, I include a variety of controlled variables that are commonly used in the armed conflict literature (e.g., Blattman and Miguel, 2009; Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Sambanis, 2004). These measures include for example the GDP per capita, the population size, and the level of democracy. These variables are taken from the V-Dem dataset (version 13; Coppedge et al., 2023). The GDP per capita ranges from 0.64 to 58.46. The population size is between 381033 and 1324655000, considered the de facto definition of population, which counts all residents regardless of legal status or citizenship (World Bank, 2022). The level of democracy is described in the dataset as the index of democratization, formed by the competition and the

participation variables and then dividing the outcome by 100 (Vanhanen, 2019). It ranges from 0 to 42.

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of all the considered variables. Because I consider the corruption index only when the conflict is over, the size of the observations has been reduced. In total, 346 observations are present in the dataset. The mean value for the level of corruption in the post-conflict period is 0.64 with a standard deviation of 0.23. Looking at the economic external intervention, the mean value is 0.25 and the standard deviation is 0.43. The rule of law index has a mean value of 0.34 and a standard deviation of 0.23, while the conflict outcome variable has a mean value of 3.6 and a standard deviation of 1.54. The mean value for the conflict duration is 10.71 years and a standard deviation of 13.03. The mean for the natural resources variable is 546.71, with a standard deviation of 3193.73. The GDP per capita shows a mean value of 5.88 and a standard deviation of 7.54. while the population size has a mean value of 110633180 and a standard deviation of 275459490, the level of democracy shows a mean value of 9 and a standard deviation of 9.9.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

<b>Variables</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Corruption	346	0.64	0.23	0	1
Economic External Intervention	346	0.25	0.43	0	1
Rule of law Index	346	0.34	0.23	0	1
Conflict Outcome	346	3.6	1.54	1	6
Conflict Duration (in years)	346	10.71	13.03	0	42
Natural Resources	247	546.71	3193.73	0	35040.67
GDP per capita	346	5.88	7.54	0.64	58.46
Population Size	335	110633180	275459490	381033	1324655000

Level of Democracy	334	9	9.9	0	42
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Before analysing the results, I checked the assumption for the beta regression conducted. I rigorously examined the assumptions for the beta regression model to ensure the validity and reliability of the results. Distributional assumptions, link function appropriateness, homoscedasticity, and independence of observations have been thoroughly assessed through diagnostic plots, statistical tests, and sensitivity analyses, affirming the model's robustness. Additionally, I carefully assessed the multicollinearity among predictor variables to guarantee that the beta regression model's estimates remain stable and unbiased, affirming the reliability of the statistical inferences drawn from the analysis. By running the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) model, I tested the multicollinearity of the considered regression model. The VIF values are all well below 10 and the tolerance statistics are all well above 0.2. Also, the average VIF is relatively close to 1. Based on these measures it can be safely concluded that there is no collinearity within the data.

Because a dataset with all the variables that I analysed does not exist yet, I merged three different datasets, namely the V-Dem dataset (version 13; Coppedge et al., 2023), the UCDP Conflict Termination dataset (version 3, 2021; Kreutz, 2021), and the UCDP External Support Dataset (ESD) (version 18.1, 2021; Meier et al., 2023). To merge the datasets, I standardized the country names and combined them based on country, year, and conflict ID.

## Results

Because my dependent variable ranges from 0 to 1, I use a Beta regression analysis. The Beta regression was developed in the early 2000s by Kieschnick and McCullough (2003) and Ferrari and Cribari-Neto (2004). This kind of regression suits better my analysis because it is designed to treat dependent variables that are bounded between 0 and 1. The results can be found in

Table 3. I developed three models to better grasp the influence of the economic external intervention on corruption, adding a variety of controlled variables. In the first model, I include only the dependent variable and the independent variable. In the second, I included all the controlled variables explained in the section above. In the last model, I added other two variables to understand if an increase in the level of corruption differs before and after the intervention.

