SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES AMIDST A GLOBAL TRIPLE THREAT OF CONFLICTS, COVID-19, AND CLIMATE CHANGE:

WAR-TORN COUNTRIES | PART 1

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Socioeconomic Challenges Amidst a Global Triple Threat of Conflicts, COVID-19, and Climate Change

(*Part 1*)

War-torn Countries

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD

The contemporary global landscape is increasingly shaped by the convergence of armed conflict, pandemic disruption, and climate change, forming a complex system of mutually reinforcing crises that defy traditional analytical boundaries. War-torn countries are at the center of overlapping crises that intensify existing fragility. Already weakened by prolonged violence, weak institutions, and economic decline, they face added strain from droughts, floods, and environmental degradation. These pressures are compounded by global dynamics, including the Middle East crisis, the Ukraine war, US–China rivalry, and international sanctions, which disrupt supply chains and limit access to essential goods. The COVID-19 pandemic further deepened these vulnerabilities by contracting economies and overwhelming fragile health systems. In such settings, crises compound rather than coexist, driving displacement, poverty, environmental damage, and broader instability beyond national borders.

The introductory chapter establishes a strong conceptual and empirical foundation by examining the global socioeconomic consequences of the convergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing cross-border and internal conflicts, and natural disasters. It shows how supply chain disruptions, inflation, energy crises, and labor market contractions have arisen from these interconnected shocks, while also highlighting their wide-ranging impacts on global health, food security, displacement, and economic stability.

The chapter on Mexico offers a nuanced view of a middle-income country facing intersecting crises while contending with profound security, governance, and corruption challenges driven by powerful drug cartels. Having experienced more foreign armed interventions than any other Latin American country, it continues to struggle with high homicide rates, widespread disappearances, and deep-rooted institutional collusion between criminal groups and authorities. Against this backdrop, the chapter examines how the country navigates pandemic recovery, global conflict-driven economic volatility, and climate change. It analyzes policy responses to unemployment, inequality, and energy transition, while highlighting the vulnerabilities of indigenous communities and environmental threats to sustainable development.

The analysis of Afghanistan—at the crossroads of Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East and long a strategic corridor shaped by repeated invasions, rivalries, and internal conflict—emphasizes compounded fragility. Decades of conflict and entrenched extremism have weakened governance and socioeconomic stability under a hardline, theocratic regime. As one of the world's major sources of refugees, often cited as the second-largest after Syria or Palestine, it faces ongoing displacement. This chapter shows how COVID-19 and climate stressors, especially drought and water scarcity, have intensified crises across agriculture, health, education, and labor, worsening food insecurity, gender inequality, and maternal and child health, while exposing limited resilience alongside deep developmental setbacks.

The global fuel crisis and inflation shock triggered by the 2022 Ukraine war and the post–COVID-19 recovery, comparable in some respects to the 1970s oil shocks, pushed inflation in many economies above levels observed during the 2008 Great Recession. The Israel–Hamas war, beginning in October 2023, diverted global attention and resources from Ukraine, contributing to intensified attacks and a complex imbalance. As a result, Ukraine, now experiencing more than four years of sustained conflict, faces extensive environmental damage, including farmland contaminated by unexploded ordnance, a record wildfire in 2025, soil erosion, and impacts on nearly one-fifth of protected areas. The chapter on the crisis in

Ukraine further examines broader socioeconomic and environmental consequences, including damage to infrastructure, agriculture, education, and healthcare, along with forced migration, fiscal strain, rising poverty and unemployment, biodiversity loss, and pollution from heavy metals and radioactive contaminants.

In Sudan, decades of conflict since 1956—marked by wars, coups, and chronic instability—have stalled development and driven a deep humanitarian crisis, now worsened by the 2023 civil war shaped by regional powers competing for influence, resources, and access to the Red Sea, leaving roughly one in four people displaced and two in five facing acute hunger, while the Sudan and Red Sea crises—linked to the Israel–Hamas conflicts—intersect through shared actors, maritime competition, and Horn of Africa security risks that also disrupt global shipping. The chapter on Sudan illustrates how political instability, economic fragility, climate vulnerability, and pandemic pressures compound impacts across agriculture, education, employment, and healthcare, while worsening food insecurity, external debt, displacement, violations of women's rights, and child health, underlining the strain of overlapping shocks on fragile systems.

The case of Yemen illustrates a multifaceted humanitarian crisis driven by a decade of conflict involving Middle Eastern, global, and extremist actors, with exploited religious divisions turning a local dispute into a broader sectarian war that has extended into the Red Sea, where attacks in the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait disrupt maritime trade and generate global economic effects. The prolonged conflict has devastated infrastructure and institutions, leaving the population highly vulnerable to climate and pandemic shocks and limiting access to routine childhood immunizations and COVID-19 vaccination. About one in eight people are displaced, and nearly half are either living in poverty or facing crisis-level (IPC Phase 3+) food insecurity, making Yemen the world's third most food-insecure context after Sudan and Gaza. The chapter further examines severe disruptions in agriculture, water, fuel, health, and education, alongside rising unemployment, gender inequality, worsening health outcomes, water scarcity, aid dependency, and widespread food insecurity, illustrating how such crises become entrenched and self-perpetuating.

The Syrian conflict lasted nearly 14 years, ending in late 2024 with the fall of the Iran-backed Bashar al-Assad regime, though instability, territorial disputes, shifting regional power dynamics, and reported airstrikes in southern Syria persisted; earlier drought and resource mismanagement (2006–2010) contributed to displacement and unrest, leaving the country ill-prepared for the pandemic, while the Israel–Hamas conflict further deepened the crisis, doubling food inflation within a year and sharply depreciating the currency in this import-dependent economy. By the end of the war, about one in three people were internally displaced, around 6 million became refugees, and roughly 90% of the population lived in poverty amid destroyed infrastructure, severe food insecurity, and widespread landmine contamination—striking for a country with a rich ancient heritage and a historic role as a crossroads of trade, culture, and power. The chapter on Syria shows how overlapping conflict, environmental shocks, and pandemic pressures drove breakdowns in agriculture, education, and healthcare, alongside inflation, displacement, and gender-based violence, resulting in lasting social fragmentation and heightened vulnerability among displaced and marginalized groups.

Taken together, these chapters reveal a consistent and troubling pattern: the interaction of conflict, climate change, and pandemic shocks generates complex, multi-layered crises that exceed the capacity of conventional policy responses. War intensifies environmental degradation and disrupts economic systems; climate stress fuels resource scarcity and displacement; and pandemics expose and amplify structural inequalities while weakening

already fragile institutions. In war-affected regions, these dynamics spiral into deeply entrenched socioeconomic crises, multiplying hardship and constraining recovery pathways. Strengthening institutional capacity, fostering international cooperation, and leveraging innovation while remaining attentive to social and ethical dimensions will be essential. The insights presented here offer a critical foundation for advancing such efforts, pointing toward a more coherent and effective response to the cascading crises that define the present and will shape the future.

