The dark side of humanitarian aid: its effects on one-sided violence perpetrated by rebels

Master Thesis

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Abstract

Previous research has demonstrated the different factors that can play a role in the use of one-sided violence by rebel groups. Humanitarian aid is one of these factors. Studies using quantitative research methods have argued that humanitarian aid increases the use of one-sided violence by rebels. However, these studies lack a detailed elaboration on the relationships within the causal mechanism causing the increase in one-sided violence. I fill this gap in the literature by answering the research question '*How does humanitarian aid affect the use of one-sided violence perpetrated by rebel groups?*'. I compare two cases to examine how the following causal mechanisms lead to increased one-sided violence by rebel groups: a perceived threat, looting and an increased number of refugees in one area. The analysis show that humanitarian aid increases the use of one-sided violence.

Introduction

In 2019, a total of 29.6 billion United States (US) dollar was spent on international humanitarian assistance (Global Humanitarian Assistance, 2020). This money was used for food distribution, medical supply provision, and the establishment of refugee camps, in order to provide protection and assistance to those in need during and after emergencies (Zürcher, 2017). Nowadays, the main reason for people to require humanitarian assistance is violent conflict (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2019). One type of violence commonly seen in conflict is one-sided violence (OSV) (Sundberg, 2009), which is defined as the government of a state or a formally organised group deliberately using armed force against civilians resulting in at least 25 deaths in a year (Fjelde et al., 2021). The focus of this research lays on OSV by rebel groups. Several factors can influence the use of OSV by rebel groups, including but not limited to the internal structure of the group, the recruitment strategy, and the presence of a peacekeeping mission (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2006; Hultman, 2010; Bussmann, 2015).

Humanitarian aid is also one of these factors (Fisk, 2018; Wood & Sullivan, 2015). The majority of scholars studying the effects of humanitarian aid on the use of OSV by rebels argue that humanitarian aid can have an increasing effect (Wood & Sullivan, 2015; Fisk, 2018). Most of these findings are based on quantitative research. According to Tuli (2010), quantitative studies are mainly focussed on testing general causal explanations, as opposed to qualitative research, which focusses on rich and detailed descriptions. This also the case with the aforementioned studies since they have shown a relationship between humanitarian aid and OSV perpetrated by rebels but, they omit a detailed description of the links between the steps within the causal mechanisms that cause this relationship. Therefore, a step-by-step account showing the links in the causal processes in needed. I fill this gap in the literature by answering the research question: '*How does humanitarian aid affect the use of one-sided violence*

perpetrated by rebel groups?'.

In order to answer this question, I study three causal mechanisms. First, because governments have to consent to humanitarian aid being provided in their country (Geneva Convention, 1949), rebel groups might fear an increased support for the government by civilians (Wood & Sullivan, 2015). This could increase OSV perpetrated by rebels because violence can be used as a tool to re-establish control (Kalyvas, 2003; Wood & Sullivan, 2015). Second, humanitarian aid might increase looting behaviour by rebel groups and thereby the killing of civilians (Azam, 2002; Weinstein, 2007; Wood & Sullivan, 2015). Third, due to humanitarian aid being delivered in a specific area, more refugees, or internally displaced persons (IDPs) might be drawn to this area. An increased number of refugees and IDPs can cause rebels to use more OSV due to out-bidding (Kydd & Walter, 2006; Choi & Salehyan, 2013; Fisk, 2018). Outbidding means that rivalling groups use violence to show that they are committed to their cause and therefore worthy of support (Kydd & Walter, 2006).

I conduct a comparative case study because this method is most suitable to study complex social and political situations with in-depth contextual descriptions, which allows me to track the steps within the causal mechanisms (Pierce, 2008). The two compared cases are the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone and Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, commonly referred to as Boko Haram, which is active in the Lake Chad basin (Campbell, 2014).

Understanding how these causal mechanisms function and how exactly they have an effect on OSV fills a gap in the existing literature and is relevant for policymakers. A profound understanding of how humanitarian aid really affects the people it is trying to help can generate change in the aid strategy to ensure the safety of civilians.

The first part of this thesis critically assesses the existing literature on incentives for OSV and identifies the gap I aim to fill. Then I provide the theory on which my theoretical

argument is based. This is followed by the explanation and justification of the chosen research methods. Subsequently, I present the analysis of the two cases. The final part is a conclusion of the research with remarks on the implications of the findings and possible avenues for future research.

Literature Review

The determinants that affect the use of OSV can be distinguished and categorized into three levels of analysis: the organizational and/or individual level, the national and/or subnational level and the international level.

Organizational and/or individual level determinants

The internal structure of a rebel group is a determining factor in the use of OSV (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2006). A badly disciplined group with the absence of sanctioning mechanisms and the inability to police their members tends to show higher levels of OSV (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2006). This has to do with the types of members that are attracted to rebel groups. Low-commitment members, who are more likely to loot and kill indiscriminately, are attracted by organizations with access to external resources (Weinstein, 2007). Organizations with limited access to resources tend to attract more committed, ideologically motivated members who are focussed on long-term goals, and are less likely to commit OSV due to the systems these organisations have in place (Weinstein, 2007). Lidow (2016) argues for the opposite, namely that resource-rich groups are not necessarily more violent.

The recruitment strategy also has a determining role in whether rebels use OSV. Rebel groups who rely on forced recruitment tend to use more OSV than rebel groups who rely on voluntary recruitment. This is related to the risk of forcefully recruited rebels to defect. Forcefully recruited rebels being part of a groups that commit OSV makes it difficult for them to defect because they might not be welcome in their community or they might even face punishment for the atrocities they committed (Bussmann, 2015).