My primary empirical results appear in Table 3, Model 1. In Model 1, I analyse the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable: I find strong support for my hypothesis that economic external interventions are correlated with an increased level of corruption in the post-conflict period ( $b = 0.117$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ). Substantively, if a typical country were to receive a boost in economic external intervention during a period of conflict, the likelihood of experiencing a surge in corruption in the post-conflict period would increase by almost twofold. This means that external efforts to stabilize a country's economy during a conflict may inadvertently lead to an increase in corrupt activities after the conflict has ended (e.g., Kartoglu-Eskisar, 2015).

In Model 2, I add a list of controlled variables that I believe can influence both the economic external intervention's impact and the level of corruption. As seen in Model 1, economic external intervention remains significant. Therefore, there is strong support for the hypothesis that economic external interventions are correlated with an increased level of corruption in the post-conflict period ( $b = 0.117$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ). Turning to other determinants of corruption in the post-conflict period, I find that the rule of law index, natural resources, GDP per capita, and the level of democracy are well all associated with a higher risk of an increase in post-conflict corruption. As expected, the rule of law index resulted as statistically highly significant ( $b = 0.232$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ). This is because, as seen before, corruption in the post-conflict period flourishes because of unchecked environments (Lyday and Stromsen, 2005). In the same

way, natural resources ( $b = 0.00002$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ) also play an important role in shaping corruption in the post-conflict period: natural resources are an incredibly valuable asset in the post-conflict period because of the substantial rent that can be extracted from them (Soares de Oliveira, 2007; Gillies, 2010; Cheng and Zaum, 2016). Both GDP per capita ( $b = 0.010$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ) and the level of democracy ( $b = 0.006$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ) are statistically significant: low levels of corruption are associated both with high levels of economic freedom and with stronger democracies (Sandholtz and Koetzle, 2000; Blake and Martin, 2002; Rose-Ackerman, 2008). Looking at the variable relative to the conflict outcome when the non-governmental side is victorious, the result is also significant ( $b = 0.162$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ). This proves the argument of Cheng and Zaum (2016: 464-465): if the opposition is victorious and takes control, the level of corruption should decline in the post-conflict period. Contrariwise, I find that the presence of other controls, other conflict outcomes, conflict duration, and population size have no apparent or little effect, contrasting the results that Brandt et al. (2008) and Mason and Fett (1996) found.

In Model 3, I added two variables, respectively *First Year of Conflict* and *External Support*. As seen in Model 1 and Model 2, economic external intervention remains significant. Therefore, there is strong evidence to support the hypothesis that economic external interventions are linked to an increase in corruption during post-conflict periods ( $b = 0.117$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). I add the variable concerning the first year of conflict to understand the incidence of economic external interventions considering the levels of corruption during the first year of conflict compared to the last year of conflict. The external support variable comprehends all the observations in which external support was provided (Meier et al., 2022). I do so to understand if any other kind of support that is not considered economic can influence both the levels of corruption and the economic external intervention. The former variable does not reach statistical significance while the latter does. This means that on one side, the level of corruption during the first year of conflict compared to the last year of conflict does not experience a



significant change while on the other, external interventions during a conflict are on average likely to influence the level of corruption in the post-conflict period even when not strictly economic.

Table 3. Beta regression results

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>
Economic External Intervention	0.273** (0.117)	0.215** (0.107)	0.321*** (0.117)
Ceasefire		0.002 (0.154)	-0.007 (0.153)
Victory form side A		-0.090 (0.142)	-0.122 (0.142)
Victory from side B		-0.341** (0.162)	-0.353** (0.161)
Low activity		-0.195 (0.138)	-0.217 (0.137)
Actor ceases to exist		-0.255 (0.290)	-0.325 (0.290)
Conflict duration		0.004 (0.003)	0.006* (0.004)
Rule of law		-3.417*** (0.232)	-3.430 *** (0.230)
Natural resources		0.00005*** (0.00002)	0.0001*** (0.00002)
GDP per capita		-0.066*** (0.010)	-0.066*** (0.010)
Population size		-0.000* (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Level of democracy		0.044*** (0.006)	0.043*** (0.006)
First year of conflict			0.075 (0.085)
External support			-0.211** (0.099)

Constant	0.457*** (0.059)	1.703*** (0.150)	1.773*** (0.163)
N	346	239	239
R-squared	0.017	0.628	0.635
Log Likelihood	56.334	152.224	154.828

*Notes:* reported are coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses.

