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## **Not A Target: Violence Against Aid Workers In The Presence Of Armed Groups**

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# NOT A TARGET

## VIOLENCE AGAINST AID WORKERS IN THE PRESENCE OF ARMED GROUPS

August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Global Conflict in the Modern Era  
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## Introduction

Over the last few years, a handful of voices has risen to denounce the appalling violence perpetrated against aid workers. By way of example, the World Humanitarian Day now commemorates the fallen in their ranks and campaigns for their peers' security.<sup>1</sup> In the same vein, the social media campaign #NotATarget seeks to increase the awareness of the international community regarding the deliberate targeting of humanitarians in conflict zones.<sup>2</sup> These initiatives not only intend to prevent unnecessary casualties but also serve as a memento of the bravery and humanity that are silenced by these assaults.

However, the sacrifices of humanitarians remain largely unseen outside their field, if not entirely invisible to the wider public. Although they risk their lives daily to reach those in need, the victims amongst them are paradoxically reduced to statistics in a process of dehumanization that is very unlike the principles that spurred them into action. In 2020 alone, 117 were killed, 242 injured and 125 kidnapped,<sup>3</sup> and each year, the count worsens. But behind these numbers, stand individuals, and countless mourning families and close ones that remain unaccounted for, along with a plethora of people that they once managed to reach, but may never be able to help again. Moreover, the consequences of these incidents are not always immediately discernible. Due to the violence they experience during their operations, aid workers may suffer from subsequent PTSD at a rate 30% higher than war veterans.<sup>4</sup> These traumatic experiences can lead to deaths by suicide and other major health issues, unnoticeably increasing the death toll.

This paper aims to address the issue of aid worker's insecurity in conflict zones, considering that there is a dearth of research in the academic sphere despite the inherent duty to protect those who protect humanity. By means of a comparative case analysis, it will draw insights from three relevant conflicts which involved at least some level of insecurity for aid workers in relation to warring armed groups, namely the Taliban, the Houthis, and the FARC. Indeed, rebel groups are a major cause of violence towards aid workers but the motives behind these attacks are far from self-evident. Hence the research question: *how can we explain the*

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<sup>1</sup> UN, "World Humanitarian Day."

<sup>2</sup> MSF Canada, "#NotATarget."

<sup>3</sup> Aid Worker Security Database. "1997-Present."

<sup>4</sup> Macpherson, Robert I.S, and Frederick M Burkle, "Humanitarian Aid Workers: The Forgotten First Responders," 111.

*violence perpetrated against aid workers by the hand of armed groups in Afghanistan (2001-2021), Yemen (2014-2022) and Colombia (1997-2016)?* This research will thus examine three case studies considering relevant theories of the field. Related strategies will then be drawn from this assessment.

The first part of this thesis provides an extensive review of the state-of-the-art academic literature as well as the theories to be tested in this paper. The next section details the methodology used throughout the research process. Finally, the analytical segment dives into the three case studies before concluding with an appraisal of the proposed theories and the recommended strategies for relevant humanitarian actors.

## Literature Review

### The Targets of the Attacks

Before any attempt at answering our research question, it is necessary to set the premises of what will be studied in the core of this thesis. For instance, terms as fundamental as *humanitarian* and *aid worker* are hardly differentiated in common parlance,<sup>5</sup> although the former is but a subset of the latter. Under the United Nations' resolution 46-182, a humanitarian focuses on providing aid under the Dunantist principles of humanitarian action, namely humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence.<sup>6</sup> These are named after the founder of the Red Cross, Henry Dunant, who initiated the related movement of Classic Dunantist Humanitarianism.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, Wilsonian Humanitarianism, named after President Woodrow Wilson, does not shy away from multilateral approaches that include international institutions and politicized missions.<sup>8</sup> These NGOs willingly conflate national aims with the provision of aid abroad, therefore disregarding traditional humanitarian principles.

Two types of NGOs will be of concern in this research. They have been categorized in the literature as either operational, if their aim consists of providing goods and services, or as advocacy-based, if their sole purpose is to campaign in the name of values such as universal Human Rights.<sup>9</sup> Amongst the most well-known NGOs, the Red Cross is a clear example of an operational organization, whereas Amnesty International is more advocational in nature. The motivations for attacking one or the other may vary or coincide depending on the interests of the local rebel groups as well as the NGOs' activities. Nonetheless, advocacy-based NGOs have been found to generally attract more violence owing to their interference with armed groups' goals and reputation.<sup>10</sup> This global trend turns empirically insignificant in some country-level cases,<sup>11</sup> which suggests that it cannot be taken at face value for every crisis.

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<sup>5</sup> Fast, Larissa. *Aid in Danger : the Perils and Promise of Humanitarianism*, 79.

<sup>6</sup> UN General Assembly Resolution 46-182, *Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations*.

<sup>7</sup> Hillhorst, Dorothea. "Classical humanitarianism and resilience humanitarianism: making sense of two brands of humanitarian action," 5.

<sup>8</sup> Irrera, Daniela, "NGOs and Security in Conflict Zones," 577.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Murdie, Amanda, and Craig S Stapley. "Why Target the "Good Guys"? The Determinants of Terrorism Against NGOs," 97.

<sup>11</sup> Hodwitz, Omi, "NGO Interventions: Influences on Terrorist Activity," 20.

Furthermore, this research focuses solely on deliberate assaults, therefore excluding safety incidents from its scope. Despite the common belief, purposely targeting aid workers does not constitute a recent phenomenon by any stretch of the imagination. Although most scholars ascertain an observed increase in the number of attacks, it is in absolute numbers only.<sup>12</sup> In the meantime, there has been an increasing presence of aid workers in conflict zones ever since the end of the Cold War and the rising notion of the Responsibility to Protect, which encourages aid deployment. This in turn led to more victims in the field. The persistent difficulty in estimating whether aid workers are proportionately more or less targeted resides in the lack of reliable data on the total number of aid workers deployed. Some researchers have tried to estimate it and concluded that the number of relative aid workers' deaths oscillate between 40 and 60 per 100,000 workers deployed in the period of 1997 to 2012, implying that the toll is stable over time.<sup>13</sup> It can be argued however that these incidents have turned more violent over the years since the proportion of armed attacks did witness an unfortunate rise.<sup>14</sup>

### The Perpetrators

If there is a victim, there is a perpetrator, and delineating them is not an easy task either. A leading article of the field presents the attacks as terrorist acts, whose purpose is to induce fear.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, colliding the attackers of aid workers with terrorist groups can be misleading due to the contradictory uses of the label—the notion is clearly embedded in political concerns. For instance, the Afghan Taliban, whose attacks will be discussed in one of our case studies, has never been recognized as a terrorist group by the United States' department of State,<sup>16</sup> presumably as to not forego a diplomatic resolution to the war. However, they are commonly referred to as “terrorists” by the different American executives and were responsible for many inherently-terrorist assaults against humanitarians. For this reason, this research will refer to them as armed or rebel groups, which are more general terms to designate non-state armed

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<sup>12</sup> Fast, Larissa. *Aid in Danger : the Perils and Promise of Humanitarianism*, 68.

<sup>13</sup> Neuman Michaël, and Fabrice Weissman. *Secourir Sans périr: La sécurité Humanitaire à L'Ère De La Gestion Des Risques*, 215.

<sup>14</sup> Guisolan, S.C, et al., “Health and Security Risks of Humanitarian Aid Workers During Field Missions: Experience of the International Red Cross,” 5.

<sup>15</sup> Murdie, Amanda, and Craig S Stapley. “Why Target the “Good Guys”? The Determinants of Terrorism Against NGOs,” 80.

<sup>16</sup> United States' Department of State. “Foreign Terrorist Organizations.”



groups that exist in parallel of the state and offer a relative social order in a state of conflict.<sup>17</sup> In wartime, state institutions are challenged, allowing the emergence of these unusual orders. Since the attacks under study mostly occur in conflict zones and at the hands of non-state actors<sup>18</sup>, this focus will enable greater relevance.

Although the labelling of terrorist groups is imprecise at best, the relevant literature regarding terrorism offers a satisfactory framework to explain most armed attacks against aid workers. The NGO sector is especially targeted due to its natural vulnerability as a non-military actor, which makes these attacks highly harmful for the NGOs while attackers usually endure minimal casualties. To paraphrase Martha Crenshaw, the act is inexpensive but has a high potential for gains.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Kydd & Walter advanced that such terrorist acts are a form of costly signaling for the enemy.<sup>20</sup> Although it has been argued that terrorism offers no political gains whatsoever, but instead provides social utility to its members,<sup>21</sup> it is a widely controversial claim. Many more academics are instead adamant that terrorism is successful and presents, in fact, many advantages to a group with few means available.<sup>22</sup> Two theoretical explanations for the attacks against aid workers, namely the State Substitute and the Perceived Enemy Explanations, favor this idea that important political gains can be achieved through terrorism. In the typology of terrorist strategies, these two theories fall within the category of *attrition*.<sup>23</sup> Per the definition, the assaults serve to convince a perceived enemy to stop a particular policy by increasing the costs of maintaining it in place.<sup>24</sup> The assumption for the next two theories is that humanitarian activities hurt rebels' interests.

### The State Substitute Explanation

In fact, the very presence of NGOs sometimes threatens rebel groups that are attempting to enforce a form of social order. Thomas Weiss described NGOs as private in form but public in purpose. As such, it can be argued that NGOs act as a substitute for the government by taking

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<sup>17</sup> Arjona, Ana, "Wartime Institutions: A Research Agenda," 1361.

<sup>18</sup> Stoddard, Abby, et al., "Crime risks and responses in humanitarian operations," 3.