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Preface

War-torn countries stand at the epicenter of overlapping crises in which prolonged insecurity, weakened institutions, and stagnant economic growth are intensified by humanitarian and food emergencies, mass displacement of civilians, and worsening security conditions, alongside the collapse and destruction of infrastructure, rising inflation and currency depreciation, and widening gaps in access to education and healthcare. These challenges are further compounded by disruptions in labor markets, increasing vulnerability among affected populations, and growing dependence on international assistance. The climate crisis adds additional pressure, while the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and deepened existing structural inequalities by overwhelming fragile health systems, slowing recovery, and reinforcing long-term fragility in already weakened contexts, ultimately undermining resilience and limiting prospects for sustainable development across fragile and conflict-affected regions worldwide. This book originated from the need to address a persistent analytical gap—the lack of an integrated, cross-country understanding of how conflict, pandemic shocks, and climate pressures interact in war-affected settings—despite their clearly compounding effects on socioeconomic stability. Focusing on countries such as Mexico, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Sudan, Yemen, and Syria, the volume examines how conflict-driven displacement, food insecurity, inflation, environmental damage, and institutional breakdown recur across diverse contexts and are further amplified by overlapping shocks. Across these cases, crises do not occur independently but interact and cascade, producing far-reaching consequences that extend beyond national borders and shape regional and global stability. By bringing together comparative analysis and empirical insights, this book aims to equip readers with a clearer framework for understanding these interconnected risks while underscoring the urgency of coordinated approaches that integrate conflict resolution, climate resilience, public health capacity, and sustainable economic recovery.

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CHAPTER 1

Socioeconomic Consequences of the Triple Whammy: War, Pandemics, and Natural Disasters

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Abstract: The world is facing a series of interconnected emergencies that are threatening human survival, because the sum of the crises' effects is much greater than their individual impacts. The chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the interconnected global crises stemming from war, pandemics, natural disasters, and climate change. It highlights the profound and far-reaching impacts on individuals, communities, and nations. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted supply chains, leading to shortages and business closures, while also exposing inequalities in healthcare access and income disparities. Natural catastrophes further exacerbate long-term effects, including environmental damage and ecosystem shifts. The escalating global conflicts, from Afghanistan to Ukraine, reflect a history of belligerence. These crises, directly and indirectly linked, contribute to increased poverty, food and water scarcity, and disease spread. Economic shocks, including inflation and debt crises, have further compounded these challenges. The fragile state of many economies worldwide necessitates urgent actions for resilience-building. The Sustainable Development Goals are under threat, particularly in food supplies, health, education, and security. It's crucial to note that the public's understanding of these complex issues may be hindered by limited health literacy. The fragile state of healthcare systems, compounded by these crises, underscores the importance of technological advances, innovation, and security measures. The delicate global system faces immense risks amid these ongoing crises.

Keywords: Asylum seekers, Displacement, Damage to health facilities, Epidemics among refugee population, Energy crisis, Economic shocks, Fragile economy, Global trade disruptions, Healthcare disparities, Inflation, Interconnected crises, Shortage of medicine and medical equipment, Vulnerable nations, War in Ukraine.

INTRODUCTION

The profound and enduring consequences of war, pandemics, and natural catastrophes can devastate individuals, communities, nations, and entire regions.

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Abdul Kader Mohiuddin, Úrsula Oswald-Spring & Omar S. Rasheed (Eds.)

The pandemic, for instance, has disrupted supply chains, causing shortages of essential goods and compelling numerous businesses to shutter. Moreover, it has brought to light disparities in healthcare and education access, as well as inequalities in income and wealth distribution. Natural catastrophes, too, can yield lasting effects, including environmental damage and alterations in local ecosystems. Our planet's temperature has surged to its highest point in the last 1.2 million years, transforming it into a hothouse planet, as noted by Saxena (2023). Recent humanitarian tragedies, such as those in Afghanistan, Iraq, Vietnam, Syria, Libya, and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and violence in Palestinian Gaza, underscore our historical conflict, with 30 wars and 187 million casualties in thelast century (Curchoe *et al*., 2022). Current geopolitical tensions, exemplified by the Russia-Ukraine conflict and strained relations between China and Taiwan, Belarus, and Poland, persist despite the acknowledged unfavorable consequences. The direct aftermath of wars, pandemics, and natural disasters extends to indirect effects felt for years, contributing to increased poverty, food and water scarcity, and the proliferation of various diseases. The far-reaching impact of these events is evident in the escalation of climate-related deaths, which are now 30 times higher than they were two decades ago. A study published in The Lancet in 2017 projected a 50-fold increase in weather-related deaths by 2100 compared to 2010, with a majority occurring in low-income countries (Forzieri *et al*., 2017). The urgency is underscored by the fact that hunger claims a life every four seconds. Compounding these challenges is the reality that nearly half of the global population lacks adequate health literacy, making it difficult for the general public to comprehend these complex issues. In essence, the ripple effects of war, COVID-19 pandemics, and natural catastrophes are profound and multifaceted, impacting millions of lives globally.

Background

From the beginning, the Harvard School of Public Health has maintained a page called “The Climate Optimist” with research on the environment and climate effects on COVID-19 transmission. More than 40 economies, home to more than 1 billion people worldwide, were classified as fragile by the IMF. On May 20, 2022, the World Bank, IFRC, and ICRC attended a “building resilience” conference arranged by UNDRR in Indonesia and highlighted the triple whammy of COVID-19, ongoing global conflicts, and climate crises (the 3Cs). On July 20, 2022, the United Nations released the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Report 2022, which revealed that ongoing, interconnected global crises are threatening the 17 SDGs and affecting food supplies, health, education, and security in countries around the world. The British Medical Journal first highlighted the effects of the 3Cs on global food security and nutrition in September 2022. On September 20, 2021, exactly one year earlier, at the United

Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) in New York, delegates from 183 countries called for urgent actions on food security. The summit had already prioritized the 3Cs (COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, and climate crisis) over the 5Fs (namely food, fertilizer, finance, fodder, and fuel systems). The point is that the 3Cs have recently captured the media's attention. Financial Times, Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, The Guardian, The Daily Star, BBC, CNN, CNBC, The New York Times, Business Standard, Bloomberg, Forbes, and Reuters have recently entered the 3Cs over global socioeconomic challenges, but scattered highlighting of any one or two of the issues has continued from the beginning, with relentless efforts. So it is with research articles published in prestigious international journals. Before the beginning of 2023, very few articles, let alone books, were published.

GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS

For the last few years, the world economy has been battered by a series of severe and mutually reinforcing shocks, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the resulting food and energy crises, surging inflation, debt tightening, and the climate emergency. The inflation glitch included the fuel and food crises, currency devaluation, and stagflation in business, as well as 41-year highs in the US and UK; 40-year highs in Japan and Germany; 37-year highs in France and Italy; 30-year highs in India and New Zealand; and 24-year highs in South Korea, Thailand, and Turkey (Mohiuddin, 2023). To combat the sharpest inflation increase in decades, central banks in major economies are normalizing interest rates. Global government debt, corporate debt, and household debt all reached 350% of global GDP in 2022 (Benediktsdottir & Ahmed, 2023). Their tools for inflation caused by the debt crisis include influencing interest rates, setting reserve requirements, and employing open market operation tactics, among other approaches. After a long period of accommodative monetary policy, central banks in major economies are normalizing interest rates.

Crisis Imposed by the COVID-19 Pandemic

The pandemic crisis was estimated to have cost 15 million lives and nearly $9 trillion in economic losses in 2020 and 2021, surpassing the economies of Japan and Germany combined, as projected by the IMF chief (Naseer *et al*., 2023). There had been a strong regional dimension to manufacturing and trading, which facilitated the virus's spread. China, Italy, the United States, and Brazil were most affected during the first wave, being the industrial hubs of their respective continents. By early 2022, two-thirds of middle-income countries, including the BRICS nations, were well connected to global economic activities, had numerous business travelers and tourists, and had good domestic transportation networks, all

Section 1 (War-torn Countries)

CHAPTER 2

Mexico's Socioeconomic Resilience and Sustainable Development in the Face of Complex Challenges

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Abstract: Mexico is a middle-income country in transition, located in North America, and is the second-largest country in Latin America. It has a population of approximately 130 million people and is known for its rich cultural heritage, vibrant cuisine, abundant minerals, oil, and beautiful landscapes, with 68 indigenous languages, many of which were conquered by the Spanish. In 2022, COVID-19 arrived in Mexico with a fragile and privatized health system. SARS-COV-2 infected millions of people with more than 330,000 deaths and excess mortality of 650,602. The pandemic produced significant socioeconomic impacts with a high unemployment rate that only recovered in 2023. Mexico rejected the FMI recommendations and maintained, during the pandemic, a stable macroeconomic policy without additional debts. The government did not subsidize enterprises but transferred direct money to vulnerable people: the elderly, youth, students, supported peasants, and trained apprentices. This money policy should steer young people away from organized crime, decrease public insecurity, and improve livelihood, where remittances contribute and achieve the most marginal regions. This policy allowed a revaluation of the pesos in relation to other currencies. Mexico is also located between two warming oceans and suffers severe climate change impacts. Droughts, hurricanes, bushfires, and other extreme events have produced crop failure and climate migration of affected communities. The Mexican government is reducing greenhouse gas emissions by investing in its existing abundant renewable energies. The Russian-Ukrainian war increased inflation in food items and fertilizers, while investments in refineries and governmental subsidies in fuel have maintained stable internal oil prices. The government is building the 1,554 km Mayan Railway, which should create jobs in the poorest indigenous region and later promote beach and archeological tourism. Further, the 310 km of the Isthmus train with two enlarged ports on both sides of the oceans, will reduce the passage through the Panama Canal to 10 days. These alternative development projects, greater transparency in government expenditure, and frontal combat of corruption have increased the public budget. The government has maintained economic stability and reduced internal conflicts related to criminal activities. The complexity of the interactions among socioeconomic, environmental, health, energy, security, and cultural factors opens the country to alternative development paths. In contrast, the opposition of the local bourgeoisie, climate

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Abdul Kader Mohiuddin, Úrsula Oswald-Spring & Omar S. Rasheed (Eds.)

disasters, and the high poverty rate also pose potential tipping points. They may limit the scope of an alternative development model of an emerging country, where the USA exercises pressure to limit drugs and migrant trafficking, but permits the sale of illegal weapons. Mexico is a transit land to the US and gets migrants from all over the world, where both borders, the southern with Guatemala and the northern with the US, are creating high instability and violence in the country.

Keywords: Alternative model of development, Catastrophic health system, Economic impacts, Energy transition, Isthmus train, Mayan railway, Migration, Organized crime, Russian-Ukrainian war, Systemic-dissipative model with potential tipping points, Unemployment.

INTRODUCTION

Mexico (Fig. **1**) is one of the nations with the highest rate of armed conflicts, according to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), and some estimates indicate that the country's death toll in 2016 may even be higher than that of war-torn Iraq and Afghanistan, second only to Syria (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2017; Roberts, 2017). The Mexican government and various drug trafficking organizations are engaged in an ongoing conflict known as the Mexican Drug War. Also, according to estimates, the Mexico City Metropolitan Area, Northern Sinaloa, Baja California, the Basin of the Conchos River, and the Bajio region are among the 70% of the country's land that is susceptible to frequent droughts, overexploitation of aquifers, and loss of crops (Galeana, 2023b). Mexico's ability to feed its population is affected, putting the health of children in particular at risk, while increasing imports of grains from the US. Its farming surface is predicted to decline from 40% to 25%. Mexico was totally unprepared when COVID-19 started in February 2020. The healthcare system was fragmented, and corrupt enterprises controlled the acquisition of public drugs. Half of the population also worked in informal jobs and suffered from unemployment, hunger, and poverty. The youth were mostly unemployed and easy prey for organized crime. Women earn lower salaries than men for the same work and often hold informal jobs. Violence increased in 2006, when the war on drugs was officially declared. Beyond drug sales, a corrupt Minister of Security got allied with a drug cartel, promoted kidnappings, extortions, torture, and home or public transportation robberies. The high corruption of the Peña government from 2012-2018 deteriorated the judicial system. The country is further highly affected by climate disasters, to which especially the poorest indigenous women and girls in the South-East are exposed (Moreno *et al*., 2020).

Fig. (1). United Mexican States (Generated from MapChart).

