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Citation
Flokstra, S. (2023). *The influence of one-sided violence on conflict onset across the border*.

Version:	Not Applicable (or Unknown)
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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

The influence of one-sided violence on conflict across the border

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Programme of study: International Politics (MSc)

Date of submission: 16th of January 2023

Word count: 8208

Abstract

How are external factors able to cause conflict in a country? Scholars have examined the spatial component of conflict largely through the lens of conflict diffusion, where conflict spread from one country to another. They have failed however, to examine the influence of one-sided violence on conflict in other countries. This is a major gap as one-sided violence does not necessarily mean conflict is occurring, meaning studies on the direct spread of conflict between countries fail to cover these cases. I fill this gap by asking: does the use of one-sided violence raise the likelihood of conflict onset in neighbouring countries? I argue that one-sided violence influences conflict onset in three ways, each via incoming refugee flows. First, refugees might have grievances that they are unable to express via traditional ways, increasing the likelihood that they may turn to violence. Second, refugees may change the ethnic composition of the host country, with the new ethnic balance causing or worsening ethnic tensions. Third, refugees may worsen the economic situation in the host country by competing with the local population, increasing local political tensions. I will study this by analyzing UCDP data on armed conflict and one-sided violence in neighboring countries. The results show that one-sided violence in neighbouring countries has a positive, significant effect on conflict onset. Countries that border countries experiencing one-sided violence have a higher likelihood of conflict occurring. The effect of refugees on conflict onset is shown to be positive and significant as well.

Introduction

After the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the Hutu government was toppled by a rebellion of largely Rwandan Tutsis, among them Rwandan Tutsis that had fled the country and now returned (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006). This led to more than a million refugees, among them a large number of Rwandan Hutus, fleeing Rwanda and entering Zaïre (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006). The Congolese Tutsis in Zaïre perceived this as a significant threat, ultimately resulting in a

rebellion against the Zairian government, as the Congolese Tutsis perceived the government to be siding with the Hutus against the Tutsis (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006). This example shows that incoming refugees can influence conflict onset in another country.

Previous research has examined several external factors that may influence conflict onset, such as the direct spread of fighters or arms into a country, informational flows and external support (e.g., Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006; Weidmann, 2015; Broers, 2016). An often mentioned external factor that can cause conflict has been the occurrence of conflict in neighbouring states, a phenomenon called conflict diffusion; the spread of conflict from one country to another (Weidmann, 2015). Factors such as conflict diffusion, external support and the spread of arms or fighters mainly focus on the direct spread of conflict, but do not address the possibility of conflict spreading or occurring without the presence of conflict in the original state.

One avenue that is not explored in existing research (e.g., Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006; Weidmann, 2015; Elkins & Simmons, 2005; Wimmer, Cederman & Gleditsch, 2015) is the influence of one-sided violence, defined as violence against unarmed civilians, who are not directly involved in the fighting (Cohen & Deng, 2009) on the likelihood of conflict onset. This is surprising because one-sided violence is a phenomenon that can be linked to an increase in refugee streams (Cohen & Deng, 2009), as civilians attempt to flee from the violence that is inflicted upon them, which can potentially influence conflict onset in neighbouring countries (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006) and therefore implies a possible link between one-sided violence and conflict onset. One-sided violence does not necessarily mean conflict is occurring, differentiating it from previous research (e.g., Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006; Weidmann, 2015; Elkins & Simmons, 2005; Wimmer, Cederman & Gleditsch, 2015). This means that the existing research on this topic has only covered the spread of conflict in cases where conflict directly spreads from one country to another (e.g., Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006; Weidmann,

2015; Elkins & Simmons, 2005; Wimmer, Cederman & Gleditsch, 2015). Cases where conflict is caused by effects from another country, without the presence of conflict in that country, have not been covered. As one-sided violence does not necessarily mean conflict is occurring, countries that experience one-sided violence may be cases that have not been covered in previous research (e.g., Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006; Weidmann, 2015; Elkins & Simmons, 2005; Wimmer, Cederman & Gleditsch, 2015). To fill this gap, I will answer the following research question: Does the use of one-sided violence in neighbouring countries raise the likelihood of conflict onset in a country?

