

Climate change increases risk of civil war in Africa

Armed conflict within nations has had disastrous humanitarian consequences throughout much of the world. There are strong historical linkages between civil war and temperature in Africa, with warmer years leading to significant increases in the likelihood of war. When combined with climate model projections of future temperature trends, this historical response to temperature suggests a roughly 54% increase in armed conflict incidence by 2030, or an additional 393,000 battle deaths if future wars are as deadly as recent wars, the Voice of Russia reports.

Most nations have experienced an internal armed conflict since 1960. Yet while civil war is central to many nations' development, it has stood at the periphery of economics research and teaching. The past decade has witnessed a long overdue explosion of research into war's causes and consequences.

A rise of as little as 1C could make civil conflict in sub-Saharan Africa more than 50 per cent more likely, according to the study.

Marshall Burke, a University of California economist and the study's lead author, said: "Our study finds that climate change could increase the risk of African civil war by over 50 percent in 2030 relative to 1990, with huge potential costs to human livelihoods."

Small changes to temperature will affect crop growth, and most of sub-Saharan Africa's poor rely on agriculture for their livelihood.

Edward Miguel, professor of economics at UC Berkeley, said: "When temperatures rise, the livelihoods of many in Africa suffer greatly, and the disadvantaged become more likely to take up arms."

The researchers found that, between 1980 and 2002, civil wars were much more likely in warmer years. In years that were one degree above average, the risk of conflict rose by nearly 50 per cent.

The study suggested that a one-degree rise could translate to a 55 per cent risk increase by 2030, which in turn would lead to 390,000 deaths in combat, assuming future wars are as deadly as recent ones.

The researchers have urged governments in Africa and worldwide to hasten and expand policies to help the continent adapt to the effects of climate change.

Millions of people have died in Africa in civil wars in the last decade, including more than 5.4 million in the Democratic Republic of Congo alone.

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