Level of significance: \*\*\*p < .01; \*\*p < .05; \*p < 1

By analysing the three models, it is clear that my main hypothesis is accepted. Overall, the progression from a univariate model to a more comprehensive model underscores the importance of considering a broader array of factors in understanding corruption dynamics. The consistent significance of the economic external intervention variable across models emphasizes its role in shaping corruption levels. While the models exhibit improved fit and explanatory power with the inclusion of additional variables, cautious interpretation and consideration of theoretical relevance remain crucial in informing policy and future research on corruption.

## Conclusion

This research contributes to the existing literature because I explored how external economic interventions during a conflict can influence corruption levels in the post-conflict period. Even though different research has already been conducted on corruption in the post-conflict period, most of the scholars failed to address the role of economic external interventions as the source of corruption in the aftermath of conflict. Therefore, my research aims to fill the gap in the armed conflict literature concerning both foreign interventions and corruption.

Theoretically, I argue that economic external interventions happening during a conflict will increase the level of post-conflict corruption. I do so by analysing the steps that build up

my causal mechanism: starting from explaining the role of economic external interventions during a conflict, I then analyse the characteristics of post-conflict countries. The typical feature that countries in the aftermath of war often present, will lead those countries to experience poor governance and lack of other essential governmental structures. As a result of poor societal and governmental structure, those countries will experience an increase in corruption, resulting from a misuse of foreign aid. Empirically, to develop my research I conducted a beta regression. The results confirm my hypothesis: economic external interventions during a conflict can lead to an increase in the level of corruption in the post-conflict period.

From a research agenda perspective, further research should focus more on how the rule of law influences the levels of corruption in the post-conflict period and what the practical solutions to apply to post-conflict countries could be to mitigate the flourishing of corrupted practices. It could be further investigated how different levels of the rule of law affect corruption and how that interaction attracts or pushes away international aid. Moreover, future studies could focus on what kind of intervention is more likely to increase corruption in the post-conflict period. In this research, I focused on economic interventions but from my analysis, it can be seen that other types of interventions could lead to corruption. For instance, in Model 3, it can be seen that the variable for external support reached statistical significance ( $b = 0.099$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ).

While conducting this research, I have encountered two main limitations. Because I had to merge different datasets, I had to conduct my analysis by limiting the country sample only to those countries that all the datasets had in common. Therefore, some countries that could be crucial for the whole analysis might have been left out because of incompatibility with one of the other datasets. Furthermore, it should be interesting to understand if using a different corruption index could improve the model or result in different significant insights. For

instance, the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) created by Transparency International, or the World Governance Indicators dataset provided by the World Bank could provide a different perspective although they are not designed to allow for longitudinal comparisons (Lohaus and Bussman, 2020).

Corruption in post-conflict situations is a serious problem that needs to be addressed to allow those countries that have been afflicted by conflicts to restore their governance and proceed to rebuild institutions. By tracking changes in the rule of law, policymakers and civil society organizations can identify areas for improvement and develop strategies to prevent corruption (e.g., Le Billon, 2008; Cheng and Zaum, 2012; Zürcher, 2012). Moreover, this research offers a significant contribution to the policy landscape by providing insights into effective international interventions in post-conflict settings. By emphasizing the potential for economic external interventions to increase corruption, policymakers can develop strategies to mitigate these negative consequences and promote sustainable development and governance reforms. The findings of this research can be used to inform evidence-based policies aimed at reducing corruption in fragile post-conflict environments, ultimately leading to more effective and equitable outcomes for all stakeholders.

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