

Conflict Exposure and Childhood Human Capital Outcomes

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Abstract/Summary

It is well-documented that early life outcomes can have lasting impacts during adulthood. This paper investigates two of the main channels - childhood health and schooling outcomes - through which the Eritrean-Ethiopian war may have negative intergenerational economic impacts. Using unique child level panel data from Ethiopia, identification of the effect is based on a difference-in-difference approach when both old and young children have the same average ages after controlling for observable household and child level time-variant characteristics. The results show that exposed children have about a third of a standard deviation lower height-for-age z-scores. In addition, exposed children are likely to complete fewer grades, less likely to be enrolled in school, and more likely to exhibit reading problems. These are disconcerting findings, as early life outcomes can have lasting impacts during adulthood. Future research that focuses on mechanisms by which war affects children may improve the design of appropriate policy on how to target and support children confronted with war.

Contributions

- 1 Evidence on the impact of war on a range of childhood human capital outcomes: height (stunting), grade completion, school enrolment, and reading ability.
- 2 Exploits panel data of old and young cohorts (born before and after the war) when they are exactly the same average age.
- 3 Identify the causal effect of Ethiopian-Eritrean war using a sample of children from Ethiopia.

Identification/Methods

- Exposure to war varies across time and geographic location.
- Difference-in-difference method for same-old children

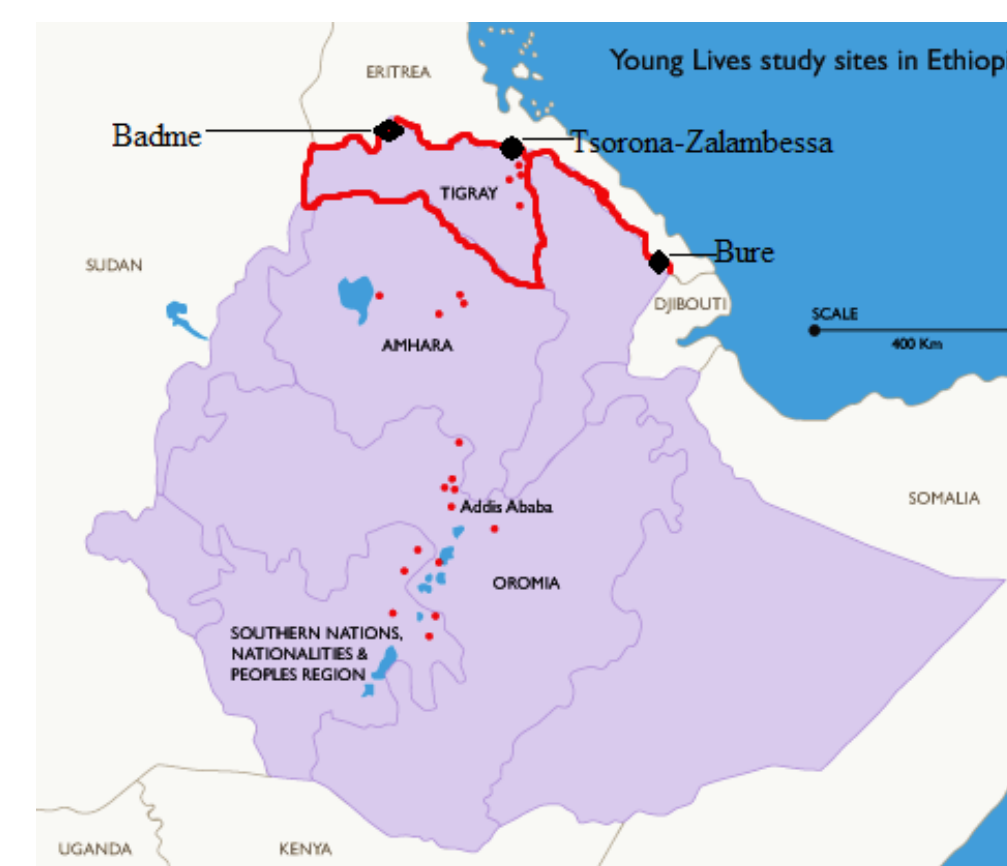


Figure 1: The Ethiopian map with Young Lives data points approximately

Key Findings

War exposed children are:

- more likely to be stunted by a third standard deviation
- less likely to be enrolled in primary school
- more likely to complete fewer grades
- less likely to be proficient in their reading ability