I argue that one-sided violence can cause conflict in bordering countries, due to the incoming refugees. I argue this occurs through three causal mechanisms. First, as refugees flee into bordering countries, they may harbour grievances which cause them to be more likely to either join or support existing rebel groups or even establish new rebel groups in the host country[1]. These groups are emboldened by this support and more likely to become violent, causing conflict. Second, the incoming refugees may change the ethnic composition of the host country and change the ethnic power balance, causing or increasing ethnic tensions. This may cause the ethnic groups to become violent to the perceived threat, causing conflict. Finally, refugees may worsen the economic situation in the host country, causing dissatisfaction among the local population and increasing political tensions in the host country. This discontent may cause the local population to turn to violence, causing conflict.

To examine this, I will first review the existing literature regarding conflict onset. In my theory, I will establish a link between one-sided violence and the onset of conflict in neighbouring countries, presenting my hypothesis that one-sided violence in neighbouring countries increases the likelihood of conflict onset. Subsequently it will present data from the

[1] Host country refers to the country refugees flee to. Home country refers to their country of origin.

Uppsala Conflict Data Program One-sided violence and Armed Conflict datasets, using which this hypothesis will be tested, which I will do using a binary logistic regression. Finally, the last section will see the analysis conducted and results presented. I will then draw several conclusions from these results.

Literature Review

Explaining conflict onset has been the core of many studies conducted in conflict research (e.g., Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Denny & Walter, 2014; Weidmann, 2015; Elkins & Simmons, 2005). These studies have identified several interrelated factors that might be of influence on the onset of conflict.

First, economic factors have been widely studied in relation to conflict onset (e.g., Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Fjelde, 2014; Pinstrup-Andersen & Shimokawa, 2008). One of the most robust findings is that low or negative economic growth raises the likelihood of conflict onset (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). When the economy stagnates or declines, the opportunity cost of joining a rebellion decreases, thereby increasing the likelihood of conflict. This relationship has been tested through factors related to economic growth, such as poverty and poor health (Pinstrup-Andersen & Shimokawa, 2008) and price shocks (e.g., Fjelde, 2014; Smith, 2014). The relation between economic growth and conflict onset has also been linked to state capacity, measured by gross domestic product (GDP) (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). States with low GDP per capita are often weaker states, which have limited policing capacity and poor infrastructure. As a result, they are less likely to dissuade and defeat rebel insurgencies. This makes them vulnerable to insurgencies as the rebels have a higher perceived chance of achieving their targets (Jakobsen, De Soysa & Jakobsen, 2013; Fearon & Laitin, 2003).

Second, other scholars have focused on the role of ethnicity in influencing conflict onset (Denny & Walter, 2014). Ethnic groups are more likely to initiate conflict than any other group

(Denny & Walter, 2014). Denny & Walter (2014) argue that this is due to three factors; ethnic groups generally have more grievances against the state, they can mobilize support more easily and they are more likely to face problems that are difficult to solve through bargaining. These grievances are often formed or exacerbated by ethnic exclusion. Ethnic groups are more likely to resort to violence when they are excluded from the political system (Asal, Findley, Piazza & Walsh, 2016; Tezcür & Gurses, 2017; Hansen, Nemeth & Mauslein, 2020). The risk of conflict is exacerbated further when a country is highly ethnically fractionalized, as ethnic fractionalization is linked with a negative effect on growth (Montalvo & Reynal-Querol, 2005; Esteban & Ray, 2008), which as discussed earlier raises the likelihood of conflict (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004).

Third, the country's characteristics are also factors that influence conflict onset (Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Gurr, 2000; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). The political system of a state influences the likelihood of conflict. Democratic states are less prone to conflict (Gleditsch & Ruggeri, 2010; Gurr, 2000, Esteban & Ray, 2008). This is because democracies discourage armed rebellion by providing outlets for discontent to be expressed and the mechanisms to handle discontent (Hegre, 2014). Elections are one such outlet, and are linked with lower likelihood of conflict (Bartusevičius & Skaaning, 2018). Democracies facilitate effective bargaining, making armed rebellion a less attractive option (Hegre, 2014). In addition, the history of the country matters. Countries with recent conflicts have a higher likelihood of conflict recurrence. Countries who have been at peace for longer periods of time, have lower risks of conflict (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Furthermore, a larger population also raises the likelihood of conflict. Larger population size makes it more difficult for the state to keep an eye on who does what at the local level (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Lastly, mountainous terrain also raises the likelihood of conflict (Cunningham, 2016). Rough terrain which is poorly served by roads raises the

likelihood of conflict, as the state will face difficulties controlling these difficult to access areas, which gives ample opportunity for rebel groups to organize there (Fearon & Laitin, 2003).