Ideology plays an important role in the use of OSV as well. Ideology shapes the idea of what constitutes a legitimate target and the organizational, economic, and strategic choices that are made (Ahmadov & Hughes, 2020). Some scholars have shown that Marxist rebel groups tend to perpetrate less OSV (e.g., Balcells & Kalyvas, 2014). Other ideologies, including ethno-

nationalism, have been associated with encouraged violence against particular targets (Valentino, 2004; Straus, 2015). It is also argued that nationalist groups are less violent than transnational groups like jihadists due to their relation to local populations (Toft & Zhukov, 2015).

National and subnational level determinants

Civilian support is crucial for the outcome of conflicts. The resources and information they can provide is often necessary for a victory and therefore, they are the ones that rebels want to receive support from, either voluntary or through force (Weinstein, 2007). Therefore, rebel groups' relationships with their domestic constituencies affects their use of OSV (e.g., Stanton, 2013; Wood, 2014; Polo & Gleditsch, 2016) When rebel groups seek broad domestic support, they are less likely to use OSV since that might impede the support (Stanton, 2013; Wood, 2014; Polo & Gleditsch, 2016). Similarly, the likelihood of rebel groups using OSV decreases when the group participates in elections since they are accountable to their supporters (Heger, 2015). Domestic constituencies are also important in relation to the territory rebel groups control. Groups controlling domestic territories elicit cooperation through governance structures, while rebel groups controlling foreign territories resort to violence to demand cooperation and extract resources (Stewart & Liou, 2017).

Furthermore, military capacity also has an effect on OSV perpetrated by rebels. However, the extent to which this has an effect is debated. On the one hand, it is argued that OSV is a tool of the weak because they lack the means to engage in direct confrontations with the government, so rebel groups turn to OSV (Arreguín-Toft, 2005; Hultman, 2007). On the other hand, Zhukov (2017) argues that by cutting off access to resources OSV can decrease because the rebel group will have to depend on local populations for resources. Moreover, OSV requires significant logistical capacity and resources and can thus not be marked as a tool of the weak only (Stanton, 2016; Zhukov, 2017). Cross-national studies prove this by showing that

OSV with the specific aim of coercing the opponent is used by both strong and weak rebel groups (Stanton, 2013; Fortna, 2015; Asal et al., 2019).

International level determinants

An armed groups' relationship with international actors can affect their use of OSV. Rebel groups who receive support from foreign governments, depend less on the support, and therefore the resources, of the local population. This type of rebel also tends to abstain from using punitive violence against civilians because it is not extremely necessary for victory because those rebels get their resource support from elsewhere (e.g., Weinstein, 2007; Salehyan et al., 2014). When rebel groups receive foreign support, they might use OSV to show their sponsors that they are still committed to the fight (Hovil & Werker, 2005).

Another international determinant are peacekeeping missions. Peacekeeping missions can boost the incentives for rebel groups to use OSV due to their triggering effect on mechanisms related to a change in the balance of power and a change in their ability to acquire resources. Rebels might therefore turn to looting. Also, the presence of peacekeeping missions causes the expectation of a settlement of the conflict, leading to last minute fights for territory. This could lead to more OSV (Hultman, 2010). However, the opposite is true for United Nations (UN) mandated peacekeeping missions (Hultman, 2010). But Melander (2009) argues that both UN and general peacekeeping missions can decrease OSV. A possible explanation for the discrepancy between his finding and other findings is that Melander (2009) considers the fact that peacekeeping missions are mainly sent to situations that are very severe already.

The effect of humanitarian aid on the use of OSV by rebels has been researched as well. Wood and Sullivan (2015) argue that humanitarian aid encourages the use of OSV by rebel groups caused by the availability of more lootable resources and because humanitarian aid challenges the rebel authority. I elaborate on this in the theory section. OSV is especially likely to increase when the humanitarian aid includes hosting refugees. The reasons for this are related

to these areas being lucrative recruitment grounds (Fisk, 2018). This is also further explained in the theory section. These studies have proven a relationship between humanitarian aid and OSV perpetrated by rebels. Due to the quantitative nature of these studies, they omit an in-depth inquiry into how the different steps within the causal mechanisms are connected and how they are necessary to cause this relationship. Therefore, scrutiny into how the causal mechanisms between humanitarian aid and OSV perpetrated by rebel groups function, is necessary. I fill this gap by building on the knowledge provided by the existing literature and by using qualitative methods.

Theory: Humanitarian Aid and OSV

Humanitarian aid can have an increasing effect on the level of OSV perpetrated by rebels (Fisk, 2018; Wood & Sullivan, 2015). This can be explained by several causal mechanisms

Firstly, rebel groups can perceive humanitarian aid as a threat to their authority (Wood & Sullivan, 2015). This is because humanitarian aid can only be provided if the government of the host country gives its consent (Geneva Convention, 1949). Rebels might fear that the aid will allow the government to buy the hearts and minds of civilians (Wood & Sullivan, 2015). The 'hearts and minds' idea suggests that through winning the hearts and minds of civilians they will reward and reciprocate it with support and information (Berman et al., 2011). Since both rebels and the government want to receive support and information from civilians, this causes competition between them, which leads to rebels using more violence against civilians to establish control (Wood & Sullivan, 2015; Wood & Kathman, 2015). Violence can be used to this end for several reasons. Rebels might target civilians to underscore the government's unwillingness or inability to protect civilians and thereby showing the government's unworthiness of support (Wood, 2010). Also, when rebels want to (re)gain control over civilians and establish compliance, it is likely that they will use violence as an instrument to achieve that (Kalyvas, 2003). Offering public goods instead of using violence can be a challenge for rebel groups due to the costs and necessary capabilities that come with providing for example basic, services and security for civilians (Wood, 2010). Violence is cheaper and therefore an attractive tool to use (Wood, 2010). Also, civil war are periods of poverty, so those public goods are often difficult to access for rebels (Luckham et al., 2001).