ALTERNATIVE POLICY MANAGEMENT IN A MIDDLE INCOME COUNTRY

COVID-19 Management and Health Crisis

Mexico reported the first case of SARS-CoV-2 on February 27, 2020, after a big musical festival in Mexico City. On November 20, 2020, the country surpassed one million infected people and had over 100,000 excess deaths (Sánchez-Talanque *et al*., 2020). Hospitals and medical personnel were unprepared to deal with the aggression of the transmissions, lacking protective tools and protocols; thus, numerous hospital workers were infected and died. The government initially gave contradictory recommendations and failed to include drugs, vaccines, and mechanical ventilation in intensive care. On April 20, 2020, a systematic campaign called “Susana distancia (SD: your safe distance)” promoted physical distance, no hugs, the protection of elders and children, open windows in closed rooms, lockdowns in schools and public services with internet management, the suspension of group meetings, travel limits, and basic hygienic measures such as frequent hand washing (Fig. **2**) (IFPES, 2020).

CHAPTER 3

Afghanistan: Growing Up in Dire Socio-economic Circumstances Amid Conflicts, Pandemics, and Climate Crises

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Abstract: Afghanistan, a crossroads of civilizations, despite having a rich history influenced by Persian, Greek, Buddhist, Islamic, and Indian cultures, has left a lasting impact on its traditions and heritage, but is still globally recognized as the epitome of a conflict-ridden, economically, environmentally, and socially challenged country. Internal divisions and power struggles between different ethnic, tribal, and political groups have often characterized the country. These internal conflicts have frequently led to political instability and, at times, full-blown civil war. The COVID-19 pandemic hit the country during a period of increasing instability, further challenging the already struggling healthcare system. Access to basic medical care remains elusive for many, resulting in avoidable casualties. The pervasive lack of security, particularly evident in high civilian casualties from conflict and explosives, is a formidable obstacle. The withdrawal of American and NATO forces from Afghanistan in 2021 has set the stage for a new geopolitical dynamic in the region. Pakistan, China, Russia, Iran, and India are emerging as key players, each vying for influence and strategic interests in the vacuum left by the departing Western forces. The country is now grappling with the devastating consequences of climate change. Recent droughts have exposed the vulnerability of an entire country in crisis, exacerbated by the Taliban's seizure of power in 2021, leaving a generation of children and youth to grow up in adverse circumstances.

Keywords: Food insecurity, Geopolitical tensions, Humanitarian crisis, International influence, Poor healthcare capacity, Political instability, Poverty and unemployment, Taliban regime.

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan has indeed been a crossroads of civilizations and has a rich and diverse history that goes far beyond the simplistic notion of it being a barren and

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Abdul Kader Mohiuddin, Úrsula Oswald-Spring & Omar S. Rasheed (Eds.)

forbidding land (Fig. **1**). Its history is far more complex and diverse than the "graveyard of empires" stereotype suggests. The strategic location at the crossroads for trade and cultural exchange between South Asia and Central Asia, as well as Asia and Europe, has made it a target for foreign conquerors throughout history. It has been ruled by various empires, including the Persians, Greeks (under Alexander the Great), Arabs, and Mongols. As a result, it has been influenced by various cultures, including Persian, Greek, Buddhist, Islamic, and Indian, which have left their mark on its traditions and heritage. It is home to a wealth of heritage sites, including Buddhist monasteries, ancient cities, and archaeological treasures. Unfortunately, many of these sites have been damaged or destroyed due to the ongoing conflicts in the region.

Fig. (1). The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (author's own work using MapChart).

Afghanistan has a comparatively low reported COVID-19 rate, with 229,686 confirmed cases and 7,966 deaths as of December 2023, according to the WHO COVID-19 database. This low rate may indicate underreporting, a lack of testing facilities, or a true low infection rate due to limited population movement and a dispersed population. The country has experienced higher new infections between

May and July 2020 and even higher between May and July 2021, with shifting patterns (WHO, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic hit Afghanistan during an already severe humanitarian crisis, exacerbating existing issues in the health sector, society, and economy. The withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops and the Taliban's seizure of power led to displacement, monetary inflation, and serious humanitarian concerns. This was felt particularly hard in the public health sector, as prior to 2021, about 75% of all healthcare costs were covered by international organizations (UN OCHA, 2023).

Corruption, weak institutions, ineffective governance, political instability, conflict, tribalism, and ethnocentrism have all significantly hampered Afghanistan's economy. The nation endured two decades of war, leaving its citizens mired in poverty and reliant on external aid. Although foreign assistance initially spurred economic growth, much of it was siphoned off by warlords and corrupt officials, rather than benefiting the populace. The withdrawal of US support has further destabilized Afghanistan's economy, casting doubt on its future and leaving its people vulnerable to the dictates of the Taliban regime. Since the Taliban seized control in 2021, Afghanistan's economy has deteriorated significantly, with a 27% decline in GDP and stagnant conditions, coupled with a doubling of unemployment and limited access to electricity (Fig. **2**). The financial sectors have collapsed, leaving small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and farmers, vital for support, struggling amid a lack of significant economic activities such as exports or public spending (UN News, 2024). The World Bank reported a 20.7% GDP decline in 2021, followed by a further 6.2% contraction in 2022 (Fig. **2**), compounding the country's economic woes. Furthermore, the UNDP Administrator has warned of an impending economic collapse due to the combined impacts of the pandemic, severe drought, and previous economic contractions (UNDP, 2023).

Afghanistan faces deepening poverty, with more than 90% of its population enduring extreme poverty and heavily reliant on humanitarian aid. The situation is exacerbated by soaring household expenditures on food, reaching 91%, which forces families to ration their resources. The country's economy, under Taliban rule, is in disarray, marked by deflation, skyrocketing unemployment, a halving of individual incomes, and escalating urban poverty rates, compounded by an unstable currency propped up artificially (IRC, 2023; Rahimi, 2024). This has exacerbated the challenges faced by the urban middle class, leading to increased household debt and the liquidation of assets to meet basic needs.

CHAPTER 4

Bearing the Burden: The Consequences of War for Ukraine

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Abstract: The full-scale war of Russia against Ukraine began on February 24, 2022, entailing significant adverse consequences that have affected all spheres of Ukrainian' life. Ukrainians displayed incredible dedication, tenacity, and unity in the face of the enemy invasion during the deadly and brutal war. In the early stages of the conflict, the Ukrainian Armed Forces thwarted Russian attempts to occupy the capital and made the Russian invaders pay dearly for the cities and villages they had taken. By brutally attacking on the battlefield, raping and torturing civilians in the occupied territories, and killing and obliterating homes and infrastructure with missiles throughout Ukraine, the Russian aggressors are attempting to break the will of the Ukrainian people to resist. The loss of billions of dollars from the national budget, the destruction of infrastructure, massive shelling, military mobilization, migration, severe injuries, deaths, life in constant stress, and numerous other hardships have critically affected the well-being of the country and its citizens. Ukraine faces an increase in chronic diseases, problems with vaccinations, including against COVID-19, significant growth in the incidence of mental disorders, and intra-family issues. The war-torn nation is also susceptible to hydro-meteorological risks and natural disasters, which primarily affect the agricultural and human health sectors through seasonal flooding and drought. In this regard, the consequences of the war on the country's territory have become a heavy burden, and they will be felt for years to come.