Results

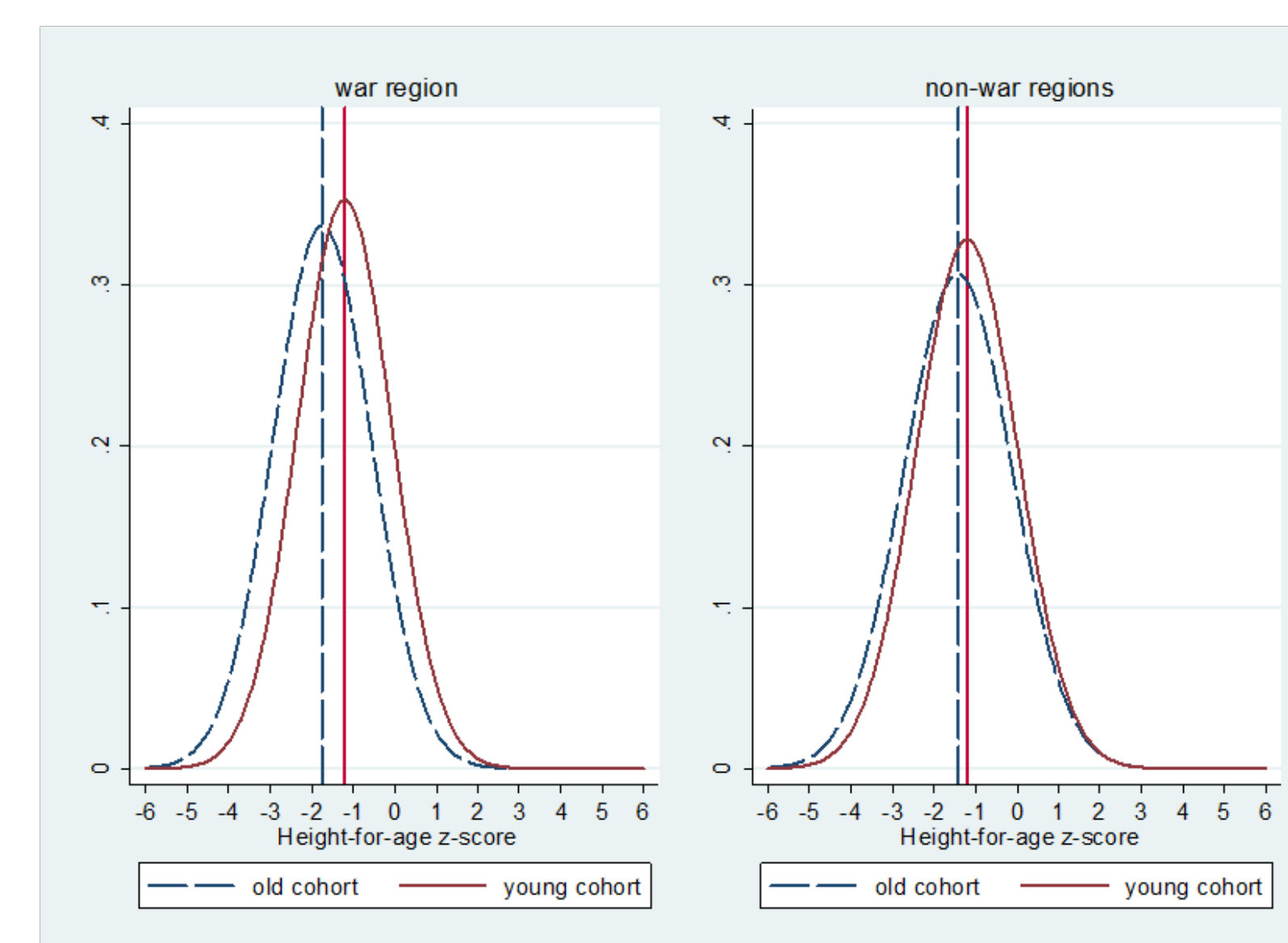


Figure 2: Height-for-age z-score distribution

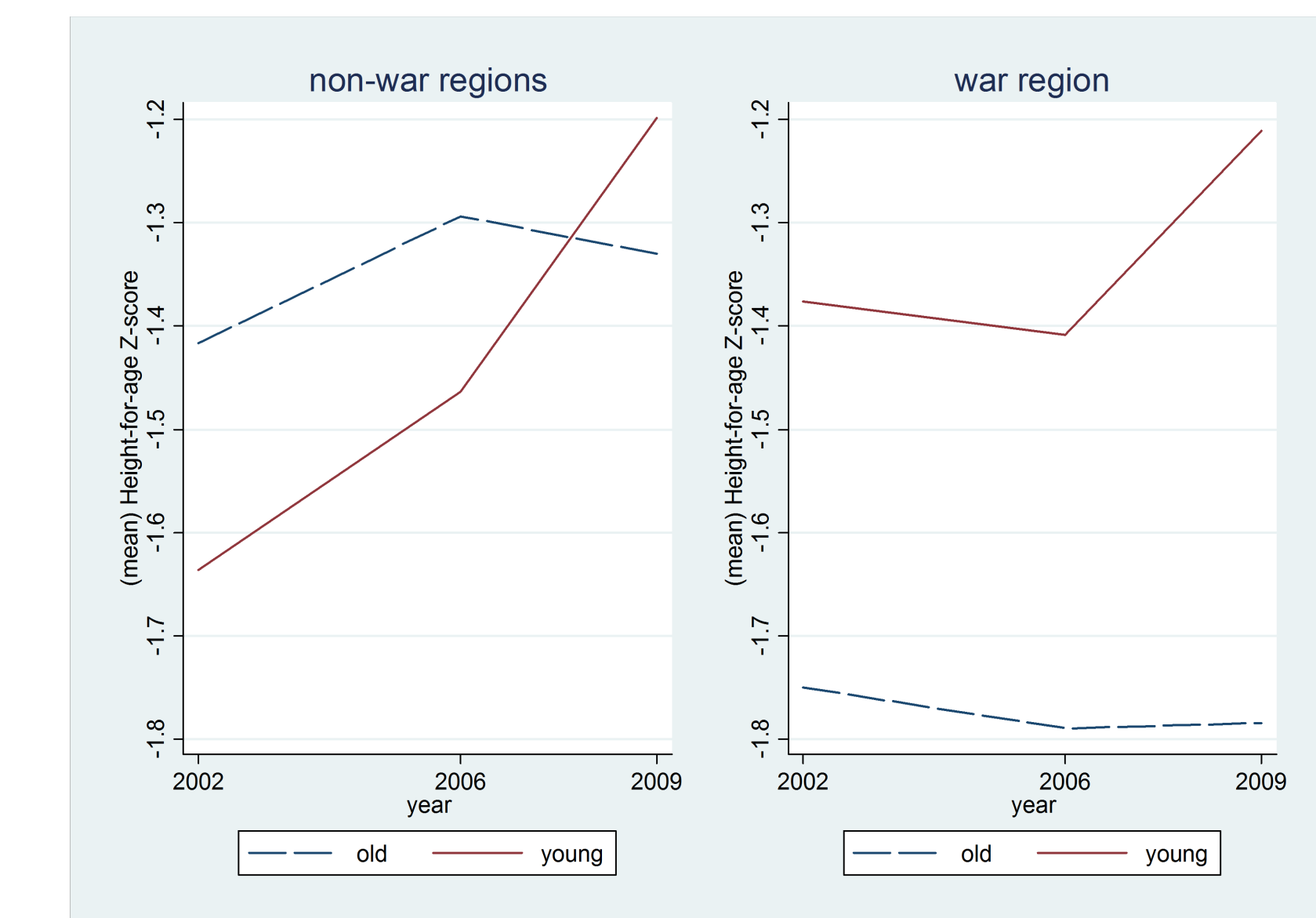


Figure 3: Trends in mean height-for-age z-score

Table 1: The impact of war on child schooling outcomes (OLS)
Dependent Variable: No. of highest grade completed by child

| All Sample | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| born before war*war region | -0.69*** [0.14] | -0.68*** [0.15] | -0.70*** [0.19] | -0.69*** [0.19] |
| N | 2,812 | 2,812 | 2,170 | 2,141 |
| Rural Sample | | | | |
| born before war*war region | -0.71*** [0.16] | -0.72*** [0.17] | -0.70*** [0.22] | -0.70*** [0.23] |
| N | 1,730 | 1,730 | 1,439 | 1,423 |
| Urban Sample | | | | |
| born before war*war region | -0.63*** [0.13] | -0.46*** [0.14] | -0.55*** [0.14] | -0.53*** [0.14] |
| N | 1,082 | 1,082 | 731 | 718 |
| Region FE | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Cohort FE | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Community FE | | Y | Y | Y |
| Child age FE | | Y | Y | Y |
| Child sex dummy | | Y | Y | Y |
| Urban dummy | | Y | Y | Y |
| Parent's age and literacy | | | Y | Y |
| Head age, sex, and education | | | Y | Y |
| Additional controls | | | | Y |

Conclusion

Long term inter-generational implications since war can diminish early childhood human capital that could be manifested in terms of reduced child health, nutrition, and education outcomes.

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