<sup>19</sup> Crenshaw, Martha, "The Causes of Terrorism," 387.

<sup>20</sup> Kydd, Andrew H, and Barbara F Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," 50.

<sup>21</sup> Abrahms, Max, "What Terrorists Really Want," 78.

<sup>22</sup> Kydd, Andrew H, and Barbara F Walter. "The Strategies of Terrorism," 49.

<sup>23</sup> See Appendix 2 for a table summarizing the strategies of terrorist groups.

<sup>24</sup> Kydd, Andrew H, and Barbara F Walter, "The Strategies of Terrorism," 79.

the role of a welfare state.<sup>25</sup> The provision of public goods and services clearly overlaps with the institutional yearning of insurgent groups that think of themselves as more competent and reliable than the supposedly failing state, or at times even seek to form the state altogether. Their claims will likely be rendered obsolete in the areas covered by NGOs, unless they perform humanitarian activities for the rebel group directly. The other side of the coin is that the NGOs' work will naturally increase the regime's stability by allowing it to place more resources in its offensive capabilities rather than in the provision of public goods.<sup>26</sup> Their enterprise can also favor a rebel group's control over a territory through the same mechanisms. This competition for statehood through the provision of welfare ought to create frictions between humanitarians and rebels if NGOs' presence increases the legitimacy of the government in place.

It is striking that attacks statistically occur where there is neither a strong support for the government nor for the rebel group, that is where a territory is highly contested.<sup>27</sup> Through these assaults, rebels prevent the provision of aid, and therefore ever so slightly undermine the state's legitimacy for their own gains. They may even gain legitimacy through the co-optation of humanitarian aid and claim to be the ones providing relief assistance, sapping the legitimacy of the regime.<sup>28</sup> However, they also risk angering potential supporters or recruits that were benefiting from this aid in the first place.<sup>29</sup> Notwithstanding, the group is more likely to swing the constituents' loyalty to their cause if only a few of them are to be convinced than if government support is already strong and unlikely to move significantly. Conversely, where support for the rebels is strong, the benefits of aid will likely further bolster their legitimacy and attacks would harm their interests rather than advance them. It echoes the argument that civil resistance in contested areas will lead to coercive behaviors from the rebel groups, forming a cycle of indiscriminate violence that is hard to put an end to once engaged.<sup>30</sup>

Lastly, some NGOs, especially Wilsonian in nature, have clearly contributed to the blurring of lines by participating in counter-insurgency campaigns that directly benefit the

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<sup>25</sup> Zaum, Dominik, "International Non-Governmental Organisations and Civil Wars," 24.

<sup>26</sup> Narang, Neil, and Jessica A Stanton. "A Strategic Logic of Attacking Aid Workers: Evidence from Violence in Afghanistan," 38.

<sup>27</sup> Kalyvas, Stathis, *The logic of violence in civil war*, 244.

<sup>28</sup> Wood, Reed M, and Christopher Sullivan, "Doing Harm by Doing Good? The Negative Externalities of Humanitarian Aid Provision During Civil Conflict," 737.

<sup>29</sup> Murdie, Amanda, and Craig S Stapley. "Why Target the "Good Guys"? The Determinants of Terrorism Against NGOs," 80.

<sup>30</sup> Weinstein, Jeremy M, "Violence," 206.

regime. The strategy of the hearts and minds counterinsurgency specifically aims to win the population's support and establish the legitimacy of the host-nation government, usually at the expense of insurgent movements.<sup>31</sup> This is an important aspect to consider in a time when humanitarian aid is shrinking, favoring a decline in traditional Dunantist principles. Likewise, most of the funds provided to NGOs originate from governments already engaged in the conflicts at hand.<sup>32</sup> This has contributed to further eroding the delineation of relevant actors, causing other issues that will be discussed in the next part.

### The Perceived Enemy Explanation

A second motive for targeting NGOs is their potential affiliation with the enemy of the rebel groups. Their neutrality and impartiality are at times authentic but sometimes compromised. The US Secretary of State Colin Powell admitted to using NGOs as a “force multiplier” of American combat operations.<sup>33</sup> Besides, the contribution of some humanitarian organizations to COIN operations involuntarily bolstered hostility towards the whole sector. Even neutral NGOs are unjustifiably believed to collude with belligerent parties and spy on behalf of foreign forces.

International aid can also be seen through the postcolonial lens where Western states typically provide help for Global South countries, but covertly pursue hidden political agendas and their own national interests. However, politicization of aid has been linked with increased violence.<sup>34</sup> NGOs indeed become a direct competitor for local support,<sup>35</sup> and a successful attack from the rebels' side can provide net benefits because there is close to no risk of retaliation. The threat of violence may encourage aid workers to leave a specific territory or cause the NGO's withdrawal altogether, thus preventing any benefits to the legitimacy of the regime or other belligerent parties.

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<sup>31</sup> Petraeus, David H, James F Amos and John A Nagl, *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual : U.S. Army Field Manual No. 3-24*, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Goodhand, Jonathan, “Contested Boundaries: NGOs and Civil-Military Relations in Afghanistan,” 291.

<sup>33</sup> Price, David H, “Counterinsurgency by Other Names: Complicating Humanitarian Applied Anthropology in Current, Former, and Future War Zones,” 96.

<sup>34</sup> Hoelscher, Kristian, Jason Miklian, and Håvard Mogleiv Nygård. “Conflict, Peacekeeping, and Humanitarian Security: Understanding Violent Attacks Against Aid Workers,” 544.

<sup>35</sup> Murdie, Amanda, and Craig S Stapley, “Why Target the “Good Guys”? The Determinants of Terrorism Against NGOs,” 86.

Some academics have argued that advocacy-based NGOs are the primary targets because they defend their donors' values, namely that of belligerent parties, and try to undermine the reputation of the rebels. Therefore, the more campaigning they pursue, the more they will be targeted by terrorist groups. This has been contested in other studies regarding some of the most violent conflicts.<sup>36</sup> This should not come as a surprise if we consider that wars are waged in ideational terms as well as material ones. Operational NGOs unwillingly contribute to the war efforts and are as much part of the conflict as campaigning NGOs. Moreover, if advocacy-based NGOs indeed put a dent in the rebels' legitimacy when campaigning against barbaric tactics, they may very well defend their cause by condemning the wrongdoings of the government. Paradoxically, campaigns protesting against the violations of human rights also give publicity to groups that rely on the advertisement of their atrocious deeds.<sup>37</sup>

### The Predation Explanation

The last, and most widely known, incentive for attacking NGO workers are the resources they carry with them. This explanation does not fit any of the terrorist strategies because the primary goal is not terror *per se*. It falls instead in the *predation* category and can also be described as criminal acts. On the one hand, it is very common for rebel groups or warlords to lack the necessary resources to consolidate their control over a certain population or to maintain their own survival. On the other hand, it is this very lack of available resources that brings humanitarian relief organizations on the ground to provide food, medicines, clothes, and other essential items. They thus present looting opportunities for groups in need, especially if the said groups suffer from short-term economic constraints.<sup>38</sup>

More specifically, in a context of high availability of resources at the onset of civil war, rebel groups are likely to draw the attention of opportunistic combatants that focus on imminent material gains. These so-called *opportunistic rebellions* forego the punishment of predatory behaviors amongst their ranks to foster membership, which permits if not incentivizes violence against civilians in the pursuit of individual interests.<sup>39</sup> A climate of impunity and a latent lack

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<sup>36</sup> Hodwitz, Omi, "NGO Intervention in Jihadist Conflicts: a Closer Look at Afghanistan and Somalia," 174.

<sup>37</sup> Zaum, Dominik, "International Non-Governmental Organisations and Civil Wars," 26.

<sup>38</sup> Wood, Reed M, and Christopher Sullivan. "Doing Harm by Doing Good? The Negative Externalities of Humanitarian Aid Provision During Civil Conflict." 736.

<sup>39</sup> Weinstein, Jeremy M, "Violence," 197-206.

of discipline become common practice over time if the group eschews punishment at its genesis. In Weinstein's view, rampant violence is therefore structurally determined by the initial presence of resources and early decisions to favor material over ideational goals. Instead, where resources are scarce, rebels turn to activism and cooperate with the locals to obtain missing resources.

The strict dichotomy between opportunism and activism is somewhat questioned by Kalyvas since a great level of adaptation is paramount to most insurgencies, which are unlikely to commit to a single *modus operandi* over the entire course of a conflict.<sup>40</sup> The overly deterministic model may fail to embrace evolving rebellions while fallaciously assuming that material interests and a commitment to a cause are mutually exclusive. While this explanation should not be downplayed in any case, its importance is sometimes overstated. They account for about a third of all attacks,<sup>41</sup> and represented merely 20% of the attacks against aid workers in Afghanistan.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, the explanation does not suffice by itself, although it remains a vital problem to address. To this day, most attempts at reducing the risk of looting eschewed dialogue and negotiations due to the criminal or terrorist nature of these groups,<sup>43</sup> and the risk of subsequently increasing their legitimacy. They favor instead higher security around the NGOs activities, which tremendously hinders their perceived neutrality.

### The Mixed Effects of Humanitarian Norms

As a final note, many international norms directly drawn from customary humanitarian law serve to prevent violence against aid workers and guarantee the safe provision of assistance. However, the existence of these norms and laws evidently generates a disparate response from rebel groups due to their inherent diversity, as was extensively discussed by Olivier Bangerter.<sup>44</sup> As such, a group's appraisal of international law interferes with the explanations of violence in

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<sup>40</sup> Kalyvas, Stathis N. "Book Review: Weinstein, J. M. (2007). Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence," 1147.