Although it is acknowledged that the use of this type of violence can be counterproductive, rebels still use it often (Kalyvas, 2003). A reason for this might be that violent rebel groups tend to achieve relatively greater concession from the state they challenge when they use OSV (Thomas, 2014; Wood & Kathman, 2014). Violence to maintain civilian

support works because, if civilians see other civilians getting killed, they will see the threat of force which raises the costs of defection enough for civilians to prioritize survival. Meaning that when civilians witnessing other civilians getting killed for defecting, they are less likely to try to defect as well (Weinstein, 2007). Moreover, since rebel groups feel threatened by the government, they can try to impose extra costs of winning the fight on them by killing more civilians. This can result in two types of costs: the political cost of being unable to protect civilians and the military cost of losing control over areas where the rebels spread fear amongst civilians, thus causing the fight against the rebels to be more difficult. This is a strategy to weaken the government (Hultman, 2007). The provision of humanitarian aid sets this causal chain in motion.

Secondly, humanitarian aid sites, such as refugee camps and warehouses, as well as villages where the humanitarian aid is distributed, store a lot of resources useful to rebels (Johnson, 2011). Food, medication, vehicles, and communication equipment can satisfy the needs of the group and help to sustain their operations (Wood & Sullivan, 2015). Humanitarian aid is especially convenient in this regard because it is often immediately useable, and it does not need labour-intensive processing or extraction (Wood & Molfino, 2016). As a result, rebel groups have the incentive to loot these humanitarian aid sites (Wood & Sullivan, 2015). Some of the looted resources can also be sold or exchanged for arms and ammunition (Stoddard et al., 2009). Looting and predation often lead to serious abuses against civilians (Azam, 2002; Weinstein, 2007). The abuses against civilians can be indirect violence by for example intimidating or threatening the owners of the looted good. Or direct violence in the form of using violence, or even killing, when the villagers owning the goods try to protect their property (Mac Ginty, 2004). Conflicts are extremely damaging to a countries' economy. On the individual level, this means loss of income and unemployment (Luckham et al., 2001). Therefore, civilians are often dependent on humanitarian aid and will protect the goods they

received from aid organisations (Harvey & Lind, 2005). They can try to do this by creating civilian organizations for cooperation and protection against rebels (Kaplan, 2017).

Thirdly, the provision of humanitarian aid to refugees in a particular area can motivate civilians from another area, to move to the area with humanitarian aid (Lehmann, 2020). This results in a growing number of refugees in the refugee hosting area. Areas with a significant refugee population tend to experience more OSV perpetrated by rebels, especially when they are self-settled (Choi & Salehyan, 2013; Fisk, 2018). One of the reasons for this is that rebel groups see refugee-populated areas as strategically valuable because it hosts many potential recruits and aid. Therefore, rebels might try to convince people from the refugee hosting areas to join the rebel group (Fisk, 2018). Violence can be a useful tool to force people into joining the rebellion. By using the threat 'enlist or be killed', civilians might be forced into enlisting themselves or get killed if they refuse (Richards, 2014). Different rebel groups might compete over the potential recruits and aid (Fisk, 2018). When this is the case, rebel groups are increasingly likely to use OSV to establish control (Fisk, 2018). This is because of the process called 'out-bidding' which means that rivalling groups use violence, including OSV, to show that they are committed to their cause and willing to fight for it, and therefore worthy of support (Kydd & Walter, 2006). Out-bidding can be successful because it makes groups look stronger and presents its members as hard-liners (Kydd & Walter, 2006).

These three causal mechanisms lead to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: *Humanitarian aid increases the likelihood of one-sided violence perpetrated by rebel groups because of the perceived threat, looting and an increased number of refugees in one area.*

Methods

In order to test the hypothesis, I use a comparative case study. Qualitative research methods are, according to Pierce (2008) "considered best suited to the study, understanding and explanation of the complexities of social and political life" (p.45). As that is what I aim to do, qualitative research is most suitable for this thesis. Specifically, qualitative comparative research provides for the possibility to present rich contextual descriptions including the differences and similarities between cases (Pierce, 2008).

I will use a most-different system design to select the case studies as humanitarian aid is almost always provided were needed, with a few exceptions. The most-different system design uses cases that are similar on the independent variable of interest and dependent variable but are different otherwise. This method provides the possibility to infer that if everything is different except for the independent variable of interest and dependent variable, the independent variable of interest is necessary for the common outcome (Bennett, 2004). The two cases I compare are the RUF in Sierra Leone and Boko Haram in Nigeria. The areas in which these groups are active have both seen spikes in OSV perpetrated by the rebel groups. (Pettersson & Öberg, 2020). Moreover, the areas in which the RUF and Boko Haram operate both have received humanitarian aid (OCHA, 2021; United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, 1997). However, they differ on several variables that are relevant to the use of OSV, as explained in the literature review. Table 1 provides an overview of these differences.

Table 1: Differences between the RUF and Boko Haram.

Influential factor	RUF	Boko Haram
Internal structure	weak internal structure, lack of discipline[a]	fairly structured, decentralized, consultative assembly[b]
Ideology	Nationalism[c]	Islam[d]
Presence of peacekeeping operation	Yes[e]	No[f]
Controlled territory	Domestic[g]	Foreign and domestic[h]
Participation in elections	Yes[k]	No[l]
Recruitment strategy	Heavy reliance on forced recruitment and abduction[i]	Mainly voluntary recruitment, reliance on kinship, radicalization, and financial incentives [j]

Sources: [a]Gershoni (1997). [b]Curiel et al. (2020). [c]Hirsch (2001b). [d]Azumah [e]Hirsch (2001a). [f]United Nations (n.d.). [g]Hirsch (2001b). [h]Zenn (2020). [i]Humphreys & Weinstein (2008). [j]Onuoha (2014). [k]Hirsch (2001b). [l]ElectionGuide (n.d.).