Keywords: Ecological crisis, Ecocide, Economic crisis, Forced migration, Inflation, Radioactivity risk, Recession, Refugee crisis, Ukrainian identity, Unemployment, Vaccine distrust.

INTRODUCTION

Ukraine is the second-largest country in Europe by area and the seventh-largest by population (Fig. **1**). It has diverse landscapes, including fertile plains (the famous Ukrainian Steppe), mountains, and coastline along the Black Sea. The Carpathian

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Abdul Kader Mohiuddin, Úrsula Oswald-Spring & Omar S. Rasheed (Eds.)

Mountains in the west offer opportunities for outdoor recreation and tourism. Arable land covers nearly two-thirds of Ukraine's territory and includes about 25% of the world's black soil (chernozem), making it a leading grain exporter. Prior to the Russian invasion, Ukraine was frequently perceived by the international community as a nation associated with Chernobyl, political unrest, corruption, rich soil, and agricultural prowess.

Fig. (1). Ukraine Political Map before Russian aggression (generated by MapChart).

In Ukraine, over 5.3 million COVID-19 cases were reported from March 2020 to December 2022. The vaccine campaign against COVID-19 in Ukraine began on February 24, 2021, exactly one year before the war. Still, only 36.93% of the population was vaccinated with two doses. Ukraine's low vaccination rate is believed to be influenced by delayed mass vaccination, significant vaccine hesitancy, and regional disparities in non-Pharmaceutical Intervention (NPI) implementation, collectively hindering effective COVID-19 vaccination efforts despite early NPI measures (Shishkin *et al*., 2023). The war in Ukraine, coupled with the Omicron-driven COVID-19 wave, dramatically escalated the pandemic, as confirmed by an analysis of key factors indicating a predicted daily incidence of 30,000 new cases, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis with an estimated 18 million victims (Chumachenko & Chumachenko, 2022). In Ukraine, designated facilities received readiness packages for COVID-19 inpatient care, including

salary top-ups and investments in oxygen supply and equipment. Funding for the COVID-19 health sector response came from various sources, including the Government Fund to Fight COVID-19, Ministry of Health programs, and local government budgets. Additionally, Ukraine accelerated information management development during the pandemic, allocating additional funds to health facilities for setting up mobile teams for COVID-19 sample collection, integrated into primary health care (Parmar *et al*., 2024). WHO reported that critical health services, including ambulances, were at risk in Ukraine, posing significant challenges for patients needing time-critical interventions amidst power outages and oxygen shortages in hospitals (Uwishema *et al*., 2022). However, the WHO assessment on the continuity of essential health services during the war in Ukraine reveals that primary health-care facilities have adapted quickly, with many providing essential services, adjusting working hours, and utilizing digital solutions. While staff shortages were noted, facilities maintained service levels and provided additional training to address changing population needs (WHO News Release, 2023). Since the beginning of the influenza season in October 2023, over 3.7 million Ukrainians have fallen ill with SARS-CoV-2, flu, and COVID-19, with 839 COVID-19-related deaths registered as of March 2024.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict, encompassing Crimea's annexation and the Donbas war, has impacted over 5 million individuals. Since 2014, these conflicts have resulted in 10,000 fatalities, over 24,000 injuries, and the displacement of 1.6 million people (Poberezhets, 2022). After February 24, 2022, the lives of Ukrainian citizens have been divided into before and after. This day was the beginning of a full-scale war of Russia against Ukraine, entailing catastrophic consequences that affected many areas of human life, the country’s environmental state, healthcare system, and economy, and its population’s physical and mental well-being. Ukrainian society has borne a heavy burden due to skyrocketing unemployment, high inflation, and a decline in national GDP. According to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, international assistance to Ukraine has amounted to an extraordinary $278 billion pledged as of January 2024 (Wolf & Davis Jr., 2024). Whereas the World Bank estimates that Ukraine will require more than $400 billion in assistance over the next decade, which is three times its GDP, due to infrastructure destruction and the government's need to cover other types of damage caused by military aggression (World Bank Group, 2023a). A huge humanitarian crisis has emerged, and, according to preliminary estimates, Ukraine will have to deal with its consequences for a long time, even in the post-war period, as it restores its economic, financial, and socio-cultural space (Heyets *et al*., 2022). The pattern of fertility and mortality and the overall demographic situation in Ukraine have changed (Kulu *et al*., 2023). Most of the deaths were among young men in their twenties who joined the Ukrainian army. Ukraine has faced a significant environmental crisis that has affected natural structures,

CHAPTER 5

Sudan's Crisis Unveiled: An In-Depth Exploration Beyond Armed Conflicts

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Abstract: The crisis in Sudan extends far beyond ongoing armed conflicts, encompassing a multitude of interconnected challenges. The impact of COVID-19 has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, leading to economic disruptions, unemployment, and severe inflation. Food insecurity has intensified within a broader humanitarian crisis marked by political instability, civil conflicts, economic decline, severe floods, and a substantial refugee population. Simultaneously, a year-long conflict has resulted in widespread displacement, acute food insecurity affecting millions, and disruptions to education and livelihoods. The conflict dynamics, including political violence and fatalities, pose significant threats, with regions like Darfur facing heightened tensions and ethnic targeting. The ongoing conflict further endangers Sudan's health system, with attacks on medical facilities and personnel, escalating violence, and dire consequences for healthcare delivery. The economic decline disrupts trade, sparks inflation, and risks social upheaval, while the acquisition of Iranian drones amid internal conflicts raises concerns about regional stability. Sudan, already among the world's most vulnerable nations to climate change, grapples with rising temperatures, floods, and droughts, exacerbating resource competition and internal displacement. Decades of climatic shifts and environmental degradation fuel resource-related conflicts, necessitating a holistic approach. The complex water crisis, driven by climate change, poses challenges to agriculture, hydropower, and overall water security. The linkage between climate change and security is evident, contributing to organized violence, migration, and delayed peace efforts, with projections indicating a significant temperature rise by 2050, aggravating desertification and threatening food security. Sudan faces compounding challenges, requiring comprehensive and interconnected strategies to address the multifaceted nature of its crises.

Keywords: Desertification, Education disruptions, Food insecurity, Humanitarian crisis, Inflation, Internal displacement, Malnutrition, Peace efforts, Unemployment, Vaccine hesitancy, Water crisis.