<sup>41</sup> Stoddard, Abby, et al., "Crime risks and responses in humanitarian operations," 3.

<sup>42</sup> Narang, Neil, and Jessica A Stanton, "A Strategic Logic of Attacking Aid Workers: Evidence from Violence in Afghanistan," 39.

<sup>43</sup> Stoddard, Abby, et al., "Crime risks and responses in humanitarian operations," 15.

<sup>44</sup> Bangerter, Olivier, "Reasons Why Armed Groups Choose to Respect International Humanitarian Law or Not," 383.

more ways than one. It is important to understand how such humanitarian norms can either mitigate or incentivize violence in our case studies.

Most importantly, these norms are clearly defended by a plethora of institutions and documents that give them tremendous legitimacy. In the eyes of the International Criminal Court, deliberately targeting humanitarian personnel constitutes a war crime. This holds in both international and non-international conflicts alike, and for as long as the workers are entitled to the protection given to civilians in concordance with the principle of distinction.<sup>45</sup> It therefore excludes aid providers that take an active part in military operations or that are directly affiliated to one of the belligerent parties. The obligation to spare aid workers may also be inferred from the duty to enable impartial humanitarian access to the people in need. This norm is expressed in the fourth Geneva Convention and developed further in Additional Protocol I to specify that humanitarian personnel's passage may not be impeded on arbitrary grounds. To do so would constitute a crime against humanity, since the deprivation of food and medicine can lead to the extermination of part of the population.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, this research argues that the recent doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect is also relevant. In a goal that echoes a majority, if not all humanitarian organizations, R2P aims to protect the people from harm in the event of gross violations of human rights, including but not limited to the already cited crimes against humanity and war crimes.<sup>47</sup> As a result, the norm acts on two grounds: it legitimizes humanitarian action and incentivizes the protection of humanitarian personnel. Nonetheless, despite identical aspirations, NGOs often distance themselves from R2P due to states' practice of justifying military approaches under its scope.<sup>48</sup> But the norm suffers from this reductionist view. R2P indeed entails the use of force, albeit as a last resort only. Civil society, and specifically NGOs, could take on a more important role in this regard, but they need to reclaim the norm with more irenic features.

Nonetheless, international norms fall short of their intended universality, especially in the presence of armed groups. They can either be violated knowingly or contested as an acceptable rule. For instance, many rebels consider themselves too far removed from international humanitarian law to accept its pertinence for their case. Although these norms aim

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<sup>45</sup> ICRC, "Rule 31. Humanitarian Relief Personnel."

<sup>46</sup> ICRC, "Rule 55. Access for Humanitarian Relief to Civilians in Need."

<sup>47</sup> Harris Rimmer. "Refugees, internally displaced persons and the 'responsibility to protect'," 6.

<sup>48</sup> Crossley, Noele. "Is R2P Still Controversial? Continuity and Change in the Debate on 'humanitarian Intervention'," 427.

to be applicable by all belligerent parties, rebels commonly denounce their exclusion from both the composition and ratification of the related treaties and may instead favor an allegiance to other local or religious laws.<sup>49</sup> Added to this fact is the general lack of socialization that would permit the norms to be internalized by armed groups even if they did not take part in its genesis. The fear of engaging with rebels, along with the recourse to a top-down approach, are dangerous for the survival of these norms.

## Conclusion

The literature review has enabled the delineation of the victims of violence, namely aid workers. It highlighted the substantial discrepancies in goals and nature of their affiliated organizations. Consequently, hostility towards humanitarians usually fluctuates depending on the NGO's activities (whether it is advocacy-based or operational) but also depending on its adherence to political agendas or alternatively to humanitarian principles (Wilsonian or Dunantist inclination). Although the terrorist label suffers from a high degree of volatility across the different actors at play, the typology of terrorist strategies remains useful for examining rebels' violence against aid workers, what with the strategy of *attrition* corresponding to two of the explored theories. The third one instead falls within the scope of *criminal acts*.

As such, three explanations for the violence perpetrated against aid workers particularly stood out, starting with the perception of humanitarians as direct supporters of the state and additionally as direct enemies to the insurgents. A third explanation emphasizes instead the looting opportunities they represent for opportunistic rebels in dire need of resources. This research will test all three of these explanations against the available empirical evidence to unravel the complex relationship that exists between humanitarians and rebels. However, a thorough assessment requires the inclusion of norms dissemination, or lack therefore, to determine why violence occurs in various degrees in yet similar contexts. The effects of humanitarian law on the rebels' behavior is indeed somewhat overlooked in all three theories.

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<sup>49</sup> Bangerter, Olivier, "Reasons Why Armed Groups Choose to Respect International Humanitarian Law or Not," 370-380.

## Methodological Approach

### Comparative Case Study

The goal of this research is one of theory testing, which the case-based approach serves well.<sup>50</sup> The complexity of adequately carving out the indicators, or absence thereof, of each explanation presupposes an in-depth investigation as to avoid the inference of premature conclusions. It thus necessitates the use of within-case analyses, which will dive deeper into the specificities of each conflict to unravel the motivations behind these assaults. The modest size of our sample serves that purpose as well, what with the available room for exploring the surrounding context rather than scratching the surface of numerous conflicts. However, it remains vital to study multiple cases to understand how and why each explanation may fare differently in similar situations. Each case therefore represents a distinct experiment on its own for testing the validity of our theories.<sup>51</sup> Since the outcomes vary tremendously, the supposed causal forces should vary accordingly.<sup>52</sup> The Method of Difference, also commonly referred to as the Most Different Case design, is useful for comparing such cases with diverging outcomes. As a result, this paper will focus on the observable differences that resulted in the variation and compare these causes with the assumptions of our explanations. Each case study will be divided in four parts, starting with a necessary account of the local context before identifying the reasons for the assaults. If the assumptions of our theories were observed but not the expected outcome, this will cast doubt on the generalizable aspect of our explanations.

Our dependent variable is the violence occurring against aid workers. Afghanistan shows the signs of being the least desired outcome due to the systematic targeting of aid workers. In comparison, Yemen is an intriguing case of moderate violence against humanitarians despite the gravity of the conflict. Conversely, Colombia can be considered as an ideal outcome in the sense that few assaults occurred during the period under study. As a disclaimer, even one death is one too many, and this holds all the more true when they are endured by those whose sole purpose is to save the lives of others.

Our independent variables, corresponding to each of our theories, are as follow :

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<sup>50</sup> 6, Perri and Christine Bellamy, *Principles of Methodology: Research Design in Social Science*, 103.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.



1) *Humanitarian support to the government in power (State Substitute Explanation)*. NGOs' activities may relieve the state of its welfare duty through their provision of public goods and services. They may also campaign for the legitimacy of the said government. If that is the case, attacks should occur at a high rate, and concentrate especially in highly contested zones where loyalty is likely to shift.

2) *The perception of NGOs as enemies (Perceived Enemy Explanation)*. Humanitarians can be seen as serving the interests of the armed group's adversaries. They may also directly put into question the legitimacy or the rule of the rebels, therefore threatening their survival. It matters more that the rebels are convinced that NGOs act against them and their cause than whether they effectively do.

3) *The armed group is an opportunistic rebellion (Predation Explanation)*. If there is a high availability of resources, such rebellions are said to prevail. They focus on short-term economic gains rather than their reputation, meaning that little discipline or punishment is enacted against the criminal behavior of their peers, leading to higher insecurity for aid workers.

4) *Acceptance of humanitarian law (Effects of Humanitarian Norms)*. Armed groups may still choose to respect humanitarian law, safeguarding the lives of aid workers. This implies a widespread awareness of humanitarian tenets amongst their ranks, made possible by the efforts of relevant actors and the prevalence of these norms over other concerns in the rebels' minds.

Although some data will come directly from primary sources, this thesis is designed as a desk review of relevant secondary sources originating from academic journals of the field. It also draws from NGOs' documents and armed groups' communications to offer a cross-examination of competing perspectives. As such, the approach is constructivist in nature. Relevant motives can then be deduced from the discourse and language of armed groups because they are both reflective and constitutive of the social reality they evolve in, which in turn constrains or permits specific practices.

## Case Selection

While some conflicts are explicitly deemed more dangerous than others for humanitarian delegates, the causes for variation remain under-researched. Yet, highlighting these differences is essential to link specific factors to the known violence and to start unpacking the said obstacles and enablers of aid workers' security. As such, a diversity of cases is required, as it will enable a better overview of the factors at play.

Three cases of conflict-related<sup>53</sup> relief assistance will be examined with regard to a single rebel group in each country for the sake of a deeper analysis. Firstly, this research will investigate the provision of aid in Afghanistan, in concordance with the Taliban presence ever since the beginning of the war in 2001 and ending with their seizure of power in 2021. The research will go on to analyze the relationship between the FARC and aid agencies from 1997 to 2016, which supposedly marks the disarmament of the insurgent movement and the end of the FARC's existence as an armed group. Lastly, insights will be drawn from one of the worst humanitarian crises, namely the conflict in Yemen since the beginning of the war in 2014 to this day, including amongst other groups the Houthi rebels. The following **Figure 1** table provides an overview of the nature and number of assaults perpetrated against aid workers during the time of activity of each rebel group.

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<sup>53</sup> See Appendix 1. Colombia is a case of low-intensity conflict, whereas Afghanistan and Yemen are the only two countries with more than 10,000 battle deaths in 2020.

