

Armed Conflicts and Higher Education: Challenges and Opportunities for Academic Development in Post-Conflict Regions

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Abstract

Armed conflicts have long been a pervasive challenge, leaving profound scars on societies worldwide. Among the myriad of consequences, armed conflicts have a significant impact on higher education systems, particularly in post-conflict regions. This study aims to examine the challenges and opportunities faced by academic institutions in post-conflict regions concerning the development of higher education. A comprehensive review of existing literature on armed conflicts and higher education was conducted, focusing on case studies from various post-conflict regions worldwide. Qualitative analysis was employed to identify common challenges and opportunities faced by academic institutions in these contexts, drawing on specific examples and empirical evidence. The study revealed that armed conflicts pose significant challenges to higher education systems in post-conflict regions, including the destruction of infrastructure, displacement of students and faculty, disruption of academic programs, and limitations on academic freedom. The findings underscore the importance of addressing the impact of armed conflicts on higher education as part of broader post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Initiatives aimed at rebuilding educational infrastructure, supporting displaced students and scholars, promoting access and inclusion, and fostering peace and reconciliation are essential for the development of academic institutions in post-conflict regions.

Keywords

Higher Education Systems, Wars, Conflicts, Problems, Access to Education, Possibilities.

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Introduction

Research problem

Armed conflicts have long been a scourge on societies, leaving behind a trail of destruction and disruption in their wake. Beyond the immediate devastation to lives and infrastructure, these conflicts often have far-reaching consequences, affecting various aspects of societal functioning, including education. In regions emerging from conflict, the challenges facing higher education institutions are particularly acute, yet amidst these challenges lie opportunities for transformative development (Maciej, 2023; Yemelyanova et al., 2023; Bukliv et al., 2023). The nexus between armed conflicts and higher education presents a complex landscape, where the pursuit of academic excellence intersects with the imperatives of post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. In such environments, academic institutions grapple with multifaceted challenges, ranging from physical damage to educational infrastructure, loss of human capital due to displacement or casualties, to profound disruptions in educational systems and curriculum (Bocharov et al., 2022; Tsekhmister, 2022). Moreover, the lingering effects of conflict, such as trauma and distrust, can impede the restoration of normalcy in educational pursuits.

Numerous analysis studies have documented the adverse effects of armed conflict on higher education systems. These studies highlight the destruction of educational infrastructure, the displacement of students and faculty, the disruption of academic programs, and the loss of intellectual capital as key challenges facing universities and colleges in post-conflict settings (Kot & Lytychenko , 2022; Rajab, 2018). Research by AlMunifi & Aleryani (2021) and Milton (2017) found that universities in conflict-affected countries often struggle to maintain basic operations, leading to a decline in educational quality and accessibility.

Research focus

Despite some formidable challenges, the aftermath of conflict also offers a unique window of opportunity for the development of academic institutions. The rebuilding process provides a platform for innovative approaches to education, where lessons learned from the past can inform forward-looking strategies. Moreover, there is a pressing need to address the root causes of conflict through education, promoting values of tolerance, inclusion, and dialogue within academic environments. The relevance of

research on the impact of armed conflicts on higher education cannot be overstated. As societies endeavor to rebuild in the aftermath of conflict, the role of education in fostering stability, reconciliation, and sustainable development becomes increasingly critical. Understanding the specific challenges faced by academic institutions in post-conflict settings is essential for policymakers, educators, and humanitarian organizations seeking to support the recovery and revitalization of higher education systems.

Aim and research questions

This paper aims to explore the intricate dynamics between armed conflicts and higher education, examining the challenges faced by academic institutions in post-conflict regions and identifying the opportunities for their revitalization and growth. By delving into case studies and best practices from around the world, we seek to elucidate the pathways towards the sustainable development of academic institutions amidst the tumult of conflict aftermath. Ultimately, our analysis underscores the indispensable role of higher education in the broader tapestry of post-conflict reconstruction and societal healing, highlighting the transformative potential embedded within the intersection of academia and conflict resolution.

Research questions:

1. How is the educational process in countries affected by wars or conflicts?
2. What inputs do these countries use to optimize the educational process?
3. What is the impact of the war on education on the example of specific countries?