Fourth, some scholars have examined the spatial component of conflict onset, and the influence of conflict in neighbouring countries (e.g., Weidmann, 2015; Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006). They have argued that conflict can become contagious and spread across borders via two ways; through emulation and spillover. Emulation involves civilians seeing uprisings occurring in another country and learning from them, causing them to emulate these uprisings in their own country (Elkins & Simmons, 2005). This form of spread might especially increase with increased information networks (Weidmann, 2015). In contrast, spillover effects are argued to occur through arms and fighters moving from one country into another (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006; Weidmann, 2015) as well as support from either ethnically or ideologically aligned groups, as they support similar causes in other countries (Wimmer, Cederman & Gleditsch, 2009; Weidmann, 2015). As a result the existing rebel groups in the host country are strengthened. These effects often occur through refugee flows, which bring arms and fighters across borders (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006).

Conflict onset has been widely studied (e.g., Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Denny & Walter, 2014). However, the studies including the spatial component have done so by studying the spread of conflict from one country to another (e.g., Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006; Weidmann, 2015). They have not examined how one-sided violence in neighbouring countries influences conflict onset in a country. This lack of research is surprising as one-sided violence is associated with an increase in refugees fleeing to other countries, which can potentially influence conflict onset in neighbouring countries (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006). Cases where conflict is caused by external factors without the presence of conflict in a neighbouring country have been neglected. These cases are important for our understanding of why conflict occurs because they show us that conflict can occur due to external factors in a

way that has not been covered yet. Where previous research has failed to cover both the spatial component and the influence of one-sided violence, I intend to fill this gap with this thesis.

Theory

As the above section shows, the literature on conflict onset has examined many possible factors that influence the likelihood of conflict, including spatial factors. However, they have not covered the influence of one-sided violence in neighbouring countries, despite there being theoretical arguments in favor of such a relation. When the state fails to protect the human rights of its civilians, either by failing to stop rebel forces from harming civilians or by perpetrating these abuses themselves (Cohen & Deng, 2009), civilians are likely to flee from the area, moving to safer regions, often in other countries (Cohen & Deng, 2009). For example, 2 million Iraqi people fled Iraq because of the sectarian violence between Shia and Sunni Muslims, to countries such as Syria (Cohen & Deng, 2009) and the genocide in Kosovo by the Yugoslav government caused more than 250.000 Kosovar Albanians to seek refuge in Macedonia (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006). Most of these refugees prefer to flee to other countries rather than to other regions of their home country (Moore & Shellman, 2006). They do so because other countries often provide more safety than their home country. As rebel groups often target marginalized groups, including internally displaced persons and refugees, they are less safe fleeing to another region of their home country (Cohen & Deng, 2009). Additionally people are more likely to flee to other countries when there is already a diaspora of their ethnic group present, as the presence of their kin means they have more cultural opportunities in this country as they fit more easily into the existing group in the host country (Moore & Shellman, 2006).

Incoming refugees can have significant consequences for the domestic stability of the host countries (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006). More specifically, refugees can increase existing

tensions in the host country, ultimately leading to conflict onset. Refugees might influence conflict onset in the host country through three causal mechanisms. First, refugees settling in the host state may harbour or develop grievances. For example, they often face restrictive policies in the host country and have little opportunity to expand their livelihoods (De Bruijn, 2009). For example, the host country may not grant refugees the right to engage in gainful employment, permit the local integration of refugees or allow access to agricultural production, such as is the case in Kenya and Thailand (De Bruijn, 2009). At the same time, the living conditions of refugees are often poor and unsafe in the host country (Van de Wiel et al., 2021). Important issues such as legal protection, food security, health and education are often inadequate for refugees (De Bruijn, 2009). The poor living conditions of refugees can cause the development of grievances against the host state (Clarke, 2018; Salehyan, 2005). As they are often excluded from the political processes, refugees lack a way to peacefully express these grievances (Haider, 2014). As a result, refugees are more likely to radicalize (Haider, 2014; Sude, Stebbins & Weiland, 2015) and their vulnerability makes them especially susceptible to recruitment by rebel groups (Salehyan, 2007; Mogire, 2009), with rebel groups particularly targeting economically deprived refugees (Haer & Hecker, 2019). As rebel groups recruit more refugees, they grow in numbers as well as strength. Larger rebel groups have more military capability, which presents them with more opportunities and capabilities to use violence (Wood, 2014). When deciding whether to use violence, rebel groups will decide to do so when they believe violence is a superior option to help them achieve their goals (Cunningham, 2016). As rebel groups are strengthened by the additional support, they may perceive more chances of success by using violence and rebelling against the state. When they perceive their chances of success through violence are greater, rebel groups are more likely to turn to violence, increasing the likelihood of conflict onset (Cunningham, 2016).