I use different sources, including books, journal articles, and documents from international organisations. In order to prevent biased information from being used, a wide variety of sources is used.

In order to test my theory, observables are used. For the mechanism that covers the threat that rebels feel from humanitarian aid leading to more OSV, the observables include indications that hearts and minds strategy were used by the government, civilian collaboration with the government and attempts by rebels to re-establish control. For the looting causal mechanism, the observables are whether rebel groups loot, what they need the looted goods for, and violence used against civilians while the looting is happening. For the increased number of refugees causal mechanism, an observable is the movement of refugees or IDPs from one area to another area where humanitarian aid is provided. Another observable for the last causal mechanism is recruitment by rebel groups within refugee hosting areas and whether other rebel groups are also trying to recruit there.

Analysis

Boko Haram

Boko Haram was founded around 2002 and 2003. The group has had several leaders over the course of their existence, but their current leader is Abubaker Shekau who has been in this position since 2009 (Zenn, 2020). They follow a fundamentalist Wahhabi theological ideology and aim to topple the government to create an Islamic state with sharia law. Boko Haram is against western values but also against the Islam of the traditional northern Nigerian establishments which is more tolerant (Campbell, 2014). The group has been active in Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad (Zenn, 2020), and has been receiving support from other groups like Al-Qaeda (Campbell, 2014). Boko Haram's funding comes from kidnapping ransoms, robberies, theft of weapons and smuggling (Campbell, 2014).

Boko Haram is one of the deadliest armed groups in recent history, responsible for more than 50.000 deaths since 2011 (Varrella, 2021). This includes 9824 deaths due to OSV perpetrated by Boko Haram (Pettersson & Öberg, 2020). They use different types of violence including shooting, beheading, drowning, stoning, burning, and bombing civilians (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2015). Between 2011 and 2014, the use of OSV surged significantly already, but from 2014, it rose even more (Pettersson & Öberg, 2020). Both the frequency and intensity of the attacks increased (Weeraratne, 2017). Additionally, in 2014, Boko Haram increasingly targeted civilians, as visualized in Figure 1.
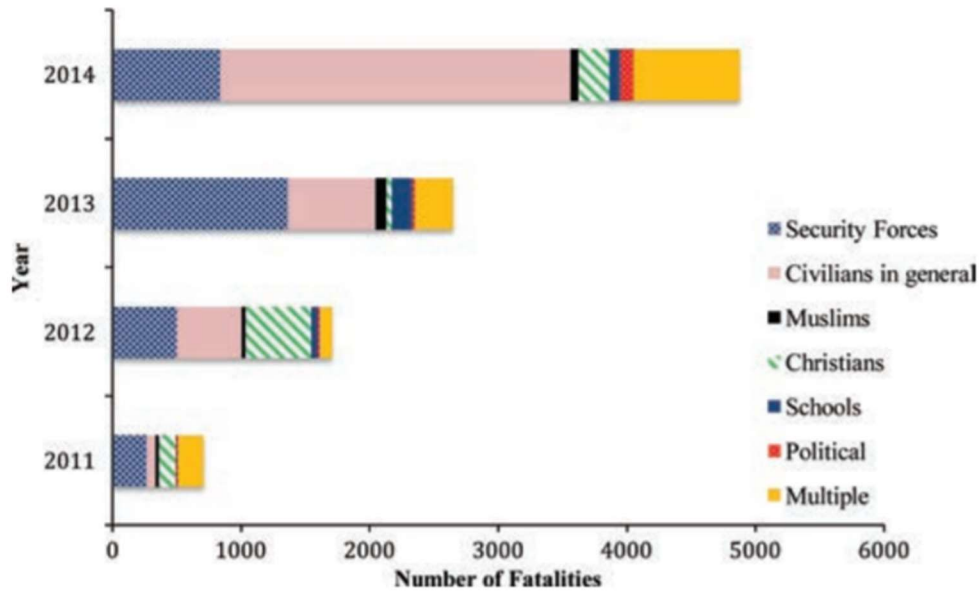
Figure 1: Targets Boko Haram 2011-2014 (Weeraratne, 2017).

In the Lake Chad basin, where Boko Haram is active, around 11 million people are currently in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. Boko Haram has caused 2.1 million people to be internally displaced in Nigeria and another 155,000 to flee to other countries in the Lake Chad basin. Cameroon, Chad, and Niger themselves have thousands of IDP as well (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2020). The humanitarian aid provision the Lake Chad basin has grown from approximately 50 million US dollar (USD) per country in 2015 (OCHA, 2015), to almost 800 million USD in 2020 for the whole area (OCHA, 2020). In Nigeria specifically, the humanitarian aid delivery has been growing significantly from almost 6 million USD in 2009 to more than 450 USD in 2016 (OCHA, n.d.). The majority of the aid was delivered in the states of Yobe, Borno and Adamawa (OCHA, 2014).

Perceived threat

Humanitarian aid can only be provided with the consent of the host country (Geneva Convention, 1949). According to the hearts and mind idea, this can lead to civilians being more willing to cooperate with the government (Berman et al., 2011). The Civilian Joint Task Force

(CJTF), founded in 2013, consist of local youth who protect civilians and provide intelligence, locate Boko Haram members in their communities and either turn them in to state forces or kill them themselves (Agbiboa, 2015). This is an example of civilians supporting the government who have their origins in the same area as where the humanitarian aid is centred. There have been many cases where Boko Haram kills civilians due to suspected membership of the CJTF or as collateral damage while looking for CJTF in villages (Agbiboa, 2015), which is in line with Weinstein's (2007) theory regarding killing civilians to prevent defection. Furthermore, Boko Haram has specifically killed civilians in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, where the humanitarian aid is provided, to prevent people from providing information to local authorities (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2015). Similarly, there have been reports of Muslim clerics from the North of Nigeria disclosing information regarding the identity of Boko Haram members and their whereabouts, and ending up being killed (Human Rights Watch, 2012). Although it is difficult to link these murdered civilians to humanitarian aid, it is highly likely that they benefitted from humanitarian aid given their location.