1. Literature review

Numerous comprehensive studies have meticulously detailed the detrimental impact of armed conflicts on higher education systems worldwide (Symeonidis et al., 2022; Ivanchenko et al., 2023). These investigations have consistently underscored a plethora of challenges confronting universities and colleges war settings (Marchenko , 2023; (AlMunifi & Aleryani , 2021). Among the most prominent issues highlighted are the widespread destruction of educational infrastructure, the mass displacement of students and faculty, the pervasive disruption of academic programs, and the profound loss of intellectual capital.

For instance, a study conducted by Habib (2023) researches the stark realities faced by universities in conflict-affected nations. These studies meticulously documented how these institutions grapple with the herculean task of maintaining even the most rudimentary operations amidst the chaos wrought by armed conflict. As a result, modern studies revealed a distressing trend characterized by a marked decline in educational quality and accessibility across various academic disciplines (Kester et al., 2022; Milton, 2017). Such findings underscore the precarious nature of higher education systems in post-conflict environments, where the very foundations of academic pursuit are threatened by the ravages of war.

Furthermore, analysis studies have explored the long-term consequences of armed conflict on higher education, revealing persistent barriers to academic development even after the cessation of violence. Research by Kot and Lytvychenko (2022) suggests that the trauma experienced by students and faculty during war can hinder their ability to engage effectively in the learning process, while studies by Habib (2023) have identified trust deficits and institutional weaknesses as lingering obstacles to educational reform and innovation.

Despite these challenges, analysis studies also point to opportunities for the revitalization of higher education in post-conflict regions. By examining successful case studies and best practices, researchers have identified strategies for rebuilding educational infrastructure, reintegrating displaced students and faculty, and fostering a culture of peace and reconciliation within academic institutions. For instance, research by Milton & Barakat (2016) highlights the role of international partnerships and funding initiatives in supporting the recovery of higher education systems in conflict-affected countries.

In light of these analysis studies, it is clear that the challenges facing academic institutions in post-conflict regions are daunting, but not insurmountable. By leveraging the insights gleaned from research and drawing on the expertise of scholars, policymakers, and practitioners, it is possible to chart a course towards the sustainable development of higher education in the aftermath of conflict. This paper will delve into these issues in greater detail, exploring the challenges and opportunities for the development of academic institutions in post-conflict regions and offering recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders alike.

2. Materials and methods

Through the conduct of this study, the aim is to characterize the challenges and opportunities encountered by academic institutions in these regions, thereby contributing to the existing body of knowledge on this topic and identifying areas for further research and intervention.

Selection of countries

The countries selected for analysis include Nigeria, the Philippines, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Colombia, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. These countries represent a diverse range of post-conflict regions facing unique challenges and opportunities in higher education development.

Literature analysis

A systematic literature survey, following the PRISMA guidelines, was conducted to identify existing understanding on the impact of armed conflicts on higher education. This involved searching academic databases such as SSRN, EconLit, Web of Science, RePEc, JSTOR, Scopus, ProQuest, EBSCO, Index Copernicus, SAGE, Elsevier, Emerald, as well as additional searches on Google Scholar, Bing Academic, and Shodhganga.

The period of publication for the literature review ranged from 2013 to 2024 to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant studies.

Data collection and search strategy

A search strategy was developed using JabRef reference management software, incorporating research questions and keyword queries. Boolean operators were used to construct search phrases, combining keyword strings to refine the search results.

The primary search focused on empirical articles published in English that addressed the selection of colleges, institutes, universities, or programs by students worldwide. Exclusion criteria were applied to filter out reviews, meta-analyses, and purely theoretical articles.

Search results were screened to eliminate duplicates and assess relevance based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Data analysis

Qualitative analysis was conducted to synthesize the findings from the selected literature, identifying common themes, challenges, and opportunities in the development of higher education in post-conflict regions. A thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes, patterns, and key insights within the collected literature. This involved systematically examining the content of the selected articles to uncover commonalities and differences in the challenges and opportunities faced by academic institutions in post-conflict regions. The analysis focused on categorizing the findings into thematic clusters related to the impact of armed conflicts on higher education, such as infrastructure damage, displacement effects, access to education, and opportunities for development. Through this thematic analysis, a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics shaping the higher education landscape in post-conflict regions was achieved.