Second, incoming refugees can cause a change in the ethnic composition of the host country (Bertinelli, Comertpay & Maystadt, 2022). They may particularly change the ethnic balance in the host country when the host country already hosts a group that is ethnically similar to the refugees (Ruegger, 2019). This is particularly important as refugees prefer to flee to countries where their ethnic group is already present (Moore & Shellman, 2006). When refugees enter the host country, fractionalization, the likelihood that two individuals in a country belong to different ethnic groups, increases (Bertinelli, Comertpay & Maystadt, 2022). In a polarized society, where these ethnic groups are already antagonistic towards each other, refugees may increase this polarization and exacerbate existing tensions (Bertinelli, Comertpay & Maystadt, 2022; Adamson, 2006). As this antagonism is fueled, the ethnic stability in the host country may be altered in two ways. First, the ethnic kin group of the refugees may rebel as their political strength increases. This increased political strength may empower the group, as they now feel they have more chance to stage a successful insurgency (Milner & Loescher, 2005; Ruegger, 2019). Second, other ethnic groups could attack the ethnic kin group of the refugees, as they may feel threatened by the demographic changes (Milner & Loescher, 2005; Ruegger, 2019). For example, in the 1980s a large number of Afghan refugees fled into the Pakistani province of Balochistan (Ruegger, 2019). The arrival of these refugees strengthened the position of their kin group, the Pashtuns, in the country's politics, but thereby also challenged the political position of the other ethnic groups as the Baloch population became less of a majority (Ruegger, 2019). In addition, the Pakistani government was accused of supporting the Islamist Pashtuns from Afghanistan in order to counter Baloch nationalism (Jamal, 2016). With the position of the Balochs challenged by these events, it eventually led to conflict (Ruegger, 2019).

Lastly, incoming refugees can worsen the economic situation in the host country. Refugees compete with the local population over the available resources, such as houses,

employment and water (e.g., Bertinelli, Comertpay & Maystadt, 2022; Akgündüz, Van Den Berg & Hassink, 2015; Martin, 2005). They can also cause wages to lower when entering the labor force, as they increase the supply of workers (Borjas, 1989; Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006). In low skill sectors in particular, where informal employment is possible, refugees may be more attractive to employers as they are cheaper than the local population, weakening the position of local workers (Akgündüz, Van Den Berg & Hassink, 2015). Especially in a situation where the aforementioned resources are scarce, this may cause living conditions to decline in the country, as the local population's cost of living increases and income decreases due to the competition caused by refugees (Martin, 2005; Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006). More civilians may fall into poverty, with poverty increasing the chances of civilians joining or supporting an armed group (Justino, 2009). The dissatisfaction resulting from the economic situation among the local population may drive more civilians towards joining an armed group (Justino, 2009). This dissatisfaction may also increase ethnic and political tensions in the host country, leading to a setting that invites violence against the ethnic group of the refugees (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006), as well as incentive for the ethnic group of the refugees to fight for their position in the host country (Koppa, 2001). An example can be found in Macedonia, where many Albanian refugees entered the country during the Yugoslav wars (Koppa, 2001). Macedonian Slavs blamed the Albanians for the worsening economic conditions, such as lack of economic growth and the high unemployment rate (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006). This caused the already existing but non-violent tensions between Albanians and Slavs to escalate into armed conflict (Koppa, 2001).