Rebel groups are likely to use more OSV when they feel threatened (Wood & Sullivan, 2015), which seems plausible here as they kill the people who are possibly working with their enemy. Rebel groups often try to gain back control that they lost when they feel threatened (Wood & Sullivan, 2015; Wood & Kathman, 2015). Human Rights Watch (2021) has reported that civilians have lost their lives as Boko Haram has been occupying more territory in Cameroon. According to eyewitnesses, Boko Haram has exerted iron control over civilians in their occupied territories. The eyewitnesses also claim that violence was used to establish that control (Weeraratne, 2017).

Looting

The distribution of humanitarian aid can lead to increased OSV due to looting (Wood & Sullivan, 2015). Rebel groups often loot readily useable goods (Wood & Molfino, 2016). The

humanitarian aid that has been delivered in the areas affected by Boko Haram is very diverse (Stoddard et al., 2020). Figure 2 shows the types of aid received in this area. These are resources that rebel groups need and can use immediately. Reports of looting of humanitarian aid by Boko Haram are widespread. Boko Haram has looted warehouses of the UN (Schlein, 2021), and of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Search for Common Ground, 2017). Additionally, Boko Haram loots villages to find basic goods (United Nations Security Council, 2017), and specifically targets civilians while doing this (Search for Common Ground, 2017; Human Rights Watch, 2021). According to eyewitnesses, these events unfold by Boko Haram firing at civilians and looting the residences, while a suicide bomber simultaneously infiltrated a group of fleeing civilians and detonated their explosives (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Killing fleeing civilians during lootings seems to happen often as other reports of witnesses also mention this (Amnesty International, 2021). The extensive reporting of looting indicates that there is a pattern and that looting and thereby killing civilians is a systemic part of their strategy. This is confirmed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2015) as they reported the following: "Victims consistently reported that Boko Haram systematically destroyed, appropriated and looted homes during attacks. These practices were widespread and part of the group's fighting tactics to gain control over territory" (p. 10-11). We can assume that looting villages was motivated by the resources provided through humanitarian aid because the area terrorized by Boko Haram has been struggling to come by, with a decreasing unemployment and poverty rate (United Nations Development Programme, 2017). IDPs in the area are even worse off with over 80% having difficulties accessing employment and productive assets. Humanitarian aid has played a major role in providing the population with resources (United Nations Development Programme, 2017). The looted goods are sometimes sold by Boko Haram (International Crisis Group, 2017). But due to Boko Haram's secretive nature (Curiel et al.,

2020), it is difficult to determine the percentage of financial resources that comes from looting. However, they seem to be partially reliant on looting as resource acquisition.
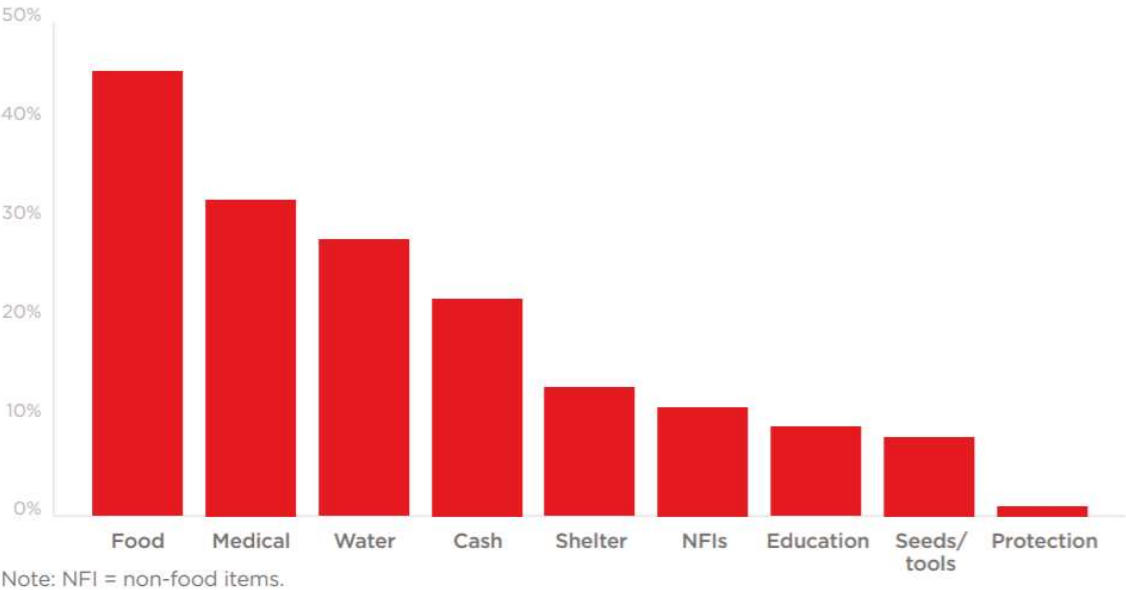

Note: NFI = non-food items.

Figure 2: types of aid received in north-east Nigeria (Stoddard et al., 2020).

Increased number of refugees

IDPs are the main displaced population in the Lake Chad basin. Table 2 provides a summary of the numbers of IDPs and refugees per country. Nigeria is the main source of IDPs (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2019).

Table 2: Populations in Lake Chad basin (IOM, 2019).