	AFGHANISTAN	YEMEN	COLOMBIA
Years of Activity For Corresponding Rebel Group	2001 - 2021	2014 - 2022	1997 - 2016
Nationals Killed	414	33	6
Nationals Wounded	338	34	1
Nationals Kidnapped	428	17	2
<b>Total National Staff</b>	<b>1180</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>9</b>
Internationals Killed	46	4	0
Internationals Wounded	42	2	0
Internationals Kidnapped	43	4	4
<b>Total International Staff</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Total Victims</b>	<b>1311</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>13</b>

**Figure 1.** Overview of Attacks against Aid Workers.<sup>54</sup>

Since most attacks against aid workers remain unclaimed, the number of victims shown is but an indicator that can by no means imply direct causality between the studied rebel groups and the assaults. Furthermore, kidnappings are generally easier to link to specific armed groups because they can lead to ransom negotiations or are meant to induce fear of the group, therefore requiring some level of advertisement of their deeds. Only one incident can be linked to the FARC, and it is indeed a kidnapping, which confirms this trend.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, the database confirms that the Taliban were responsible for at least 6% of the total reported shootings targeting aid workers against 15% of total kidnappings. Either they engage much more in kidnappings than shootings than is the norm, or the reporting of incidents is biased towards kidnappings. In spite of their inherent flaws, these numbers give a first glimpse to apprehend the violence that occurred, or was absent from, each of these wars regarding aid workers. No data is available before 1997, which precludes a thorough analysis of violence during the earlier activities of the FARC insurgency and explains this research's limitation to the subsequent years.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

All three of these conflicts present variation in outcomes, with the Colombian war being the least harmful to aid workers, whereas Yemen appears like a case of moderate violence. However, the prevention of humanitarian access greatly contributes to covering up the gravity of insecurity on the ground, as will be detailed in its own section. In fact, the environment was so insecure that humanitarians were usually confined to specific hubs and under important protection. Comparatively, Afghanistan is said to be the deadliest for humanitarians, and the numbers concur. There were about 65 victims per year in Afghanistan versus 11 in Yemen and fewer than one in Colombia. While the period of study is identical for Afghanistan and Colombia, there is a factor 100 between the two tolls of victims during the time of these insurgencies.

Most importantly, the casualties are disproportionately located amongst the national staff of aid workers in all three conflicts, ranging from 70 to 90% of the total toll, despite incidents against international staff attracting much more media coverage.<sup>55</sup> It should always be kept in mind that nationals are the most likely victims if one ought to provide strategies for aid workers' security.

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<sup>55</sup> Glinski, Stefanie, "Afghanistan attacks spur fresh concerns over aid worker safety."

## Case Studies

### The Taliban in Afghanistan

#### Context

The Taliban, whose name roughly translates to “student” in the image of those who first took arms in 1994, originally fought to supersede the government of the Mujahideen, namely “the defenders of faith”. Despite their successful overcoming of the thirteen-year-long Soviet occupation two years prior, the Mujahideen had failed to establish a stable state and a lasting peace during their short time in power. It must be noted that the leader of the opposing Taliban forces, Mullah Mohammad Omar, had in fact fought alongside their ranks before deciding to put an end to the disorder which lingered through the rule of local warlords and militias. Thenceforth, the Taliban recruited followers in the religious schools of Pakistan and of southern parts of Afghanistan and conquered a vast majority of the Afghan territory over which they ruled from 1996 to 2001, enforcing strict Islamist values.<sup>56</sup>

War has infamously plagued the country for centuries on, causing it to be known as the *Graveyard of Empires* due to the multiple attempts, and failures, of major powers to subdue its people. In this regard, the United States is the most recent invader of Afghanistan. Following the terrorist attacks of the 9/11, the American army sought to overthrow the Taliban government on the grounds that they refused to hand over Osama bin Laden, the Al-Qaeda leader responsible for the attack. The War on Terror served as a justification for the intervention.<sup>57</sup> Thereafter, the group effectively returned to the status of an armed rebel group, falling back into the scope of the present research until the withdrawal of American troops in 2021 when they seized power once more.<sup>58</sup>

#### Collusion of Counterinsurgency and Aid

The distinction between foreign interests and locals' welfare holds all the more importance in a conflict that tremendously contributed to the blurring of the lines between military and humanitarian personnel, resulting in an undue conflation of political and altruistic aims. Aid in

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<sup>56</sup> Ansary, Tamim. *Games without Rules: The Often-Interrupted History of Afghanistan*, 262.

<sup>57</sup> Connah, Leoni. “US Intervention in Afghanistan: Justifying the Unjustifiable?” 72.

<sup>58</sup> Doucet, Lyse. “Hardliners get key posts in new Taliban government.”

Afghanistan is a textbook example of rebel groups perceiving humanitarians as enemies. Military forces have reportedly disguised themselves as aid workers to both hand out propaganda pamphlets and collect intelligence on the Taliban, promising more aid if the communities cooperated.<sup>59</sup> More generally, the counter-insurgency campaign waged against the Taliban aimed to win popular support amongst the locals through the provision of much-needed help. American President George Bush owned up to this doctrine when he declared that the war required a “military-humanitarian coalition”,<sup>60</sup> signifying that NGOs were to serve the US’ political agenda. From the Taliban perspective, aid aimed to impose Western values on a vulnerable population. They did not hesitate to retaliate against these communities whenever they accepted foreign help.

In fact, the principles of the Hearts & Minds counterinsurgency campaign that guided the invasion directly clashed with humanitarian principles, in particular that of neutrality and independence. Regardless, many NGOs readily put aside their Dunantist allegiance in order to embrace the nation-building enterprise, which was meant to be achieved through the legitimization of the new government put in place after the ousting of the Taliban.<sup>61</sup> NGOs’ work then served to consolidate the power of the new regime, tying back to the state substitute explanation as well. This undoubtedly sparked hatred amongst the Taliban ranks. In 2008, their strategy reportedly consisted of ridding their territory of aid workers, therefore of foreign and government presence. Following the killing of three Western aid workers, the group declared that “they were not working in the interest of Afghanistan” and accused all humanitarians to be spies working for the central government.<sup>62</sup> The sole condition of being the only outsiders in the area usually sufficed to fuel such claims. In their words, along with the powerful states they allied with, they represented “infidels” who “drank the blood of Muslims and poor people”.<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately, the perceived absence of aid during the rule of the Taliban post-2001,<sup>64</sup> corroborated with the closure of 87% of health facilities after the Taliban took back the capital,

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<sup>59</sup> Terry, Fiona, “The International Committee of the Red Cross in Afghanistan: Reasserting the Neutrality of Humanitarian Action,” 175.

<sup>60</sup> Crombé, Xavier and Denis Lemasson, “Is Independent Humanitarian Action Over In Afghanistan?”

<sup>61</sup> Sexton, Renard, “Aid as a Tool Against Insurgency: Evidence from Contested and Controlled Territory in Afghanistan,” 732.

<sup>62</sup> Gopal, Anand, “Taliban wages war on aid groups.”

<sup>63</sup> Jackson, A. and Giustozzi, A, “Talking to the Other Side: Humanitarian Negotiations with the Taliban in Afghanistan,” 16.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

in part due to the decrease of international donors' assistance<sup>65</sup> indicates that independence was not the strong suit of humanitarian aid in Afghanistan. Most of the aid provided during the conflict was contingent on the presence of international forces in the area, heightening this perception of colliding enemies.

### Negotiations under Opaqueness and Uncertainty

On top of the perception of NGOs as threats to the Taliban, other conditions factored in the virtual lack of communication with the armed group and the subsequent constraints on, and hostility towards, the humanitarian sector. The invasion of Afghanistan was launched under the scope of the War on Terror, meaning that the Taliban embodied the Terror to be fought. As a result, NGOs felt tremendous pressure not to engage with these so-called terrorists. But the absence of dialogue irreversibly endangered aid workers' security. Many NGOs still decided to negotiate under the radar, which unfairly transferred the risk onto national staff as well as inexperienced delegates who had pursued no prior training in negotiations. Senior managers were usually unaware of the means through which their staff secured access, as to prevent their organization from being associated with such negotiations.<sup>66</sup> Social psychology already warns us about the effects of labeling on intergroup relations. Terrorist groups arguably symbolize the ultimate outgroup in the field of security, therefore name-calling rebels as such will persuade other actors involved to act with mistrust and further certain policies, meaning that discourse by itself generates a set of expected actions.<sup>67</sup> Nonetheless, bearing in mind that even American administrations have been particularly inconsistent in calling them terrorists or an armed insurgency,<sup>68</sup> it remains questionable whether the Taliban deserved such treatment or not. The NGOs without doubt suffered from the deterioration of diplomatic relationships that could have otherwise advanced humanitarian norms.

To further complicate their tasks, NGOs had to operate under a great deal of uncertainty. The Taliban network is a highly decentralized movement, and with a constant rotation of leaders

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<sup>65</sup> ACAPS, "Humanitarian Access Overview."

<sup>66</sup> Jackson, A. and Giustozzi, A, "Talking to the Other Side: Humanitarian Negotiations with the Taliban in Afghanistan," 5-6.

<sup>67</sup> Baele, Stephane J., et al., "What Does the "Terrorist" Label Really Do? Measuring and Explaining the Effects of the "Terrorist" and "Islamist" Categories," 533.

<sup>68</sup> Karl, Jonathan, "Taliban Are Not Terrorists, or So Says the White House."

due to the targeted killings of the higher-ranked combatants by enemy forces.<sup>69</sup> The instability of command meant that humanitarian actors were constantly threatened by sudden changes of local Taliban policies. Despite most NGOs avoiding official contact with the Taliban, the more effective strategy to guarantee staff's security appeared to be the inclusion of the group at all levels of the chain of command to circumvent the precarity of most agreements. The ICRC embodied this approach after the tragic death of one of their delegates, negotiating a "private peace" with the Taliban, and later expanding this newly acquired humanitarian space to other fellow organizations in the field.<sup>70</sup> Despite the decentralization of power, and deficient adherence to the armed group's official rules and norms at the individual level, the attacks against aid workers were rarely associated with predatory behaviors.<sup>71</sup> The group had the structure of an *opportunistic rebellion*, what with the practice of abusive behaviors and absence of subsequent punishments, but it appeared to be a means for countering enemies' strategies or an inherent trait for a tribalist society rather than a defining feature.

