

Ambiguity Politics in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings

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Abstract: How does political ambiguity manifest in conflict and post-conflict settings? An emerging literature highlights the utility of political and institutional ambiguity for authorities engaged in or recovering from conflict. This literature challenges traditional views of statehood and development, which tend to emphasize the benefits of formalization and predictability. Instead, we will highlight how in some settings ambiguity and unpredictability—whether intentional or not—yields strategic advantages for actors such as non-state armed groups, governments grappling with the effects of conflict, and newly established post-conflict regimes. Our roundtable participants will present and discuss the theoretical and practical implications of their research on ambiguity and unpredictability and how it might benefit scholars and practitioners of conflict and development. We will bring together a diverse range of multidisciplinary scholars with expertise and substantial field experience in countries such as Lebanon, Uganda, and Afghanistan. Participants will identify key research questions and empirical gaps that need to be addressed in further research, as well as challenges and strategies for conflict researchers conducting fieldwork in ambiguous settings.

Track Classification: Political Violence, Conflict and Transnational Activism