Population type	Cameroon	Chad	Niger	Nigeria	Total	% of total
IDPs	244,347	122,312	104,288	2,026,602	2,497,549	55.9%
Returnees	100,925	41,240	25,731	1,642,696	1,810,592	40.5%
Refugees	41,763	1,761	118,868	N/A	162,392	3.6%
Grand Total	387,035	165,313	249,813	3,669,298	4,471,459	100%
% of total	8.7%	3.7%	5.5%	82.1%	100%	

Figure 3 shows the refugee influx from the Nigerian state of Borno into Niger, Chad and Cameroon with a few refugee locations and camps in these countries. Nigeria has most IDP

camps of the four countries (UNHCR, 2017). The IOM (2015; 2021) reports a continuously increasing number of IDPs in the camps. Between 2015 and 2020, the IDP population in several north/north-eastern Nigerian states doubled, tripled, or even grew four times its size (IOM, 2015, 2021). The IOM (2020) also reported that many IDPs move around within the area of camps. For example, in Monguno in Borno, in 2019 more than 10,000 IDPs moved from one IDP camp to another "in search of humanitarian assistance whenever there was distribution" (p. 2). This confirms the idea that refugees or IDPs are attracted by camps or areas where humanitarian aid is provided. As expected, Boko Haram tries to recruit new members in these camps (Mbewa, 2020). The Guardian (2017) similarly reports that Boko Haram has attempted to recruit new members in refugee camps using financial reasons to motivate people to join (Townsend, 2017). A breakaway group of Boko Haram called the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) has also been recruiting at IDP camps in the same area as Boko Haram has (Barkindo, 2020). Although there is no direct evidence that the two groups have engaged in out-bidding activities, they have clashed in the state of Borno in grabs for territory (AfricaNews, 2021). Figure 3 shows that this state contains several IDP camps. Despite the lack of hard evidence, it is likely that this fight for territory was partially motivated by gaining control over lucrative recruitment areas. These clashes have led to many civilian casualties (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development & Sahel and West Africa Club, 2021).
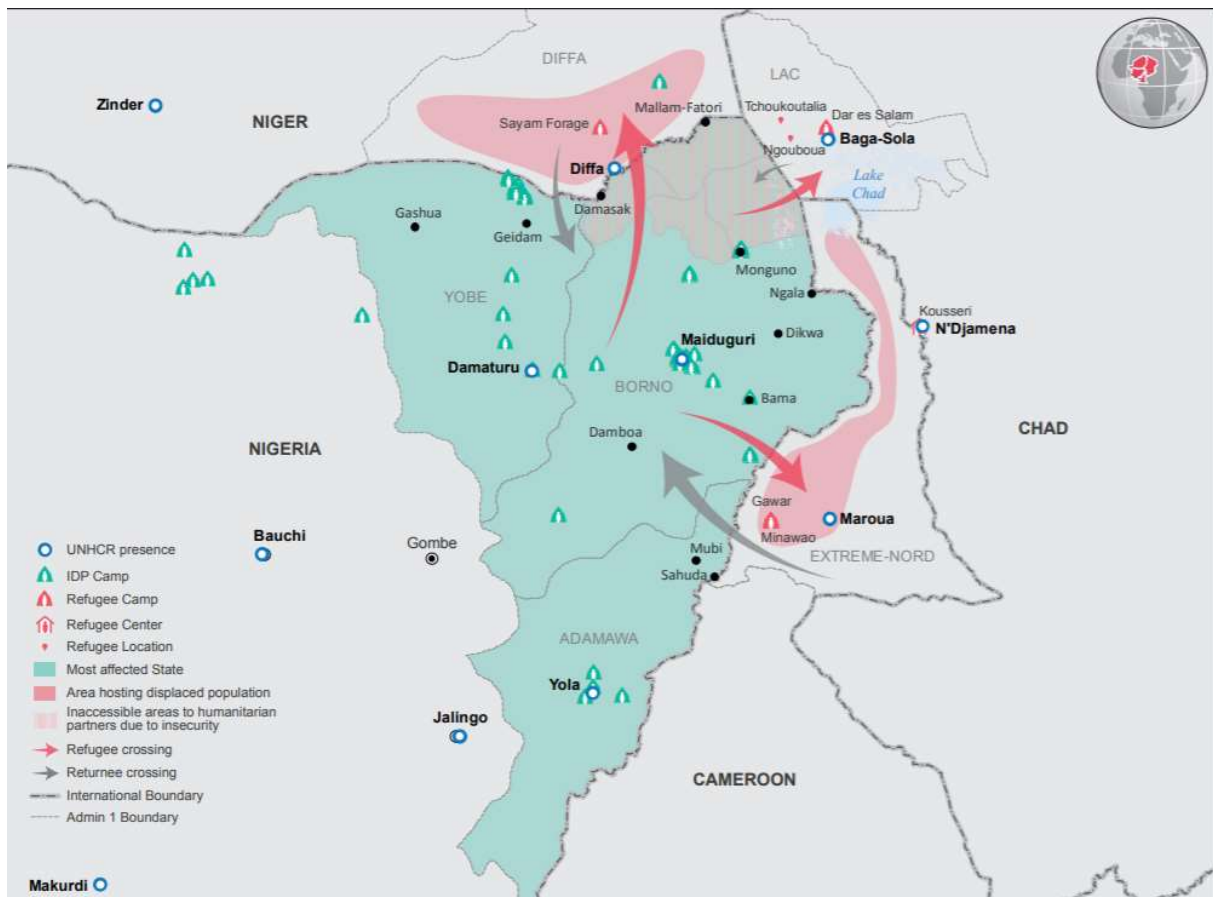
Figure 3: IDP and Refugee Camps Lake Chad Basin (UNHCR, 2017).