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Abdul Kader Mohiuddin, Úrsula Oswald-Spring & Omar S. Rasheed (Eds.)

INTRODUCTION

The ongoing power struggle in Sudan has prompted the evacuation of foreign nationals, revealing global interest in the nation's strategic location, mineral wealth, and regional significance. The country's location at the nexus of North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and Central Africa, along with its control over the Nile River Basin and the Red Sea, makes it crucial for regional stability (Fig. **1**). Additionally, Sudan's mineral resources, including gold and oil, attract partnerships from countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Russia, and China, each seeking to capitalize on the nation's transition of power (Tounsel, 2023).

Fig. (1). The Republic of the Sudan (Generated by MapChart).

The extensive impact of COVID-19 on Sudan is evident, with a prolonged lockdown and subsequent easing, and the government's $230 million preparedness plan facing funding challenges, contributing to a second wave with 16,052 cases and 1,197 deaths by November 25, 2020. Economic vulnerabilities intensified, causing disruptions, unemployment, and an 81.3% projected increase in consumer prices in 2020, leading to a 4–10% GDP decrease. Employment struggles were notable, with 67% of pre-lockdown workers yet to resume by June/July 2020, and farming households facing income reduction (33%) and remittance declines (27% international, 31% domestic) (Govt. Sudan & World Bank, 2020). The pandemic

exacerbated food insecurity in Sudan, contributing to a complex humanitarian crisis in 2020, marked by political instability, civil conflicts, economic decline, severe floods, and a large refugee population (Al-Saidi *et al*., 2023). Between April and August 2021, various sectors experienced declines in employment rates, and unemployment rose in sectors like manufacturing, transportation, storage, accommodation, food services, and health (Nour, 2022). Sudan's healthcare system faced critical shortages during the pandemic, resulting in increased mortality and limited access to care, emphasizing the importance of investing in public health surveillance and community engagement for future prevention (Fadul *et al*., 2021). A comprehensive analysis of COVID-19's impact on Sudan, drawing on data from 1,575 households and 464 enterprises, revealed significant economic challenges, with a 63% income reduction for IDPs and 50% for nomads during the lockdown, 73% of employed respondents in Khartoum experiencing reduced working hours, and the private sector bearing the brunt, with 63% of businesses reporting decreased profits and 25% facing liquidity issues (ILO, 2021).

The enduring impact of oil dependence on Sudan's economy manifested in structural rigidities, hindering macroeconomic stability, causing a contraction of the economy, and escalating inflation rates to 300%, as reported by the IMF. The separation of South Sudan from Sudan in 2011, following a significant reliance on oil, had profound implications for both economies. The sudden loss of 70% of Sudan's proven oil reserves triggered economic challenges, prompting a shift towards better economic performance. The separation adversely affected Sudan's economy, which is heavily reliant on oil since its exploitation in 2000, resulting in a decline in growth, exports, and government revenue (Abbass Ali, 2023).

Civilians in Sudan have endured decades of wars, including civil conflicts from 1956 to 1972 and 1983 to 2005, with ongoing conflicts in Darfur, the Nuba Mountains, and the Blue Nile state (Rothbart *et al*., 2023). As Sudan approaches the third year of the brutal conflict between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which began in mid-April 2023, over 14 million people have been displaced—including 9 million internally displaced persons and 4.4 million refugees—making it the world’s largest and most severe displacement and humanitarian crisis, with more than one in four people displaced (UN News, 2026). In less than a year, acute food insecurity had affected 17.7 million people (37% of the total population), more than doubling from the previous year, while disease outbreaks, including cholera, posed significant health challenges. The conflict disrupts education, leaving 19 million children out of school, exposing them to immediate and long-term dangers. Livelihoods are decimated, with the economy expected to contract by 12%, exacerbating food security and forced displacement, emphasizing the urgent need

CHAPTER 6

Yemen: A Decade of Catastrophic Humanitarian Crisis in History

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Abstract: Yemen has been embroiled in a devastating war since 2015. The conflict began in late 2014 when Houthi rebels, who are aligned with former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, seized control of the capital, Sana'a, and other parts of the country. In response, a Saudi Arabia-led coalition, including the UAE and several other Arab states, launched a military intervention in March 2015 to support the internationally recognized government of President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi. The situation is indeed complex, and multiple countries, including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, the Houthis, China, Oman, Qatar, and Jordan, have been involved in various ways. The population's vulnerability, coupled with inadequate access to clean water, sanitation facilities, and proper hygiene practices, has heightened the risk of COVID-19 transmission. The true extent of the pandemic's spread in Yemen remains difficult to ascertain, and there is a lack of comprehensive data on COVID-19 cases and related fatalities. The conflict has caused immense humanitarian suffering, including widespread famine, displacement, and a severe health crisis. Efforts to find a lasting solution and alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people continue to be a significant challenge. The country is also vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including the increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, and storms. However, the conflict and ongoing humanitarian crisis have significantly impeded efforts to tackle these issues effectively.

Keywords: Armed conflict, Child labor, Droughts, Food crisis, Groundwater depletion, Health, Humanitarian crisis, Inflation, Refugee crisis.

INTRODUCTION

Yemen is a country situated on the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula in Western Asia (Fig. **1**). It shares borders with Saudi Arabia to the north, the Red Sea to the west, the Gulf of Aden to the south, and Oman to the east. Its location is crucial as it connects Africa and Asia, and it has a coast along the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a significant sea route linking the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

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Abdul Kader Mohiuddin, Úrsula Oswald-Spring & Omar S. Rasheed (Eds.)

The country, which has been a significant center of Islamic learning and architecture since converting to Islam in the 7th century, boasts well-preserved historical sites like Sana'a's Old City and Shibam's mud-brick high-rises. Sana'a, one of the oldest cities in the world, features ancient multi-storied buildings and the historic Great Mosque. Shibam is renowned for its 16th-century mud-brick skyscrapers, while Zabid is notable for its mosques and burnt brick structures. Despite the damages from the ongoing conflict, Yemen's cultural heritage remains a testament to its rich history and resilience, with efforts underway to preserve its legacy (Khalidi, 2017; Marchand, 2017; Jansen, 2021).