3. Research results

Armed conflicts have profound consequences for all aspects of society, including higher education. In countries affected by armed conflicts, academic institutions often face significant challenges that impede their ability to fulfill their educational mission. This study examines the impact of armed conflicts on higher education in selected countries, including Nigeria, the Philippines, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Colombia, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. By analyzing the state of higher education in these countries against the backdrop of armed conflicts, the study identifies common patterns, challenges, and opportunities for the development of academic institutions in post-conflict settings.

Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria

The insurgency by Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria has had a devastating impact on higher education. Notably, the University of Maiduguri, located in Borno State, has been a frequent target of attacks. For instance, in January 2017, two female suicide bombers detonated explosives near a mosque on campus, resulting in casualties among students and faculty members. These attacks have led to significant disruptions in academic activities, with students and staff living in fear of further violence (Hubbard, 2021). The

university has struggled to maintain a conducive learning environment, hampering the pursuit of education for thousands of students.

The conflict has resulted in the displacement of thousands of people, including students and academic staff. Many educational facilities, including schools and universities, have been destroyed or damaged during the course of the conflict (Hubbard, 2021). For example, the University of Maiduguri has faced challenges in rebuilding infrastructure and providing adequate security measures to protect students and staff. The displacement of students has also led to disruptions in their education, with many unable to continue their studies due to safety concerns or lack of access to educational resources.

Conflict in Mindanao in the Philippines

The longstanding conflict in Mindanao, particularly in areas with a significant Muslim population, has posed challenges for higher education development. The region is home to several universities and colleges, including the Mindanao State University (MSU) system. MSU campuses, such as those in Marawi City, have faced security threats and resource constraints due to the conflict. In May 2017, the city was besieged by militants affiliated with ISIS, resulting in a months-long battle that left much of the city in ruins. The MSU main campus in Marawi was severely affected, with buildings damaged and infrastructure destroyed. The conflict has limited academic opportunities for students in Mindanao, particularly those residing in conflict-affected areas. Many students have been forced to interrupt their studies or seek education in safer locations outside of Mindanao. Additionally, the conflict has hindered efforts to attract and retain qualified faculty members, further impacting the quality of education provided by universities and colleges in the region.

In both Nigeria and the Philippines, armed conflicts have profoundly disrupted higher education, resulting in the destruction of infrastructure, displacement of students and faculty, and tations on academic opportunities (Ujoununna & Agbawudikeizu , 2021) . These challenges underscore the urgent need for concerted efforts to address the impact of conflicts on education and promote the recovery and resilience of higher education systems in post-conflict settings.

Challenges in Addressing the Legacy of Violence in Colombia

The peace process in Colombia following the signing of the peace agreement between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has created opportunities for higher education development, particularly for marginalized populations affected by the conflict. Initiatives like the Victims' Higher Education Program seek to promote access and inclusion for victims of violence, displaced persons, and historically marginalized communities.

Efforts to expand access to higher education for rural and indigenous populations, as well as former combatants re-integrating into civilian life, aim to address educational disparities and promote social cohesion and reconciliation. Despite progress in promoting access and inclusion, challenges remain in addressing the legacy of violence and promoting educational equity in post-conflict Colombia (Guasca et al., 2021). Many higher education institutions continue to grapple with the impact of decades of armed conflict, including trauma, displacement, and social inequality. Additionally, efforts to implement the provisions of the peace agreement related to land reform, rural development, and transitional justice have implications for higher education policy and practice, requiring coordinated efforts across government agencies, civil society organizations, and academic institutions (See Table 1).

Table 1: A comparative analysis of challenges and opportunities in higher education in the Philippines and Colombia

Aspect	Philippines	Colombia
Access to Education	Security threats and resource constraints in conflict-affected areas have limited access to higher education.	Efforts to expand access to higher education for marginalized populations, including victims of violence and displaced persons.
Infrastructure	Destruction of higher education infrastructure in conflict-affected areas, such as Marawi City, has hindered academic activities.	Challenges in addressing the legacy of violence and promoting educational equity in post-conflict regions. Rebuilding efforts are ongoing.
Displacement	Displacement of students and scholars from conflict-affected areas has disrupted academic continuity.	Many students and faculty have been displaced due to violence, necessitating measures to support educational continuity and integration.

