

Illustrating a Machine Learning Causal Workflow: Applications to Civil Conflict.

Identifying the causes of civil conflict is fraught. It is impossible to do RCT's to study the causes of civil conflict. Consequently, the literature has sidestepped the issue of causality, at least in the sense of which policies may matter the most. Yet, any attempt to reduce human suffering requires understanding the policy levers that will do the job. Identifying causality is critical for academic work to have any human meaning. In this paper, we highlight a possible methodology for analyzing causal links. We suggest a typology for variables that should be included as controls (or excluded). We offer theoretical processes that can test whether a variable is ripe to be harvested as a causal variable. We suggest that our systematic approach yokes theory to machine learning to create complex and systems of knowledge because we can link cause to effect more comprehensively.