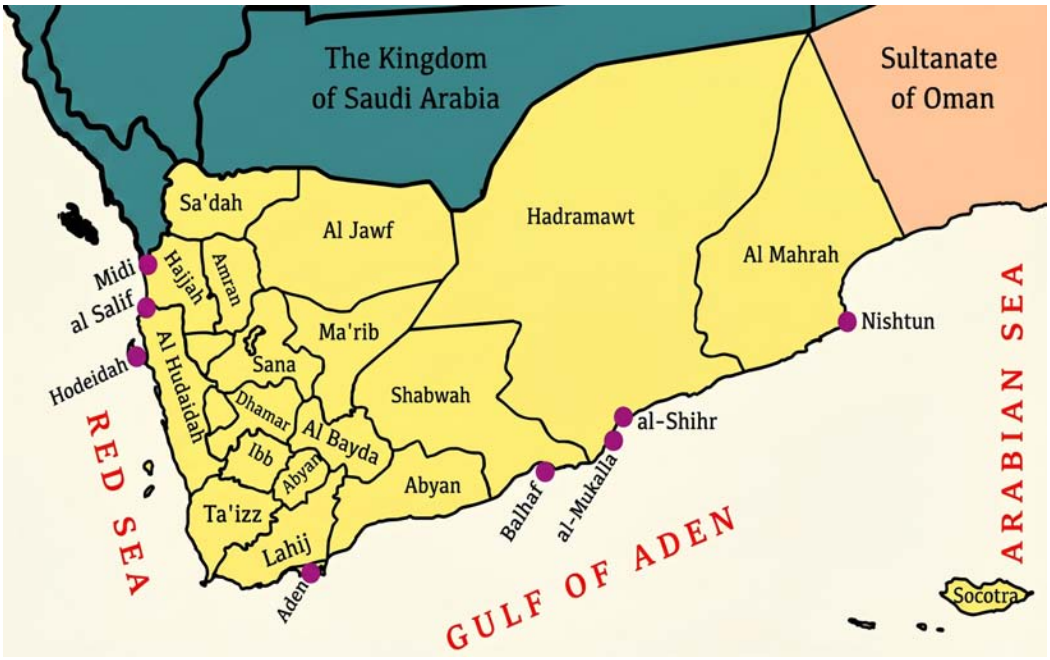

Fig. (1). The Republic of Yemen (Generated by MapChart).

The country is currently facing one of the most severe humanitarian crises globally. Approximately 80% of the population struggles to obtain basic necessities, and in 2023, a staggering 23.4 million people—more than two-thirds of its population require some form of humanitarian aid. According to the UN, by early 2022, the multifaceted conflicts in Yemen led to over 377,000 deaths, with 60% attributed to factors like hunger, inadequate healthcare, and contaminated water (BBC, 2023). The average person has endured considerable hardships due to nearly a decade of conflict, economic collapse, natural calamities, and the COVID-19 pandemic. The breakdown of the healthcare system has severely limited their access to life-saving medical services. While peace talks between

Saudi Arabia and the Houthis offer hope for resolving Yemen's conflict, aid agencies warn that the humanitarian crisis, worsened by severe food insecurity and underfunded health services, remains dire (Devi, 2023). Despite the cessation of the UN-mediated truce in October, 2023 marked the lowest incidence of political violence in Yemen since 2015, with an unofficial ceasefire facilitating peace negotiations between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia. However, regional tensions toward the year's end threatened to derail this progress and possibly reignite violence (ACLED, 2024). Although armed conflict in Yemen remained relatively stable by late 2023, the Israel–Gaza conflict spurred major demonstrations, including a surge in Houthi movement-backed pro-Palestine/ant--Israel protests, and by 2026 the Iran-backed Houthis had actively joined the regional war by launching missiles and drones at Israel and threatening Red Sea shipping routes, positioning themselves within the "Axis of Resistance" to expand the conflict and boost domestic legitimacy despite risking a deeper humanitarian crisis.

Since 2015, the Houthis had seized Sanaa and ousted the Yemeni government, triggering a war with a Saudi-led coalition after President Hadi fled into exile. The conflict evolved into a regional proxy battleground marked by airstrikes, naval blockades, and shifting frontlines involving Iran-aligned Houthis and coalition-backed forces (Council on Foreign Relations, 2026). Yemen's landscape became highly fragmented, with militias, tribal groups, and state-affiliated actors, as the Houthis functioned as de facto state authorities while groups like the STC shifted roles. External involvement, particularly by the Saudi-led coalition and the United States, further complicated alliances and command structures (ACLED, 2025). Between 2016 and 2021, repeated peace efforts failed amid ongoing offensives in Hodeidah and Marib, the rise of AQAP and the STC, and continued cross-border attacks. These dynamics prolonged instability and contributed to one of the world's worst humanitarian crises (Council on Foreign Relations, 2026). From 2021 to 2026, the conflict shifted from large-scale warfare to a fragile truce established in 2022 that remained unrenewed. During 2023–2026, the Houthis consolidated power while expanding attacks on Israel and maritime shipping, as over 22 million people required aid by 2026 (Blanchard, 2026). Meanwhile, renewed Saudi-UAE rivalry in 2025–2026 fractured the anti-Houthi coalition, further destabilizing the situation.

As of June 2023, Yemen had reported fewer than 12,000 COVID-19 cases and just over 2,000 deaths (Worldometer), likely due to limited testing capacity. Only about half of medical facilities were fully operational and faced severe shortages of supplies and funding, while 40% of health workers lacked disaster preparedness training and only one-third had adequate disaster management knowledge. Similar symptoms often led to misdiagnosis of COVID-19 as dengue

CHAPTER 7

Syrian Arab Republic: An Era of Agony

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Abstract: Amid an uprising that turned into a civil war that started in 2011, Syria, a country in the Middle East with a population of about 20 million, was widely shunned by Arab governments due to the Syrian President's brutal crackdown on protesters and later civilians. Over the past decade, the triple crisis of armed conflict, natural disaster, and pandemic has had a devastating impact on the population. Half a million people have died in the conflict, which has also destroyed cities and forced internal and cross-border displacement. Over three-quarters of the nation's medical services have been destroyed as a result of this issue, which has been exacerbated by poverty, illiteracy, and violence. Similar to most low-income countries, Syria faces two other significant obstacles to achieving population immunity to COVID-19: vaccine reluctance and vaccine inequity. Health and economic challenges in Syria are significant to the extent that about half of the health facilities are not functioning, and the purchasing power of the population has significantly dropped, leading to widespread poverty with an estimated 14 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. As temperatures rose and precipitation sharply declined, desertification set in, forcing nearly 2 million people to relocate from rural to urban areas and decimating agricultural lands. While the consequences of such crises are severe, the level of resilience among Syrians is a wonder.

Keywords: American influence in the Middle East, Armed conflict, Attack on health, Child labour, Droughts, Earthquake in Syria, Food crisis, Forced displacement, Groundwater depletion, Humanitarian crisis, Inflation, Internally displaced persons, Refugee crisis.