### Moral Dilemmas

Lastly, NGOs faced important ethical concerns regarding an already all too complex situation. These predicaments contributed to blocking the dissemination of norms between NGOs and the Taliban by severing potential social links. For instance, humanitarians would presumably be guaranteed access if they incurred the taxes imposed by the Taliban upon their activities. Even though NGOs would object to claims that they were financing the group, according to one humanitarian worker, 'no one is admitting to paying tax, but everyone assumes that everyone else is.'<sup>72</sup> This situation resulted from the already mentioned lack of transparency within each organization, but also that which lies in-between them. Such unspoken practices and taboos are dangerous in the sense that they prevent relevant actors, particularly smaller or newer NGOs, from accessing valuable, empirical data that they otherwise may only acquire through costly

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<sup>69</sup> Jackson, A. and Giustozzi, A., "Talking to the Other Side: Humanitarian Negotiations with the Taliban in Afghanistan," 2-6.

<sup>70</sup> Terry, Fiona, "The International Committee of the Red Cross in Afghanistan: Reasserting the Neutrality of Humanitarian Action," 186.

<sup>71</sup> Narang, Neil, and Jessica A Stanton, "A Strategic Logic of Attacking Aid Workers: Evidence from Violence in Afghanistan," 39.

<sup>72</sup> Stoddard, Abby, et al., "Afghanistan Survey on the Coverage, Operational Reach, and Effectiveness of Humanitarian Aid," 10



experimentation. But most importantly, humanitarians' indecisiveness led to the interruption of socialization, and at times even nipped it in the bud.

In like manner, the challenge of women's rights confronted NGOs with moral concerns. Having female staff represented a risk, what with the possibility of sexual violence and the restrictions on women's freedom imposed by cultural and religious beliefs.<sup>73</sup> This required flexibility and accommodation from the NGOs, which at times imposed regulations to female personnel and recipients of aid. But many more NGOs considered the exclusion of women to be too harmful, especially when their core principles were to defend and spread gender-based equality. Afghanistan is indeed a country where this type of campaign is arguably the most needed. Similarly, accepting the Taliban limitations on women's access to aid, as was the case for one hospital that the Taliban threatened to burn down if they accepted a single female patient or doctor,<sup>74</sup> interferes with the concept of impartiality. However, accepting some concessions could have closed the gap between NGOs and the Taliban. Instead, divergent values sufficed to completely block socialization. If one day the wife of a Taliban had been sick, perhaps he would have taken her to the closest hospital and changed his hardline view that no female presence should be tolerated in a hospital. The question is how many concessions are acceptable in the hope to advance humanitarian norms.

## Conclusion

In the case of Afghanistan, the perception of NGOs as enemies appears to be the most credible explanation to answer for the massive violence perpetrated against aid workers. Humanitarians purposely advanced the agenda of foreign military forces and were seen as direct antagonists of the Taliban. The terrorist labelling of the group led to the intensification of hostility, corroborated with differences in values and practices that were too hard to overcome. The state substitute explanation also partially explains the attacks, although the provision of welfare was advanced mostly by enemy troops to the benefit of the regime. All in all, the ambient distrust and severed channels of diplomacy led to the impossibility of diffusing international humanitarian norms regarding the protection of aid workers.

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<sup>73</sup> Stoddard, Abby, et al., "Addressing sexual violence and gender-based risk in humanitarian aid," 17.

<sup>74</sup> Jackson, A. and Giustozzi, A., "Talking to the Other Side: Humanitarian Negotiations with the Taliban in Afghanistan," 19.

## The Houthis in Yemen

### Context

The 2011 Arab uprising shook Yemen to the core, leading to the ousting of the authoritarian president in place and the rise in power of president Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi. An armed group formerly known as Ansar Allah, but more commonly called the Houthis, defied the new president who reportedly failed to address their grievances and to eradicate corruption within his government. From late 2014 to January 2015, the rebels effectively split the country in two by successfully taking control of what is known as the North of Yemen, all the way to the Yemeni capital.<sup>75</sup> Hadi temporarily resigned, seeking refuge in neighboring Saudi Arabia, before writing a letter to the Gulf Monarchies to denounce the Houthis' "heinous aggression". The coalition of friendly Arabic states issued a joint statement, along with the said letter, urging the members of the UN Security Council to return Yemen's sovereignty to the "legitimate authorities".<sup>76</sup> As a response, the Security Council reaffirmed the "legitimacy of the President of Yemen" in the person of Hadi.<sup>77</sup> The situation evolved into a years-long, internationalized civil war that some describe as a regional proxy war, what with the Saudi-led coalition fighting against the Iran-backed Houthis on Yemeni lands with the aim of restoring power to Hadi's government.<sup>78</sup>

Ever since the beginning of the conflict, the UN has repeatedly called the resulting situation of unrest, economic collapse, and famine the "world's worst humanitarian crisis" and proclaimed it a Level 3 Emergency, the highest level possible.<sup>79</sup> This meant to illustrate the dire situation on the ground, with more than 20 million people in need of aid, that is up to two thirds of Yemen's total population.<sup>80</sup> Although all parties involved claim to have the Yemeni people's best interests in mind, calling upon principles that are highly reminiscent of the norm of R2P, the said crisis is largely caused by deliberate decisions, along with less so intentional choices, that run counter to humanitarianism.

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<sup>75</sup> Montemurro, Marzia and Karin Wendt, "Principled Humanitarian Programming in Yemen. A 'Prisoner's dilemma'?" 8.

<sup>76</sup> UN Security Council, "Identical letters dated 26 March 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council," 3-4.

<sup>77</sup> UN Security Council, *Resolution 2216*, 2.

<sup>78</sup> Harvey, Paul, et al., "Yemen Survey on the Coverage, Operational Reach, and Effectiveness of Humanitarian Aid," 5.

<sup>79</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Deadly Consequences. Obstruction of Aid in Yemen During Covid-19," 15.

<sup>80</sup> ACAPS. "Yemen Complex Crisis Overview."

### Obstructionism from the Houthis

As a matter of fact, the Houthis regularly committed grave war crimes by strategically diverting aid for their own purposes or imposing strict restrictions on aid agencies, resulting at times in an untimely humanitarian response, or even in the suspension of aid delivery altogether. These policies included a high level of bureaucratic constraints on travel permits and visas, withholding cargos full of medical supplies at the ports, and directly assaulting aid workers to take control of the redistribution of available resources to serve the group's military interests.<sup>81</sup> Meanwhile, UN agencies gave in to the Houthis' tactics by paying salaries and incentive payments to local authorities. Over time, this obstructionist behavior has become more centralized and systemic, suggesting a calculated approach which foregoes the simplest observance of humanitarian norms. Aid workers have therefore been prevented from reaching the bulk of the civilian population, while suffering from a truly insecure environment.

In order to resolve the impossibility of accessing those in need, NGOs compromised humanitarian principles at the core of their activities to avoid expulsion or suspension of aid. They conformed to increasingly damaging demands and political interference by the armed group until they were reportedly left with no bargaining power to push back against the overly restrictive oversight of the Houthis.<sup>82</sup> It is arguable whether they did so to guarantee the egocentric survival of their operations or to enable help, however small, to reach the right constituents. The fact is that most of it has been diverted to the benefit of the Houthi officials and combatants, and that the humanitarian crisis is still as deplorable as it was seven years prior. Nonetheless, in light of constructivist theory, this research argues that the damage is never irreversible. Any situation can be turned into a new reality where humanitarian principles are reestablished, were the relevant actors willing to pursue such an approach. This would require better cooperation in the humanitarian sector to come to a global agreement on the red lines that should not be crossed. Recent declarations by the Houthis seem to indicate that they would be willing to revise their management of humanitarian aid on their territory.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Deadly Consequences. Obstruction of Aid in Yemen During Covid-19," 17-32.

<sup>82</sup> Harvey, Paul, et al., "Yemen Survey on the Coverage, Operational Reach, and Effectiveness of Humanitarian Aid," 4-10.

<sup>83</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Deadly Consequences. Obstruction of Aid in Yemen During Covid-19," 19.

### Inadequacy of the Humanitarian Response

To corroborate this dismissal of important principles, the humanitarian response in Yemen was also found lacking on the leadership front. Despite the multiplicity and decentralized nature of NGOs being a clear asset for providing an appropriate and varied humanitarian response, its operationalization in Yemen demonstrated an unusual dependence on the UN. In this respect, it must be reminded that the UN was not a neutral actor in the conflict to the extent that its Security Council officially supported Hadi's government while publicly condemning the Houthi movement, adding fuel to the Perceived Enemy Explanation. Unsurprisingly, the leading strategy was what some have described as an overly restrictive approach, with aid workers confined to urban hubs and suffering from an overall inhibited mobility. Under these conditions, which favored deterrence and protective measures to the detriment of acceptance, no engagement with the Houthis and the locals was seriously pursued, thus eschewing socialization processes. Adding to the difficulty of initiating negotiations is, as for the Taliban, the looming designation of the Houthis as a terrorist group.<sup>84</sup> The supervision of NGOs by the non-neutral United Nations and the name-calling practices all served to establish hostile relationships that forewent any agreement on common norms.