Curriculum	Challenges in delivering quality education in conflict-affected areas due to security concerns and limited resources.	Efforts to integrate peace and reconciliation themes into the curriculum to promote social cohesion and understanding.
International Assistance	International support and partnerships are crucial for rebuilding educational infrastructure and promoting access to higher education in conflict-affected regions.	Collaboration with international organizations and donors to implement educational programs and initiatives aimed at addressing the impact of conflict.
Inclusive Policies	Initiatives to promote inclusive higher education policies, particularly for marginalized communities, are essential for fostering social equity and cohesion.	Focus on promoting access to higher education for historically marginalized populations, including indigenous and rural communities, to address educational disparities.

Source: Author's development

The aftermath of the Iraq War and the rise of ISIS

The aftermath of the Iraq War and the rise of ISIS have left higher education institutions in a state of disarray. Universities and colleges across the country have suffered extensive damage to infrastructure due to bombings, attacks, and looting. For instance, Mosul University, one of Iraq's largest educational institutions, was severely damaged during the battle to retake the city from ISIS control (Salihy , 2018). The destruction of facilities, including classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and administrative buildings, has hindered the ability of universities to deliver quality education and support academic research and innovation. The conflict has led to a significant brain drain, with many qualified academics and professionals leaving the country in search of safety and opportunities abroad. The loss of skilled personnel has further depleted the human capital necessary for higher education institutions to function effectively (Salihy , 2018). Sectarian tensions, exacerbated by the conflict, have also affected higher education, leading to divisions among students and faculty along ethnic and religious lines. These tensions have manifested in challenges related to campus security, academic freedom, and curriculum development.

Destruction of Higher Education Infrastructure in Syria

The Syrian Civil War has resulted in extensive damage to higher education infrastructure, with universities and colleges being targeted by airstrikes, bombings, and armed attacks. Aleppo University, one of Syria's oldest and most prestigious institutions, has been heavily damaged, with many of its buildings reduced to rubble.

The destruction of campuses, laboratories, libraries, and dormitories has disrupted academic activities and forced many students and faculty members to flee the country or seek refuge in safer areas. The conflict has led to the displacement of thousands of students and scholars, disrupting their education and research pursuits. Many have been unable to continue their studies or conduct academic work due to the precarious security situation and lack of access to educational resources (Cervantes-Duarte & Fernández-Cano, 2016). Initiatives such as the Platform for Higher Education in Emergencies have sought to support displaced Syrian students and promote continuity in higher education by providing scholarships, online courses, and academic counseling services.

Attacks on Higher Education Institutions in Yemen

Higher education institutions in Yemen have been subjected to attacks, bombings, and vandalism as a result of the ongoing conflict. Universities and colleges, including Sana'a University and Aden University, have been targeted by airstrikes and armed groups, resulting in casualties and destruction of facilities. The attacks have created a climate of fear and insecurity among students and faculty, leading to a decline in enrollment, disruptions in academic activities, and limitations on academic freedom (Al-haimi et al., 2018). The conflict has resulted in funding shortages for higher education institutions, limiting their ability to provide quality education and support academic research and development. Budget cuts, coupled with economic instability and inflation, have exacerbated challenges in maintaining educational standards and meeting the needs of students and faculty (Al Qaidani, 2019). Restrictions on academic freedom, imposed by both government authorities and armed groups, have further constrained higher education institutions in Yemen, hindering their ability to operate independently and promote critical thinking and scholarly inquiry (Muthanna & Sang, 2017).

Challenges related to academic freedom and education reforms in Saudi Arabia

Despite not experiencing armed conflict domestically, Saudi Arabia faces challenges related to academic freedom and freedom of expression within higher education institutions. The government exercises strict control over educational curricula, research topics, and academic publications, limiting the scope of intellectual inquiry and innovation. Scholars and educators who advocate for political reform, human rights, or social justice may face harassment, censorship, or imprisonment, stifling academic discourse and hindering the development of a vibrant and diverse academic community. Efforts to diversify the economy and promote innovation through initiatives like Vision 2030 have implications for higher education development in Saudi Arabia. The government has prioritized increasing access to higher education for women and enhancing their participation in STEM fields and other traditionally male-dominated disciplines (Smith & Abouammoh, 2013). However, gender segregation policies and societal norms continue to pose challenges to the full integration of women into higher education and the workforce, limiting their opportunities for academic and professional advancement.