INTRODUCTION

Syria, formally known as the Syrian Arab Republic located on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea in south-western Asia, bordered by Lebanon to the west, Turkey to the north, Iraq to the east, Jordan to the south, and Israel to the southwest. The capital is Damascus (Dimashq), on the Baradā River, situated in an oasis at the foot of Mount Qāsiyūn. Syria has a rich history dating back to

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ancient times and is home to many historic sites and cultural landmarks, including the ancient city of Palmyra and the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. In addition, it is home to diverse religions (*e.g.*, Muslim, Christian, Yazidis) as well as ethnic groups, including Arab, Kurds, Turkmen (Khan & Khan, 2017; Mazigh, 2016).

The Syrian conflict, which erupted in 2011, stems from a confluence of factors, including political, religious, social, and economic tensions, exacerbated by regional political upheavals and climate-related challenges. Specifically, water scarcity and climatic variability have directly contributed to Syria's economic downturn (Gleick, 2014). However, the complex and varied causes of the Syrian uprising are numerous. They consist of rising rates of unemployment and poverty, repression, and police brutality; injustice; a widening gap between rural and urban areas; and a lack of political freedom (Eklund *et al*., 2022). The government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has reclaimed the majority of Syria's territory with support from Russia and Iran. In the northwest, opposition fighters with Turkish support continue to hold some territory, and US-backed Kurdish fighters also hold some ground close to the Turkish border (Gebeily & Jones, 2023, Fig. **1**). With the help of Iran and Russia, Assad was able to retake control of most of Syria from rebels who had been supported by regional nations and were now open to negotiations (Reuters in Cairo, 2023). In contrast to 2011, when many Western and Arab states boycotted the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad over his brutal suppression of protests, some Arab states, including regional heavyweights Egypt and the UAE, have repaired their relations with Damascus (FE Online Desk, 2023). The Syrian conflict remains significant for the Arab League, despite being overshadowed by the Gaza war at this year's summit. Syria's reintegration into the Arab League last year after 12 years of isolation marks a major regional realignment and highlights the diminishing influence of the U.S. in the Middle East (Said & Faucon, 2023; Al Alawi, 2024). However, U.S. sanctions, particularly the 2020 Caesar Act, deter Western investment/reconstruction aid. Assad has also sought closer ties with non-Western countries, notably China, which has provided diplomatic support at the UN. The U.S. remains at odds with Syria, partly due to American support for Kurdish forces in northeast Syria (Agencies, 2024).

CRISIS PRECIPITATED BY THE 3CS

The COVID-19 Pandemic: Another Crisis for the Population of Tragedy

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the population of Syria. The prolonged conflict in Syria rendered its population especially vulnerable to the pandemic due to a weakened healthcare system, inadequate sanitation, and extensive population movements. As of July 2023, there have been 106,451

documented cases in Northwest Syria (NWS), with a total of 2,527 fatalities. Among the fatalities, 59% were male, and 41% were female (Al-Abdulla & Kallström, 2023). However, it is widely believed that the actual figures are much higher due to limited testing and reporting. The COVID-19 outbreak in Syria sparked intense political competition between the Interim and Salvation governments, each vying to control the pandemic response and gain international recognition. Despite these efforts, the international community ultimately endorsed local civil society, particularly the Syrian Civil Defence, as the primary actor in mitigating the pandemic's impact. This decision underscored a broader discrediting of political bodies within and outside opposition-held areas, granting local civil society increased legitimacy and confidence (Beaujouan *et al*., 2020).

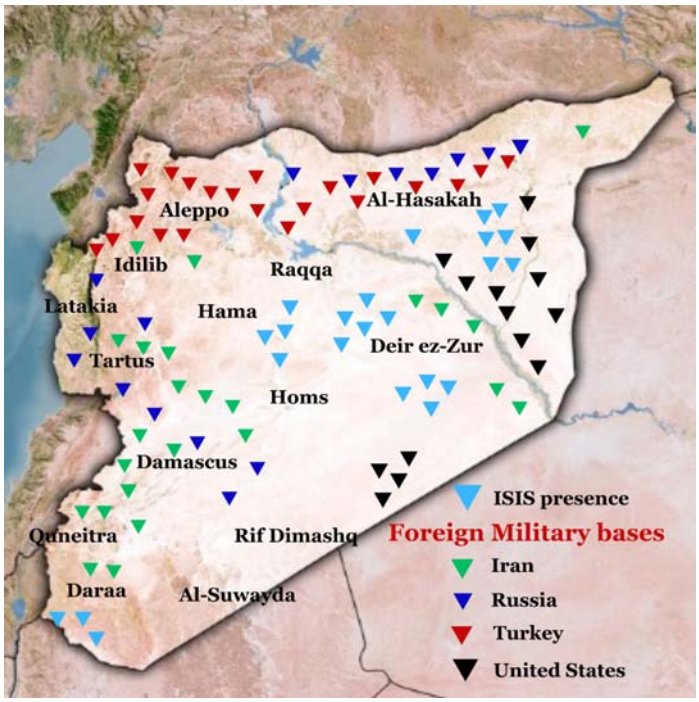

Fig. (1). Military control and foreign presence in Syria in 2023 (Author's own work with Canva illustrator, adapted from Economist Intelligence and Arab News).

Over fifty thousand cases were confirmed in 2020 alone. With only 325 ventilator-equipped ICU beds, the healthcare system was ill-prepared to manage the crisis, prompting concerns about potential rationing (Swed *et al*., 2022b). Moreover, a positivity rate exceeding 33% was largely ascribed to limited testing and underdiagnosis (Swed *et al*., 2023). A study published in the Web of Imperial College of London suggested that deaths due to COVID-19 in Damascus alone may have surpassed four thousand by September 2, 2020 (Johns & Elsland, 2020).

SUBJECT INDEX

M

N

O

P

Q

R

S

T

U

V

W

Y

Z

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Abdul Kader Mohiuddin served as an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Pharmacy at the World University of Bangladesh. In addition to nine years of teaching experience, he also worked for five years in strategic management roles within reputed pharmaceutical companies. He completed his M.Pharm in 2006 from the Department of Pharmaceutical Technology, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Dhaka, and earned his MBA in 2007 from East West University.

Úrsula Oswald-Spring

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Omar S. Rasheed

Dr. Omar S. Rasheed is a clinical psychologist with extensive experience in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) within humanitarian settings. Over the years, he has worked with a range of organizations across the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. His career spans multiple MHPSS roles, including psychologist, advisor, delegate, program manager, and coordinator, each contributing to a deep and practical understanding of how to address the mental health and psychosocial needs of individuals and communities affected by crises. He currently serves as the MHPSS Programme Coordinator at the ICRC, where he leads global MHPSS efforts, working closely with a dedicated team to ensure the delivery of effective and impactful support.