Revolutionary United Front

The Civil War in Sierra Leone started when the RUF, led by Foday Sankoh invaded the east of in the country in 1991 (Hirsch, 2001a), and expanded land inwards from here (Davies, 2000). The exact reason for the movement to take up arms is disputed. Different main drivers have been argued for, including political grievances (Bellows & Miguel, 2009), an urge for revenge by Sankoh personally (Hirsch, 2001b), access to diamonds in Sierra Leone's soil (Lischer, 2005; Bellows & Miguel, 2009), or the failed education system and weak social security system (Peters & Richards, 1998). The group had a populist agenda of fighting the government, who they held responsible for plundering the countries resources, and accused of lack of social services for the population (Hirsch, 2001b. Throughout their fight, they generated revenue through the exchange of diamonds for weapons (Hirsch, 2001b), in addition to receiving

financial support the Charles Taylor and Muammar Qaddafi (Hirsch, 2001a). In 1996, the RUF transformed into a political party, and with a process of amnesty, disarmament and demobilization, the civil war was declared over in 2002. RUF as a political party still exists to date (Kaldor & Vincent, 2006).

The RUF became known for their extreme atrocities, mainly cutting of hands and limbs (Hirsch, 2001b). However, they also perpetrated OSV and killed almost 6000 civilians over 11 years with a significant increase in 1994 and smaller peaks in 1996 and 1999 (Pettersson & Öberg, 2020). The RUF killed civilians while attacking villages and they made new forcibly recruited men and boys kill civilians in order to brutalize them (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, n.d.).

During the conflict, Sierra Leone has received humanitarian aid from multiple UN agencies (United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, 1997) and many international NGOs (Porter, 2003). In 1995, the largest donors were the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, but the funding was still relatively limited, with 6 million USD funding from ECHO. The funding increased with some ups and downs over the years (Porter, 2003). Additionally, several million USDs went to UN agencies. In 2001, all these budgets enlarged again but decreased in 2002 (Porter, 2003). A big part of the humanitarian aid consisted of food aid and some cash contributions (Porter, 2003), and was mainly provided in Bo, Kenema, Lungi, Nitti, Kabala, and Kambia (OCHA, 2000).

Perceived threat

The chances of the RUF feeling threatened by the humanitarian aid provided with consent from the government is very likely since the government of Sierra Leone played an increasingly important role in the coordination of aid over the course of the conflict (Porter, 2003). Porter (2003) claims that, after the elections of 1996, there was a significant enhancement in financial

support for humanitarian assistance from international organisations. This means that the government could allocate more money to aid for civilians (Porter, 2003). This was probably beneficial for civilian support for the government and yielded support. The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) also started to use the hearts and minds doctrine around 2001 (Porter, 2003). Sometimes it was difficult to distinguish between peacekeepers and humanitarian aid workers (Porter, 2003). The peacekeepers provided a lot of assistance to agencies including but not limited to OCHA (Porter, 2003). Civilians in Sierra Leone, mainly those outside the big cities, did not seem to distinguish between different international actors such as UN agencies, UN peacekeepers and NGO's (Van Brabant, 2002). This could have caused fear amongst the RUF because not differentiating between neutral humanitarian aid workers and government allies such as the UN peacekeepers might lead to unintentional support for government, due to the cooperation. The RUF went on a campaign of terror in these countryside areas (Abdullah, 1998), possibly as a reaction to the threat of civilians supporting the government. In 1997, the Civil Defence Forces arose, consisting of civilians supported by the government. They fought on the side of the government and shared information with them (Hoffman, 2007). RUF members felt anger towards civilians for turning their backs on them setting up the Civilian Defence Force and they worried about the civilians opening up about information about the RUF (Keen, 2002). This put civilians at great risk as the RUF killed known or suspected members of the Civil Defence Force for supporting the government (UCDP, n.d.).

Looting

Looting was a very common strategy for the RUF (Abdullah, 1998; Gberie, 2005; Bellows & Miguel, 2009). They looted and burned villages (UCDP, n.d.), warehouses of UN agencies for their equipment and vehicles (United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, 1997; OCHA, 1998; Porter, 2003). In addition to the consistent looting, they either made civilians

carry the loot or killed them (Smith et al., 2004). Looting from villages is linked to humanitarian aid because civilians in Sierra Leone were poor during the civil war. The economy worsened, the agricultural sector plummeted, and unemployment rose (Zack-Williams, 1999). Therefore, it is very likely that many of the resources available in villages were acquired through humanitarian aid. The reasons for the RUF to loot from civilians was because it was a source of income (Davies, 2000), as they either sold it or used it themselves (Sesay, 2015). The United Nations Development Programme has specifically reported taxation of humanitarian aid by the RUF (Kaldor & Vincent, 2006). In May 1996, for example, the village of Gondama was looted and civilians were forced to carry the loot. These civilians were killed afterwards (Leboeuf, 2008). Sometimes, civilians were killed during the attack of the village itself (Leboeuf, 2008). A personal account from a victim of the RUF said that the RUF killed her sons, while she was trying to flee looted all her possessions (Human Rights Watch, 2000). Medecins Sans Frontieres conducted interviews with multiple victims of the RUF. From their account, it seems like the RUF indiscriminately killed civilians during looting sprees. The interviewees did not mention civilians trying to protect their possession and getting killed for that reason (Medecins Sans Frontieres, 1999). Refugee camps were also the target of looting sprees, where the aid for the refugees and the other useful materials were taken from the camps along the Guinean border, and inhabitants of the camps were killed (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

<u>Increased amount of refugees</u>

Although it is difficult to create fully accurate statistics on the victims of the conflict in Sierra Leone, it is estimated that approximately 2.6 million people had to flee their homes (Kaldor & Vincent, 2006). By the end of 2001, at least 600,000 people were internally displaced (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 2002). But most of the Sierra Leonean refugees fled to Guinea and Liberia with a peak in 1999, namely over 490,000 people sought refuge across national borders (UNHCR, 2003). In 2001, more than half of all IDPs were staying in camps.