Even though it remains necessary for all humanitarian actors to cooperate, NGOs could have benefitted from a more local than international approach, turning to national staff and fellow organizations rather than the state-centric UN organization to guide their missions. Such a coordinated approach amongst NGOs, once segregated from UN decisions, would have given leverage to pursue the principled response that was dismissed or unduly constrained at the international level. In fact, contrary to what Weinstein's argument regarding *opportunistic rebellions*, the scarcer the resources, the more competition and insecurity seemed to revolve around the leftovers of aid in Yemen. As such, the dearth of resources led to systematic lootings and diversion, seemingly causing predation rather than favoring collaboration between the Houthis and the locals through an activist ambition. As a result of the United Nations' restrictions, aid failed to be distributed qualitatively and quantitatively, a failure that many attribute to the cooptation of aid by international NGOs that were too far removed from the local context and too submissive to the international organization.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>85</sup> Alqatabry, Hameed, and Charity Butcher, "Humanitarian Aid in Yemen: Collaboration or Co-Optation?" 251.

## Reciprocity in Jeopardy

In the case of Yemen, however, one should not overstate the responsibility of the Houthis and of humanitarian actors. Firstly, security incidents targeting aid workers were as much a result of state interference than armed groups' violence, with an occurrence of 14 versus 12 confirmed incidents respectively.<sup>86</sup> While the Gulf States overtly contributed to the humanitarian response by being amongst the top 5 donors in Yemen alongside the United States,<sup>87</sup> the coalition has pursued an indiscriminate bombing campaign which has forced many agencies to withdraw at the beginning of the conflict. The Houthis have proved sensitive to the attacks perpetrated by the coalition, typically airstrikes, saying that they represented an "escalation" and qualified them as "aggression crimes" on "international workers".<sup>88</sup> This touches upon the important norm of reciprocity in international humanitarian law. If the coalition disregards the protection of aid workers, it gives little incentive and ground to argue for rebels' compliance to humanitarian norms. To be clear, a violation by enemy troops does not legally justify a group's own violations,<sup>89</sup> but it does prevent the agreement on common norms and forestalls the expectation that one's respect for humanitarian law will result in equivalent compliance by other belligerent parties.

In a similar vein, the blockade imposed by the coalition against the importation of fuel and essential goods in the Houthi-controlled areas also hindered the capacity of NGOs to provide aid adequately, on top of furthering what is now known as a man-made famine.<sup>90</sup> NGOs would do well to point out the dishonesty of the Saudi-led coalition which both sustains the humanitarian crisis and funds a related humanitarian response. The unimpeded access of aid resources to the North of Yemen would reduce uncertainty for aid workers' security, thanks to a decreased competition for resources and a facilitated relationship with the armed groups on the ground, both reducing opportunistic behaviors and favoring the dissemination of norms. Some NGOs have already been very vocal about both sides' unwillingness to enable the

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<sup>86</sup> Harvey, Paul, et al., "Yemen Survey on the Coverage, Operational Reach, and Effectiveness of Humanitarian Aid," 12.

<sup>87</sup> Montemurro, Marzia and Karin Wendt, "Principled Humanitarian Programming in Yemen. A 'Prisoner's dilemma'?" 10.

<sup>88</sup> Al-Shami, Dheifallah, "Houthi gov't spokesman accuses UN of covering up coalition crimes in Yemen."

<sup>89</sup> Klabbers, Jan, "Rebel with a Cause? Terrorists and Humanitarian Law," 311.

<sup>90</sup> Waal, Alex de. "The End of Famine? Prospects for the Elimination of Mass Starvation by Political Action," 194.

required provision of aid to the proper recipients, and at the peril of humanitarian staff,<sup>91</sup> and the Houthi leaders repeatedly condemned this blockade as enhancing human suffering.<sup>92</sup> Nonetheless, Yemen has suffered from a deficit in international attention due to the multiplicity of concurrent conflicts and the situation has remained at an impasse, endangering humanitarian personnel.

## Conclusion

The Houthis in Yemen have clearly indulged in predatory behaviors against aid agencies as a result of the limited access to emergency supplies. Aid failed to reach the population in need due to the restrictions imposed by the United Nations as well as the grave crimes perpetrated by the coalition, leading to a scarcity of resources that seemed to incentivize the rebels to prey and divert the supplies for their own survival rather than collaborate with local populations as was anticipated by the literature. The norms that could have emerged from closer ties and overarching aid were obviated by the absence of reciprocity, what with both sides of the conflict entangled in their respective crimes against aid workers.

## The FARC in Colombia

### Context

In the aftermath of the Colombian civil war known as *La Violencia*, in which the two dominant political parties fought each other – Liberals vs Conservatives, the 1960s saw the rise of several guerrilla groups as a response to the hostilities. These peasant movements aimed first and foremost to act as a self-defense tool for the Colombian people. Amongst them, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo (FARC or FARC-EP) quickly took on a leading role, seeking the government overthrow on top of socialist reforms inspired by the Marxist-Leninist ideology. At the time, it even served as the armed wing of the Colombian Communist Party.<sup>93</sup>

Over six decades of conflict turned the war into one of the longest internal conflicts ever witnessed, causing the death of over 260,000 people, amongst which a disproportionate share

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<sup>91</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Deadly Consequences. Obstruction of Aid in Yemen During Covid-19," 13-17.

<sup>92</sup> Al Mayadeen. "Blockade on Yemen is all out war: Al-Houthi."

<sup>93</sup> Heffes, Ezequiel, "From Words to Deeds," 8.

were civilians.<sup>94</sup> The armed struggle also went through different phases in terms of intensity, reaching a peak in the hostilities in the late 1990s but decreasing in the mid-2000s.<sup>95</sup> Eventually, in the year 2016, the FARC and the Colombian government reached a peace agreement, resulting in the group's disarmament. Despite the dissolution of the FARC rebels, many splinter groups, sometimes led by eminent ex-FARC leaders, and other armed groups such as ELN, still operate in the country to this day. Accordingly, a recent intensification of violence has been jeopardizing this fragile peace.<sup>96</sup>

### A Growing Commitment to International Humanitarian Law

The FARC movement historically opposed the terms of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) on the grounds that it was biased towards states. In their words, IHL is a “law made by states and violated by the same”<sup>97</sup> and they themselves intended to “end the war rather than humanize it”.<sup>98</sup> Interestingly enough, not only do many of their official communications conform with international norms, the group also increasingly expressed its commitment to IHL over the course of the conflict. Eventually, the FARC recognized the principle of distinction as salient to their cause<sup>99</sup> and their 11<sup>th</sup> rule of conduct stated that “Leaders and combatants should study and comply with the rules of international humanitarian law” - although the document specified that these laws had to be “applicable” to their conflict, leaving some room for non-compliance.<sup>100</sup> In 2012, the FARC officially committed to IHL, and thereafter, a noticeable decrease in hostage-taking could also be noticed,<sup>101</sup> illustrating the internalization of the principle of distinction.

This shows a process of socialization that NGOs benefited from, but also took part in. For instance, Human Rights Watch has repeatedly met with FARC commanders to raise awareness of the group's many violations of international norms. The NGO was especially

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<sup>94</sup> Statista. "Number of fatalities in the armed conflict in Colombia between 1958 and 2018, by victim category."

<sup>95</sup> Arjona, Ana, "Wartime Institutions: A Research Agenda," 1365.

<sup>96</sup> Geneva Call. "Geneva Call's Annual Report 2021," 31.

<sup>97</sup> Bangerter, Olivier. "Reasons Why Armed Groups Choose to Respect International Humanitarian Law or Not," 380.

<sup>98</sup> Heffes, Ezequiel. "From Words to Deeds," 12.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>100</sup> FARC-EP. "Rules of Conduct with the Masses."

<sup>101</sup> Rojas-Orozco, César. "The Role of International Humanitarian Law in the Search for Peace: Lessons from Colombia." 712.

critical of the fact that they seemed to arbitrarily overlook some norms while enforcing others.<sup>102</sup> However, the argument that only absolute compliance can be deemed as a success is unpersuasive in the author's view. Highlighting the good behaviors or progress towards a more humane way of fighting for a cause goes a long way. Other NGOs such as the ICRC and Geneva Call are more open to bringing back *ownership* into the equation, encouraging armed groups such as the FARC to ratify a Deed of Commitment written in concordance with other eminent NGOs and armed groups while still promoting IHL norms.<sup>103</sup> Direct negotiations with the FARC coincide with an increased respect for IHL, in part because they bridge the existing gap between armed groups and international relations while also adapting IHL to a more contextual and local language.

### NGOs, friends or foes?

The openness of the FARC towards humanitarian actors only equaled their categorization of specific organizations as allies or enemies. Although the group recognized the humanitarian principle of independence, it stated that the concept did not hold much water in practice. They perceived humanitarians as “conditioned by the political contexts in which they arise, their sources of funding, the degree of their relationship with the authorities”, thus presenting significant bias towards one belligerent party or another. Accordingly, in 2011, a UN humanitarian aid program was thought to be taking part in a counter-insurgency campaign due to its presumed ties with the Colombian government.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, the FARC accused Human Rights Watch to collide with US interventionism under the guise of humanitarian action.<sup>105</sup>

Nonetheless, this antagonism did not embody usual practices in Colombia. When the US-funded Plan Colombia overtly contributed to the militarization of the government army and police under seemingly pacifist goals, dozens of NGOs rushed to denounce the farce, raising both awareness amongst the international community and drafting a press release directed at the then American president Bill Clinton.<sup>106</sup> Overall, local NGOs also tended to be heavily

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<sup>102</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Colombia: Beyond Negotiation International Humanitarian Law and its Application to the Conduct of the FARC-EP."