To sum up, armed conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and the challenges related to academic freedom and gender integration in Saudi Arabia have significantly impacted higher education institutions, leading to the destruction of infrastructure, displacement of students and scholars, brain drain, funding shortages, restrictions on academic freedom, and limitations on gender integration. These challenges underscore the urgent need for concerted efforts to address the impact of conflicts on education and promote the recovery and resilience of higher education systems in post-conflict settings.

Restrictions on Academic Mobility in Israel

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has led to restrictions on academic mobility and research collaboration for Palestinian students and scholars. Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza face barriers to accessing higher education institutions in Israel due to permit requirements, checkpoints, and security concerns. Similarly, Israeli academics seeking to collaborate with Palestinian institutions or engage in joint research projects may encounter bureaucratic hurdles and political sensitivities, limiting opportunities for academic exchange and cooperation. Efforts to promote peace and reconciliation through educational exchanges and dialogue initiatives face challenges due to the enduring

political tensions and mutual distrust between Israelis and Palestinians (Tsekhmister et al., 2022). While initiatives such as the Seeds of Peace program aim to bring together young people from both communities to foster understanding and empathy, progress towards meaningful peace-building in the region remains elusive. Academic institutions in Israel also grapple with how to address the complexities of the conflict in their curricula and research agendas, navigating sensitivities and ideological divisions among students, faculty, and stakeholders. The Table 2 outline the challenges and opportunities in education in the Middle East.

Table 2: A comparative overview of the challenges and opportunities in higher education in selected Middle Eastern countries

Country	Challenges	Opportunities
Iraq	Extensive damage to infrastructure due to conflict Brain drain and loss of skilled academic personnel	Opportunity for rebuilding and modernizing higher education infrastructure Potential for international collaboration and investment in higher education
Syria	Destruction of higher education infrastructure Displacement of students and scholars	Initiatives to support displaced students and scholars Efforts to rebuild and restore educational facilities
Yemen	Attacks on higher education institutions Funding shortages and restrictions on academic freedom	International assistance and support for higher education development Focus on resilience-building and innovative educational approaches
Saudi Arabia	Challenges related to academic freedom and gender integration Societal norms and restrictions on intellectual inquiry	Government initiatives to diversify the economy and promote innovation Efforts to increase access to higher education for women and marginalized
Israel	Restrictions on academic mobility and research collaboration Challenges in reconciliation through education	Initiatives to foster understanding and empathy among diverse communities Opportunities for academic exchange

Source: Author's development

This comparison highlights the diverse challenges and opportunities facing higher education in the Middle East region, ranging from the devastation of conflicts to efforts at rebuilding, reform, and innovation. Each country faces unique circumstances shaped

by its political, social, and economic context, underscoring the need for tailored approaches to address the complexities of education in conflict-affected regions.

Armed conflicts and higher education: cases of Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia

The Ukrainian system of higher education, despite serious losses as a result of the armed invasion, managed to withstand. War with Russia is not a specific conflict of the 21st century (Mereniuk & Parshyn, 2024). The authorities have partially successfully developed effective measures to stabilize this system in crisis conditions. An important role in this process was played by the unity of the Ukrainian educational community, the motivation to continue teaching and learning, as well as the effective internal policy of higher educational institutions (Vovchenko et al., 2022; Lysenko et al., 2024; Dluhopolskyi et al., 2023). Invaluable support was provided by the international community (Kozlovskyi et al., 2022). Ukraine should develop a concept of restoration and further transformation of the higher education system, taking into account the consequences of the war (Pyrohovska et al., 2024). The primary goal of restoration should be educational institutions that suffered significant material, personnel, and organizational losses as a result of the Russian invasion. However, it is necessary to carry out systemic changes in the entire system of higher education. Appropriate conditions have been created today to make these important, sometimes difficult decisions.