As demonstrated in this section, refugees of one-sided violence entering another country may increase the risk of conflict. They may do so by radicalizing due to their grievances, changing the ethnic balance in the host country or by worsening the economic

situation, or a combination of these factors, leading to conflict. Following this argument leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The use of one-sided violence in neighbouring countries increases the likelihood of conflict onset in a country

Method

To empirically examine this linkage, I will use the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict dataset version 22.1 as the basis of my analysis (Davies, Pettersson & Öberg, 2022; Gleditsch et al., 2002). This dataset is a country-year dataset and records various information about the nature of conflict. My analysis will cover all African countries from 1989 to 2018 because it is the continent that has been affected the most by one-sided violence (Fisk, 2018), hosts more refugees than any other region in the world (Fisk, 2014) and has experienced more conflict than most other regions, except perhaps the Middle East (Cilliers, 2014; Venkatasawmy, 2015), making Africa a fitting most likely case for this thesis.

Dependent variable

To measure my dependent variable, conflict onset, I will use information from the UCDP Armed Conflict Dataset version 22.1 (Davies, Pettersson & Öberg, 2022; Gleditsch et al., 2002). This dataset collects various information about armed conflict, which it defines as: "a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year" (Gleditsch et al., 2002, pp. 618-619). I will code the onset of conflict in a country using a dichotomous variable with the value of 0 meaning no armed conflict and the value of 1 meaning armed conflict is occurring. The data shows that for a total of 1593 country-year values, there were 385 conflict years in African countries. The

1990s and early 2000s saw much conflict, after which a period with relatively less conflict followed. However, from 2014 onwards, the continent saw a large rise in the number of conflicts. East Africa experienced the most conflict of the continent. Particularly Sudan, Ethiopia and Uganda experienced relatively many conflict years, with Sudan experiencing conflict in every year included in the analysis. Southern Africa experienced relatively little conflict, with only Lesotho (1998) and Mozambique (the early 1990s and 2018) experiencing conflict years.

Independent variable

To measure my independent variable, one-sided violence, I will use data from the UCDP One-sided violence dataset version 22.1 (Davies, Pettersson & Öberg, 2022). This dataset collects different information about one-sided violence, which it defines: "the use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organized group against civilians which results in at least 25 deaths'' (Eck & Hultman, 2007, p. 235). This variable will be measured in the logged value of the total number of fatalities due to one-sided violence in neighbouring countries. This means taking the total number of fatalities due to one-sided violence in a year from each neighbouring country, adding them together and then taking the logged value of this number. To illustrate this, in the case of Liberia, this is the logged value of the total number of fatalities due to one-sided violence in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast. The data shows the highest values in countries bordering Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1994, 1996 and 1997, owing to the Rwandan Genocide and the First Congo War. Other large values are found in countries bordering Sudan in 2004 (the genocide in Darfur) and Nigeria in 2014 (a drastic increase in fatalities from attacks by Boko Haram). East Africa has experienced the most one-sided violence in general. This is largely because of the number of fatalities due to one-sided violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. Southern

Africa experienced the least one-sided violence, with no major outliers and only prolonged periods of one-sided violence in South Africa and Mozambique in the early 1990s. There were no countries that went without a single year of one-sided violence in a neighbouring country.

Control variables

I will control for several other factors, which are also linked to conflict onset, as they are possible other factors that may affect conflict onset. These control variables come in three strands, economic factors, state factors and a control for refugees.

First, to control for economic factors I will control for state capacity. Lower state capacity, measured through gross GDP per capita has been linked to higher likelihood of conflict onset (Jakobsen, De Soysa & Jakobsen, 2013; Fearon & Laitin, 2003). I will use data from the Maddison project database (Bolt & Van Zanden, 2018). I will take the logged value of the GDP per capita in my analysis.

Second, to control for state factors I will add two other control variables. First, lower level of democracy is linked to higher likelihood of conflict onset (Gleditsch & Ruggeri, 2010; Crescenzi & Kadera, 2016). I will use data from the Polity V project dataset (Marshall & Gurr, 2020). This will be an ordinal variable, ranging from 0 (strongly autocratic) to 20 (strongly democratic). Second, larger population size has been also linked to higher likelihood of conflict onset (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). I will use data from the World Development Indicators dataset (World Bank, 2021). This variable will be the logged value of the total population in my analysis.