<sup>103</sup> Geneva Call, "Geneva Call's Annual Report 2021," 5.

<sup>104</sup> Heffes, Ezequiel, "From Words to Deeds," 31-33.

<sup>105</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Colombia: Beyond Negotiation International Humanitarian Law and its Application to the Conduct of the FARC-EP."

<sup>106</sup> Fletcher, Nataly. "Advocates or Obstacles? NGOs and Plan Colombia."



biased against the government in action and favoring armed groups. An insidious military operation illustrates this mutual trust. In 2008, the Colombian army infiltrated the FARC for a hostage rescue, tricking them into putting the hostages in a helicopter kindly loaned by a sympathetic NGO.<sup>107</sup> The fact that FARC leaders bought into the lie suggests that it appeared credible that NGOs would directly provide military resources. Perhaps the readiness of NGOs to engage with the FARC enabled higher sensitivity to humanitarian norms, but it was done at the expense of neutrality. In fact, the only hindrances to negotiating with local armed groups seem to be the legal barriers set forth by the Colombian government.<sup>108</sup> This illustrates the other end of the spectrum of the Perceived Enemy and State Substitute explanations, suggesting that cordial relations between an armed group and humanitarians avert violent assaults but at the expense of the current government's interests.

### Strong Compliance and Enforcement

Other than the engagement of NGOs with the FARC, other enabling conditions are to be considered when assessing the low targeting of aid workers in Colombia. Although these conditions fall outside the humanitarian sector's leeway, lessons can still be drawn for the sake of aid workers' safety.

To start with, the high level of structure within the group, to the extent of resembling that of a state army, greatly influenced the dissemination of norms, while reducing potential rogue attacks from uncontrolled members. Most of the FARC violence was ordered from the top of the hierarchy, and any attack was thoroughly planned by the leaders.<sup>109</sup> According to their representatives, the only acceptable instances for targeting aid workers were clearly stated as followed: the attack had to be 1) a last resort, 2) motivated by the collection of sufficient intelligence regarding the targeted subjects 3) being accompanied by "enemy military personnel".<sup>110</sup> For this purpose, one document specified that humanitarians should display "clear visible signs" and "travel at a minimum speed".<sup>111</sup> These types of in-group laws were highly institutionalized, starting with their ratification at National Conferences before being

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<sup>107</sup> O'Grady, Mary Anastasia. "FARC's 'Human Rights' friends."

<sup>108</sup> Geneva Call. "Geneva Call's Annual Report 2021," 32.

<sup>109</sup> Heffes, Ezequiel. "From Words to Deeds," 8-15.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

passed on through a trickle-down effect, which favors the effects of socialization with the NGOs' and local communities' interests as soon as their leaders conform with them.<sup>112</sup>

That is not to say that enforcement was unconditional by any stretch of the imagination, but non-compliance remained anecdotal in comparison to other organized armed groups.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, it has been argued that the convergence of in-group rules and IHL norms prevailed when peace prospects were strong, along with a subsequent will for political recognition and legitimacy. This trend could be noticed in 2012 and onward, when the group understood that its credibility in the peace process also relied on its attention to reputational concerns.<sup>114</sup> This presupposes that the armed group is more likely to observe the security of aid workers when it considers itself a credible party for national negotiations and at the same time associates such credibility with respect to international norms.

## Conclusion

The FARC represent a case where any of the prerequisites for the explanations are overtly absent, coinciding with minimal violence against aid workers. Humanitarians and the group engaged in amicable relations, perhaps to a point that was morally reprehensible all humanitarian principles considered. However, the early resistance of the insurgents against humanitarian norms waded over the years thanks to the work of campaigning NGOs that successfully brought back ownership in the pursuit of compliance to international law as well as a clear understanding on the FARC's part that compliance with humanitarian norms would better their credibility for peace prospects. The tentative predatory behaviors seemed constrained by a strong in-group discipline and militarized structure.

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<sup>112</sup> Heffes, Ezequiel, "From Words to Deeds," 47.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 31-41.

<sup>114</sup> Rojas-Orozco, César, "The Role of International Humanitarian Law in the Search for Peace: Lessons from Colombia," 712.

## Discussions

### Findings

#### Explanations

The three explanations for violence against aid workers performed unevenly for the three conflicts under study. Our case analyses strengthened the validity of the Perceived Enemy Explanation while the indicators for the State Substitute Explanation remained subsidiary or further sustained the first Explanation. The Predation theory showed relevance as well, although its assumptions must be adjusted to fit our cases.

Firstly, the perception of aid workers as enemies held water for the case of Afghanistan, where humanitarians effectively joined war efforts, leading to an antagonist relationship between aid workers and the Taliban insurgency. Wilsonian NGOs, which integrated the US political agendas into their own, incited animosity, which possibly damaged the image of the humanitarian sector as a whole. The opposite happened in Colombia, where the FARC started to see aid agencies as allies rather than enemies, creating a safe environment for humanitarian personnel. This suggests that there exists, as a corollary to the Perceived Enemy explanation, a Perceived Ally argument which guarantees aid workers' security. Nonetheless, such a situation, although it seemingly preserves the lives of humanitarians, is very likely to create other types of friction. When NGOs lose their neutrality to the detriment of the government in power, they may lose access to the territories in need of assistance. The executive power could impose restrictions on the humanitarian sector, preventing the provision of aid in the same way that rebels prevent it through their assaults.

For its part, the State Substitute explanation did not appear very relevant for the case studies. The potential benefits for the regime in place served to increase the perception of aid workers as enemies in Afghanistan but remained secondary for all three armed groups. It reinforced the first explanation in the sense that the Afghan government, aid agencies and foreign troops all collided into one big enemy because of the coalition they formed and their overt solidarity. In the case of Yemen, the fact that the Houthis exerted control over the territory in question and the overall lack of aid averted any benefits to go to the Yemeni government. In Colombia, the FARC seemed to accept that NGOs' presence benefitted them more than they would the regime for the reason noted above.

Lastly, the Predation argument was consistent with the low occurrence of assaults in Colombia due to the high degree of discipline observed amongst the FARC's ranks. However, it represented only a minority of the attacks in Afghanistan. Despite a decentralized power and a lack of overall enforcement of the leadership's rules, both of which should have favored criminal practices, the Taliban attacked NGOs on ideological terms rather than economic grounds. Likewise, opportunistic behaviors were rampant in Yemen, with the diversion of aid for the Houthi combatants' direct benefit. Surprisingly, predatory behaviors occurred where resources were scarce, suggesting that opportunistic rebellions can rise not only from a resource-intensive context but also from a situation of extreme famine and poverty. Perhaps the dire situation, considered as unlike to any other humanitarian crises, explains this anomaly. Collaboration may have been insufficient to guarantee both the locals and the Houthis' survival had they gone for this approach. Instead, preying on resources appeared as a better means of survival. A glimpse into sociology research could have enlighten Weinstein's argument in this regard. Many researchers often highlight the increase in criminality where poverty is high, and resources scarce, which runs counter to his theory.<sup>115</sup> Even so, his emphasis on the structure of the rebel group proved salient regardless of the initial availability of resources and the nature of the rebel group. The FARC embodies this correlation between a rigid internal structure and the absence of assaults against aid workers.

### The Role of Humanitarian Norms

In parallel to these explanations, this paper also considered the effects of norms socialization which interacted with our other explanations. Bangerter already theorized that the insurgents' respect for IHL would vary depending on the group's specific interests and goals. This research further argues that the internalization of these norms is directly correlated with the quality of humanitarian/rebel relations. The difficulty of disseminating norms where NGOs were perceived as a threat (Afghanistan in particular), added to the high commitment to IHL where they were perceived as allies (Colombia), teaches us several things. Firstly, it implies that norms dissemination is intrinsically ingrained within the Perceived Enemy Explanation. It could even be a causal mechanism of the theory. The more cordial the relationships between rebels and NGOs, the more respect for humanitarian norms. This includes the distinction which protects humanitarians from assaults, therefore enabling higher security for humanitarians. Secondly, it

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<sup>115</sup> Pare, Paul-Philippe, and Richard Felson. "Income Inequality, Poverty and Crime Across Nations," 452.

suggests that NGOs are potentially the main vector for bringing awareness of humanitarian norms. In the absence of cordial relations between humanitarians and rebels, humanitarian law was virtually dismissed by the rebels. This is tentatively explained by their geographical proximity and their readiness to negotiate with insurgents even when other relevant actors refuse to engage with armed groups.

Nonetheless, the humanitarians' willingness to interact with rebels did not suffice on its own. The attempted negotiations with the Houthis led to concessions on the humanitarian side which hindered the application of humanitarian norms. The eagerness to provide aid at any cost took over the efforts to alert on international law. The overly protective measures also isolated humanitarians from the bulk of the locals, further preventing any form of socialization. In Afghanistan, the uncertainty surrounding negotiations also averted strong diplomatic relations due to the audience's fear of engaging with so-called terrorists. Humanitarians resorted to go under the radar, which appeared to be especially harmful for the furtherance of norms. Humanitarian law was repeatedly shunned to the benefit of the Taliban code of conduct whereas in Colombia, where the FARC accepted humanitarians' presence, IHL visibly integrated their rules over time. On a side note, it also puts a dent in the current debate on whether negotiating with rebel groups will strengthen their power. The Taliban have successfully risen to power, despite all attempts at keeping them outside the political and diplomatic realm, whereas the FARC signed a peace treaty which resulted in their disarmament. At least for these two conflicts, the involvement of humanitarians with insurgents did not weigh significantly enough to shift the balance of power, either to the disadvantage of the Taliban or to the benefit of the FARC.