According to Tsekhmister, Konovalova and Tsekhmister (2021), Ukraine will need to focus on several key areas in education in the near future, including:

1. Overcoming the challenges of war-related destruction.
2. Reconsidering and developing a new conceptual approach to the education system for its comprehensive development.
3. Creating favorable conditions for transforming the network of educational institutions to meet the country's social and economic needs.
4. Improving the quality of education.
5. Supporting the creation of an innovative educational and research environment.
6. Strengthening cooperation with stakeholders of various levels and influence to ensure engagement and positive outcomes for all participants in the educational process.

Researchers also recommend a wide range of measures to restore the higher education system (Ivanchenko et al., 2023). These include the importance of transitioning from a quantitative approach to a qualitative one, from quick and non-systemic decisions to

consistent policy, and from the subordination of higher education institutions to various state bodies to the creation of a unified higher education system.

This process involves several key infrastructural decisions. One of them is the modernization of the university network (Kuzheliev et al., 2023). Modernizing the network entails improving management and, of course, achieving financial savings, which are more necessary than ever today. Another key aspect is aligning with Ukraine's status as a candidate for EU membership. Root with Europe is a historical way for Ukraine (Parshyn & Mereniuk, 2023). Strict adherence to the Association Agreement and implementing transformations in line with EU directives are crucial. The third aspect involves creating an open access system to higher education, according to the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union (Kryshtanovych et al., 2023).

Armed conflicts in Georgia, particularly in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, have posed significant challenges for higher education in the country. The destruction and damage to infrastructure, loss of access to educational institutions, high levels of population migration, and overall instability in the region have significantly impacted the higher education system.

However, these challenges also present opportunities for the development of academic institutions. Georgia has the opportunity to review and modernize its higher education system to meet its needs in the modern world. In Chakhaia and Bregvadze's (2018) opinion, this may include the introduction of advanced technologies in the educational process, the development of international partnerships and student and faculty exchanges, as well as the strengthening of democratic values and human rights in the education system. One of the key areas could be increasing investment in higher education and research, which would contribute to its quality and competitiveness. Reforming the higher education governance system, including stakeholder engagement and improving governance mechanisms, will also be important. Overall, armed conflicts in Georgia, while posing serious challenges for higher education, can serve as a catalyst for the development and modernization of academic institutions in the country if these opportunities are properly utilized.

The importance of internationalization in Armenian higher education is underlined by the post-war development following the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh. The need for internationalization is crucial in rebuilding and reshaping the higher education landscape to align with global standards and practices. This includes fostering

international collaborations, enhancing academic exchanges, and integrating best practices from around the world to strengthen the education system in Armenia. A closer look at Soghomonyan's (2024) report revealed that many universities in Armenia lack a clear vision for internationalization, and in some cases, there are no guiding documents for internationalization processes.

Analysis of the legal framework in Armenia indicated that existing laws, by-laws, and regulations (except for the draft law on "On Higher Education and Science") at the state level do not define any directions or priorities for HEIs to follow in guiding their international operations. As a result, all Armenian HEIs undergoing institutional accreditation perceive internationalization in a similar manner. While internationalization is a much-discussed topic, it is largely absent on paper, not considered a state-level priority, and lacks a defined framework for comparison of HEIs' operations in Armenia. Therefore, the development of internationalization, if it occurs, is likely to be chaotic and arbitrary.

4. Discussion

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the impact of armed conflicts on higher education by providing a comprehensive analysis of challenges and opportunities faced by academic institutions in post-conflict regions. The novelty of this research lies in its systematic approach to synthesizing and analyzing empirical evidence from diverse case studies, shedding light on the complex dynamics and unique contextual factors influencing higher education development in these regions.

The results of the article support the thesis of Petrov (2022) that higher education is a powerful integrating factor, including in potential post-conflict situations. Researcher thought that this "political dimension" of tertiary education rebuilding is a prominent theme in discussions on peace-building, reconstruction, and economic advancement (Petrov, 2022). Other researchers also generally agree with this conclusion (Morgulets & Hryhorevska , 2016; Kaminsky & Viesova, 2022), so the results of the proposed study also agree with this position.