Lastly, as my theory proposes that one-sided violence increases conflict onset through refugee streams, I will control for the number of refugees present in the host country as well. For the presence of refugees I will use data from the World development indicators dataset

(World Bank, 2021). This variable will be the logged value of the total number of refugees by country of asylum.

As my dependent variable is dichotomous, I will use a binary logistic regression analysis to perform my research. This analysis will be run using four separate models. The first model will research the primary relation of this thesis, between one-sided violence in neighbouring countries and conflict onset. The second model will add the control variable for refugees, to further test my causal mechanisms. The third model will add the rest of the control variables. Lastly, I will run a fourth model to control the relation between refugees and conflict onset, to provide an additional test of the causal mechanisms.

Analysis & Results

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	*N*	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*	*Min.*	*Max.*
Conflict	1593	0.24	0.428	0	1
OSV	1413	1.70	1.347	0.00	5.73
Refugees	1593	3.54	1.749	0.00	6.24
GDP	1529	3.39	0.410	2.58	4.68

Level of Democracy	1532	10.41	5.513	0.00	20.00
Population	1586	6.82	0.689	4.84	8.29

Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variable in the analysis. Notably, the number of cases for the two variables differs. This is because the variable for one-sided violence is coded by one-sided violence in neighbouring countries. Africa, however, has 6 island nations which do not border any other country, meaning they do not have a value for this variable, explaining the difference in the number of cases. The table also shows descriptive statistics for the control variables included in the analysis. GDP, level of democracy and population each have a different number of cases. This is because certain country-years do not have available data for these indicators and they are therefore excluded from the analysis.

Table 2. Logit Regression Models of Conflict Onset

Variable	*Model 1*	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*
OSV	0.455	0.301	0.240	
	(0.050)***	(0.054)***	(0.060)***	
Refugees		0.464	0.292	0.657
		(0.066)***	(0.075)***	(0.057)***

GDP			-0.787	
			(0.206)***	
Level of Democracy			-0.059	
			(0.015)***	
Population			1.176	
			(0.152)***	
Constant	-1.849	-3.504	-7.889	-3.771
	(0.120)***	(0.278)***	(1.154)***	(0.255)***
N	1413	1413	1349	1593
-2 Log likelihood	1557.865	1498.412	1287.093	1556.272

p ≤0.1; ** p ≤ 0.05; *** p ≤ 0.01

Table 2 presents the results of the analysis across the four models. Model 1 includes only the independent variable one-sided violence in neighbouring countries, and the dependent variable conflict onset. In line with my expectations, it shows that the influence of one-sided violence in neighbouring countries on conflict onset is positive and statistically significant. This indicates support for my hypothesis that one-sided violence in neighbouring countries raises the likelihood of conflict in a country.

Model 2 adds the control variable for the number of refugees in the host country. After adding this variable the influence of one-sided violence in neighbouring countries remains positive and statistically significant. This further supports my hypothesis as the effect of one-sided violence in neighbouring countries holds up across these separate models. Additionally, the influence of refugees on conflict onset is positive and statistically significant as well. This provides additional support for my theory, as the positive effect of refugees on conflict onset is key to my causal mechanisms. Both one-sided violence and the hosting of refugees appears to raise the likelihood of conflict onset in a country.

Model 3 adds the rest of the control variables. The influence of one-sided violence in neighbouring countries remains positive and statistically significant in this model as well. The influence of refugees on conflict onset is positive and statistically significant as well. As for the other control variables, population size has a positive and statistically significant effect on conflict onset. GDP per capita and level of democracy have a negative, statistically significant effect on conflict onset. These results are all in line with my expectations and further support my theory.

Lastly, model 4 provides a separate analysis of the effect of refugees on conflict onset. This model shows a positive and significant result for refugees on conflict onset. It indicates that a larger number of refugees in a country raises the likelihood of conflict. This is also in line with the expectations formed by the theory, further supporting my causal mechanisms, that it is refugees through which one-sided violence influences conflict onset.