Up until this year, the IDP camps had been growing steadily (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2002). Similarly, refugees across the border, in Guinea, settled in increasing amounts. However, they settled in villages and medium-sized towns, as opposed to refugee camps, and these towns received UNHCR support for that (Van Damme, 1995). Movement between camps occurred regularly. Many IDPs were drawn to Mile 91, a village in eastern Sierra Leone, specifically in search of humanitarian aid (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 2001). Sierra Leoneans in Guinea were at risk because of RUF attacks against refugee settlements and attempts to recruit new rebels (Amnesty International, 2001), often resulting in the deaths of civilians (Milner & Christoffersen-Deb, 2006). The RUF recruited many children forcibly, especially at refugee and IDP camps. In this process, civilians were being killed, for example when parents are trying to prevent their children from being recruited (Dudenhoefer, 2016). However, there seemed to be no other groups trying to recruit in these areas so out-bidding was unlikely.

Comparison Boko Haram and the RUF

In analysing the factors that affected the use of OSV by rebels caused by the provision of humanitarian aid to Boko Haram victims and RUF victims, I found that all three hypnotized causal mechanism are relevant to the growth of the use of OSV by rebel groups.

In both cases, it seems very plausible that the rebels felt threatened by the humanitarian aid. Civilians in Nigeria started fighting on the side of the government after humanitarian aid was provided. This caused more civilian deaths as Boko Haram targeted people suspected or known to collaborate with the government. In Sierra Leone, the RUF killed civilians for those same reasons. It is even more likely that the RUF felt threatened by the humanitarian aid since civilians were not distinguishing between neutral humanitarian aid workers and government who were actively using a hearts and minds strategy. Therefore, it can be concluded that both cases support the hypothesized functioning of a

perceived threat as causal mechanism to increase OSV by rebels.

Looting was a systemic strategy of both the RUF and Boko Haram and both rebel groups killed civilians while doing this. As poverty was and is widespread during the times of civil war, it is very likely that the majority of the possessions of villagers was acquired through humanitarian aid but due to difficulties with finding trustworthy sources, no direct evidence was available. However, the indirect evidence was substantive. Nonetheless, it is clear that the provision of humanitarian aid has still drawn the rebels to the villages to loot. Based on this evidence, the inference can be made that the provision of humanitarian aid has in both cases led to increased OSV perpetrated by rebels and this part of the hypothesis can be confirmed. However, in both cases, there was no proof of civilians trying to protect their possessions and getting killed as a result. They got killed for different reasons such as trying to flee during looting sprees. In the case of the RUF, civilians were often forced to carry the loot but got killed afterwards. This means that although the hypothesis can be confirmed, the expected steps within the causal mechanism are not recognizable in the available evidence.

After humanitarian aid had been delivered in the areas where Boko Haram is active, the refugee and IDP camps experienced an influx of civilians who were looking for humanitarian aid, as expected. Consequently, Boko Haram tried to recruit from these camps. It is likely that this was a partial incentive for the clashes between Boko Haram and ISWAP in this area as ISWAP tried to recruit at camps in these areas as well. Due to lacking evidence, this can only be inferred based on indirect evidence. Similarly, in Sierra Leone, the camps had been growing and reports also shows that civilians specifically moved to other camps in search for aid. In both cases civilians died as a result of recruitment or attempted recruitment at the camps. The difference between the two cases is that the RUF in Sierra Leone did not have a competing rebel group trying to recruit as well whereas Boko Haram was competing with ISWAP. Based on this, we can infer that the increased number of refugees and IDPs, as a result

of humanitarian aid, did lead to more OSV. But, in the case of Sierra Leone, a step of the causal mechanism as theorized in the theory section cannot be proven with the available sources, which is competing with another rebel group over lucrative recruitment ground. The evidence shows that the research question can be answered in the following way: a perceived threat by rebel groups, looting and an increased number of refugees in one area have been driving factors in the OSV perpetrated by rebels of the RUF and Boko Haram. As all three causal mechanisms have led to increased OSV in the two case studies, the hypothesis of this thesis can be confirmed.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I answered the following research question: '*How does humanitarian aid affect the use of one-sided violence perpetrated by rebel groups?'*. Previous research has shown that humanitarian aid tends increase the use of OSV by rebels (Wood & Sullivan, 2018; Fisk, 2018). However, the causal mechanisms that lead to this increase had not been research with a focus on the different steps and the links between those causal mechanisms. Therefore, I aimed to do so by conducting a comparative case study of Boko Haram and the RUF. The results of my analysis show that the hypothesis can be confirmed and that a perceived threat by rebels, looting and an increased number of refugees in one area have led to more OSV by rebels in the cases of the RUF and Boko Haram. However, some steps of the causal mechanisms did not occur as expected. In terms of looting, many civilians died when Boko Haram and the RUF looted goods, but since there are no accounts of civilians protecting their goods and were thus murdered, this theorized step of the causal mechanism cannot be proven. Similarly, the increased number of refugees in Sierra Leone led to more OSV, but there was no other rebel group competing over lucrative recruitment ground, as the theory suggested. The lack of evidence is part of the limitations of my research. Due to the sensitive topics and secrecy around some rebel groups, as well as possible dangers, gathering and documenting information can be difficult and is therefore not always available. Future research should focus these areas. Perhaps this issue can be overcome with different research methods. Additionally, future research could apply a similar study on different case studies for more generalizable results. Finally, conclusion of my thesis is relevant for policymakers because the knowledge of how exactly humanitarian aid increases the use of OSV by rebels can be used to humanitarian aid provision policy. Dangerous situations for civilians might be prevented when measures are taken at the right steps from the causal mechanisms.

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