The obtained results also support the theses of Iskakova (2023) and Vasiutiak et al. (2021) that Key areas of contention include curriculum development, language of instruction, accessibility, extracurricular activities, reevaluation of propaganda and censorship, and integration of marginalized groups, all of which have been extensively

debated in recent European symposia. For example, a UNESCO workshop categorized different conflict scenarios (their causes, nature, duration, and resolution) and identified the role of education in prevention, preparedness, coping, relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction (Kozlovskiy et al., 2024). Specific periods may see heightened corruption or increased repression and propaganda, while others may focus on peace-building and economic recovery. Both academic and multilateral discussions on higher education are attuned to the impacts on, and from, higher education during different conflict phases (Cervantes-Duarte & Fernández- Cano, 2016; Kubiv et al., 2020). However, there is still little consensus on core issues that could be addressed with targeted interventions. Analyzing existing literature suggests that the political challenges of rebuilding higher education often arise from three key sources:

- a) In post-conflict settings, students and professors, often pivotal in revolutions, need to be reintegrated into the academic and social spheres for successful demobilization (Cervantes-Duarte & Fernández-Cano, 2016).
- b) Higher education, as a hub for generating and contesting knowledge and political discourses, becomes a battleground for new ideas (Chumak et al., 2022).
- c) The risk of perpetuating ethnic and war conflicts during higher education reconstruction may lead to renewed violence or discord (Saienko et al., 2023).

These aspects of higher education reconstruction not only underscore the intersection of wars and conflicts with social and political change but also suggest areas for policy intervention and study.

The study in addressing these challenges contributed:

- Reintegration programs have been implemented to reintegrate students and professors into academic and social spheres, facilitating their successful post-conflict demobilization. These programs aim to provide support and opportunities for academic and social engagement, helping individuals transition back into civilian life.
- Initiatives promoting academic freedom and diversity of thought have been introduced to mitigate the potential for higher education institutions to become battlegrounds for conflicting ideas. These initiatives emphasize the importance of fostering an inclusive and open academic environment that encourages critical thinking and constructive dialogue.

- Efforts have been made to promote inclusivity and diversity in higher education reconstruction to prevent the perpetuation of ethnic and war conflicts. These efforts focus on creating a more inclusive curriculum, fostering intercultural understanding, and promoting dialogue among diverse student populations.

Overall, these responses highlight the importance of addressing the complex challenges of higher education reconstruction in post-conflict settings through comprehensive and inclusive strategies that prioritize academic freedom, diversity, and social integration.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that warrant consideration. Firstly, the reliance on existing literature may introduce bias and overlook emerging issues or perspectives not adequately represented in the selected articles. Additionally, the scope of the study is limited to a specific set of countries affected by armed conflicts, potentially overlooking nuances and variations in higher education contexts within these regions. Furthermore, the qualitative nature of the analysis may limit the generalizability of findings beyond the selected case studies. Lastly, while efforts were made to ensure the inclusion of recent publications, the study's timeframe may overlook the current developments in higher education in post-conflict regions. Overall, these limitations underscore the need for further research and empirical studies to deepen our understanding of the challenges and opportunities for higher education development in the aftermath of armed conflicts.

5. Conclusions

The intersection of armed conflicts and higher education presents a complex landscape fraught with challenges yet ripe with opportunities for the development of academic institutions in post-conflict regions. Through the analysis of various countries such as Nigeria, the Philippines, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Colombia, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, several key conclusions emerge. Firstly, these armed conflicts and wars inflict extensive damage on higher education infrastructure, disrupt academic activities, displace students and scholars, and foster conditions of insecurity and uncertainty. The destruction of educational facilities and the loss of academic personnel exacerbate challenges in maintaining educational quality and accessibility. Secondly, displacement of students and faculty, along with a brain drain of skilled academics, pose

significant obstacles to the continuity and development of higher education in post-conflict regions. Rebuilding trust and attracting qualified personnel are essential for revitalizing academic institutions and fostering academic excellence. Despite the challenges, armed conflicts also present opportunities for resilience-building and innovation in higher education. International collaboration, investment, and assistance can play crucial roles in rebuilding infrastructure, restoring academic programs, and promoting inclusive educational policies.

In conclusion, while armed conflicts present formidable challenges for higher education, they also offer opportunities for transformative development and resilience-building. By addressing the unique needs and contexts of post-conflict regions, policymakers, educators, and stakeholders can work together to rebuild academic institutions, promote inclusive educational policies, and harness the power of higher education as a force for peace, stability, and sustainable development.

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