### *Strategies for Aid Workers' Security*

The main obstacles to aid workers' security resulted from several factors. Firstly, any effort of aid agencies to serve military actors' agendas greatly hindered their status. They then became potential targets, although they lacked the effective means to defend themselves or to deter assaults. This antagonistic relationship was also driven by name-calling the armed group "terrorists", since it prevented the dissemination of norms as well as encouraged these groups to lock in certain practices that were expected of them—as a reminder, two of the explanations are considered as pertaining to terrorist strategies. As a result, NGOs should refrain from unnecessarily labelling insurgent groups or indulging in practices that fuel rebels' mistrust. Nevertheless, although effective for enhancing aid workers' security, connivance for the

insurgents could blur the lines between civilians and combatants, challenging their right to be protected under the principle of distinction. This further reasserts the importance of Dunantist principles.

Conversely, friendlier relationships between humanitarians and rebels foster the socialization of humanitarian norms, what with the advent of ownership to encourage rebels' commitment to international humanitarian law. When such relationships exist, and with norms put in their own words and codes of conduct, armed groups seem less reluctant to comply with international norms. However, norms appear to travel more effectively where armed groups show a high level of structure on top of a willingness to commit. The FARC seemed especially exemplary in that regard, whereas the Taliban decentralized power led to inconsistency and hardship in negotiating for a safe environment for aid workers. Perhaps a multi-leveled negotiation is required for rebel groups that lack structure and discipline to ensure the coherence of all relevant commanders' policies. This strategy requires much more resources, albeit well spent, meaning that all NGOs will not be able to afford it. This inconvenience can be bypassed with better collaboration between humanitarian organizations, exemplified by the private peace negotiated by the Red Cross which later extended their rights to other NGOs.

Lastly, abiding to an overly restrictive approach, as was the case of Yemen, created opaqueness between humanitarian organizations and armed groups while generating a resource-poor environment that encouraged predation on the few resources that aid workers managed to provide. NGOs ought to rely on each other to determine potential red lines that would disrupt the general provision of relief assistance. This includes restraint regarding their capitulation on core humanitarian norms. The short-term benefits to the population in need could otherwise be outweighed by the long-term struggle to overcome past decisions. On the other hand, hostile relationships arise from initial gaps in values that are deemed impossible to overcome, for instance due to ethical concerns regarding women's rights in Afghanistan or the fear of providing too much legitimacy or resources to insurgent groups. One can rightfully question if humanitarians can compromise their principles in the hope that norms progress, ever so slightly, within a said rebel group. In favor of this strategy is the fact that, even in a context of poor diplomatic relations, the Taliban code of conduct called the *Layeha* still evolved to include notions of international law.<sup>116</sup> The process was slow and incomplete, but it challenged the perception that the code of conduct was a rigid and impervious set of religious laws. The

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<sup>116</sup> Nagamine, Yoshinobu. *The Legitimization Strategy of the Taliban's Code of Conduct : through the One-Way Mirror*, 2015.

question remains about whether this justifies involvement with the Taliban but it is for certain that no involvement will foster no change at all. Finally, rebel groups may relieve themselves from any duty to respect humanitarian norms, amongst them the protection of aid workers, due to other belligerent parties' neglect of those very norms. The only resort left for NGOs in this regard would be to advocate against the treaty violations of belligerent parties.

### Limitations

It is important to note that this research entails several challenges, which must be acknowledged here. Above all, the scope of this research was reduced for the sake of deepening the analysis to only include armed groups as potential perpetrators of violence. As was previously mentioned, however, other actors are equally responsible for the security incidents that they endured, as illustrated by the norms' violations of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. Moreover, more cases should be analyzed to confirm or invalidate this research's findings. For instance, the explanations may perform differently for other conflicts. In particular, other cases of extreme scarcity of resources should be analyzed to understand whether the Houthis' opportunistic behaviors constitute an exception or the norm. Similarly, more research is required to shed light on the importance of the group's structure to determine whether the rebels engage in predation, regardless of the initial availability of resources.

The overall lack of transparency from NGOs due to surrounding taboos and hidden practices, as well as the limited data available on rebel groups, present research with many challenges that can only be overcome with more intensive academic engagement and an increased collection of data on the ground. Perhaps the engagement with specific NGOs and rebels would greatly advance the state of research in the department. None of these actors systematically collect data on their activities, or at least are not as willing to share than most states. This creates gaps, such as the inherent hardship that comes with estimating how many aid workers are deployed, and how to link humanitarians' deaths with armed groups. Although the practice of ownership shows encouraging signs, it is hard to appraise the effects of organizations' activities such as that of Geneva Call. Most information originates from the organization itself, which poses selection concerns.

Moreover, NGOs are not all-powerful. Even with the best intentions and assessments of the situations, they may never reach the ideal outcome of zero incident on their own. They are highly dependent on other actors' words and deeds and may at times only influence them rather

than actively act upon them. The strategies offered in this thesis only introduce avenues for improvement rather than provide the panacea to a longstanding problem. In this regard, the strategy offered in the face of moral dilemmas, that is to favor a little socialization over none at all, cannot uniformly apply on a case-by-case basis. There ought to be situations where counting on norm dissemination would be counter-productive or even harmful for humanitarian staff.



## Conclusion

Through the examination of three well-known conflicts, this research was able to test several explanations for the violence perpetrated against aid workers. The Perceived Enemy Explanation held water, while the State Substitute Explanation remained secondary throughout the analysis. Weinstein's argument on opportunistic rebellions was contested in several regards which give substantial leeway for further research.

Moreover, the socialization of humanitarian norms, including the protection of humanitarian personnel, seemed to correlate with the quality of the relationships between aid agencies and rebel groups. The link between the Perceived Enemy theory and norms socialization was salient in our case studies. NGOs would do well to encourage practices that enable them to positively engage with insurgents in order to guarantee their staff's security. Armed groups are unlikely to naturally consider international law as binding for their combatants since they are excluded from most diplomatic channels. As such, bringing back ownership, thanks to the efforts of NGOs such as Geneva Call will be more efficient than the widespread practice of name-calling these groups terrorists. These negotiations must also take into account the structure of the group, since engaging with the leadership may not suffice to guarantee every fighter's compliance to the norms. However, turning too friendly to an armed group's cause will also breach humanitarian principles. Humanitarianism consists of constantly balancing strategies to reach a fragile equilibrium that antagonizes the least people.

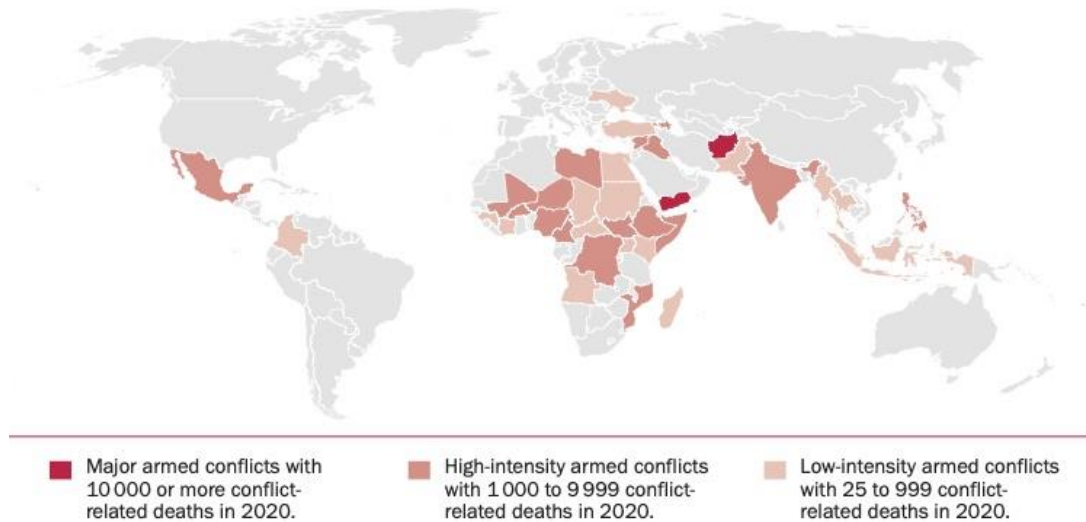
As such, this research does not provide the cure for aid workers' insecurity, but it is a step forward in a world that often looks away from the suffering of the protectors of humane practices, both in the academic, public, and civil spheres. It brings back the qualitative feature where the quantitative is usually the only measure of appraisal. All in all, it seeks to effectively ensure that humanitarians are not treated as a target any longer.

Further research could determine whether a scarcity of resources at the onset of war often give rise to opportunistic rebellions, thus challenging the Predation Theory. Furthermore, this thesis' focus on actions taken during conflict limits the activities of NGOs to a narrow and unrealistic role. Humanitarians also act outside wars, and more attention should be given to the prevention pillar of R2P. Afterall, the answer to successfully disseminating norms could very well find its roots in before-conflict endeavors.

*(15,000 words)*

## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Mapping the Intensity of Conflict



**Source :** Davis, Ian and Jaïr van der Lijn. “Global developments in armed conflicts, peace processes and peace operations.” *SIPRI*. (2021). Available at <https://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2021/02>.

### Appendix 2 – The Strategies of Terrorist Violence

Figure 1. Strategies of Terrorist Violence

		Target of Persuasion	
		Enemy	Own Population
Subject of Uncertainty	Power	attrition	intimidation
	Resolve		outbidding
	Trustworthiness	spoiling	provocation

**Source :** Kydd, Andrew H, and Barbara F Walter. “The Strategies of Terrorism.” *International Security* 31, no. 1 (2006): 49. <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.2006.31.1.49>.

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