

# Unhappy Rebels: The Role of Subjective Wellbeing in Civil Uprisings

*Caroline Witte, Martijn Burger and Elena Ianchovichina*

Motivated by the inability of existing models of grievances – which mainly rely on traditional socioeconomic indicators - to predict and explain the recent wave of political conflicts, we test whether wellbeing data can be used to better explain variation in these events. We focus on non-violent civil conflict and construct a database combining data on non-violent uprisings and subjective wellbeing covering 118 countries over the period 2007 to 2014. Consistent with the grievance-based approach to rebellion, we find that a decrease in average subjective wellbeing – and particularly an increase in self-reported *suffering* – leads to an increase in non-violent uprisings, but not violent political conflict. We find evidence that this negative effect of overall wellbeing on non-violent uprisings is to a large extent the result of changes to satisfaction with living standards and the perceived capability to have a purposeful and meaningful life.