

Aid assistance and aid conditionalities

Aid is used directly to address conflict through a range of causal mechanisms. Aid can support the legitimacy of government, and so support stability, by strengthening institutions, improving governance, and a “hearts and minds” approach of providing public services. However, aid projects are usually concentrated around the capital, whereas conflict occurs in more outlying areas.

The evidence suggests that in general aid is not effective in reducing conflict. The four included studies, and the one narrative review, conclude there are adverse effects. The overall effect size for all studies is a small, adverse effect.

There is heterogeneity by type of aid and context. Military aid increases conflict. Aid is more likely to be more effective in relatively stable environments, but more likely to fuel it in unstable settings when combatants may seize aid, or attack aid-supported facilities. One study reports that “easily lootable aid” is associated with higher civilian fatalities. Also,

In contrast, withholding aid is effective in persuading governments to comply with the condition which has triggered the sanctions – such as democratic transition. However, this effect weakens over time.

Table 5 - Effect of Aid assistance and conditionalities

Outcome sub-domain	Effect size	No. of studies	No. of effect sizes
Diplomatic relations	0.347	1	1
Economic security	0.052	1	11
Nature and scale of violence and atrocities	-0.018	4	35