Across all models, the effect of one-sided violence in neighbouring countries on conflict onset is both positive and statistically significant. This holds true both on its own as well as with control variables added. In my theory, I argued that one-sided violence in neighbouring countries would raise the likelihood of conflict onset by causing an increase in refugees entering the host country, as civilians flee from the violence occurring in their host state. They

would increase the likelihood of conflict in three ways: by strengthening rebel groups due to their grievances against the host state and susceptibility to recruitment by rebel groups, by changing the ethnic balance in the host country and raising ethnic tensions, or by worsening the economic situation in the host country and aggravating the local population. The results of the analysis support this argument. They show a rise in conflict onset when neighbouring countries experience one-sided violence. The more fatalities due to one-sided violence in neighbouring countries, the more likelihood that conflict will occur, supporting my hypothesis.

Additionally, to specifically test my causal mechanisms, I ran a model which tested for both one-sided violence in neighbouring countries and refugees, as well as a model which tested for only the effect of refugees on conflict onset. The effect of refugees on conflict onset is positive and significant across these models as well. This further supports the causal mechanism that it is refugees through which one-sided violence in neighbouring countries increases the likelihood of conflict onset. The results therefore suggest that countries that border countries where one-sided violence occurs are at greater risk of conflict than countries whose neighbours do not experience one-sided violence and that hosting more refugees increases the likelihood of conflict in a country. The significant results for the control variables suggest that the likelihood of conflict is also greater in countries with less state capacity, lower levels of democracy and larger populations.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I set out to answer the question whether the use of one-sided violence in neighbouring countries raises the likelihood of conflict onset in a country. The results of the analysis show that across all countries on the African continent, one-sided violence in neighbouring countries increases the likelihood that conflict will occur in a country. This finding remains significant after adding controls for refugees, state capacity, level of

democracy and population size. In countries that border on countries experiencing one-sided violence, the likelihood that there will be a conflict is higher than in countries where the neighbouring countries do not experience one-sided violence. Additionally, the results show that countries hosting refugees also raises the likelihood of conflict onset in those countries, with this finding also holding up when adding the aforementioned other controls. My hypothesis that one-sided violence in neighbouring countries raises the likelihood of conflict onset is supported by these results. The theory that this process occurs through the refugee streams caused by one-sided violence and the effect this has on the host country also finds support in these results.

The goal of this thesis was to fill the gap in research on conflict onset. Previous research has studied how conflict spreads directly from one country to another (e.g., Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006; Weidmann, 2015; Elkins & Simmons, 2005; Wimmer, Cederman & Gleditsch, 2015). They have not studied how one-sided violence in neighbouring countries influences conflict onset in a country. The lack of research on this linkage is surprising because one-sided violence can cause an increase in refugees fleeing to other countries (Cohen & Deng, 2009), which can potentially affect conflict onset in neighbouring countries (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006). Countries that experience one-sided violence do not necessarily experience conflict, which differentiates it from previous research (e.g., Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006; Weidmann, 2015; Elkins & Simmons, 2005; Wimmer, Cederman & Gleditsch, 2015) which has only covered the spread of conflict in cases where conflict spreads directly between countries. Only covering those cases neglects cases where conflict is caused by external factors without conflict occurring in a neighbouring country, such as may be the case for countries that experience one-sided violence. These cases are important for understanding conflict onset, because they show that conflict can be caused by external factors in a way that has not been covered yet. This thesis has filled this gap by studying the effect of one-sided violence in

neighbouring countries on conflict onset, through the increase of refugees entering a country and the effects they have on the host country.

The results of this thesis show that one-sided violence in neighbouring countries should not be ignored when studying the spatial component of conflict. As one-sided violence causes civilians to flee, it increases refugee streams, and the effects of these refugees on their host countries may lead to conflict. Future studies on the spatial component of conflict should not focus solely on cases where conflict spreads directly from one country to another, as this neglects to acknowledge that conflict may be caused by factors beyond the direct spread of conflict. Instead, these studies should include cases where conflict occurs due to external factors from a neighbouring country, without conflict occurring in that neighbouring country, such as one-sided violence. Future studies may build on these findings and further research the relation between conflict and one-sided violence in neighbouring countries by further investigating the specific causal mechanisms of the theory. They may do so by analyzing whether refugees of one-sided violence are actually forming or being recruited by rebel groups. Alternatively, they may do so by analyzing whether ethnic tensions in the host country actually rise as a result of refugees of one-sided violence altering the ethnic composition of the host country, and whether this leads to either rebellion from the ethnic group of the refugees or attacks by other ethnic groups on the ethnic group of the refugees. Lastly, they may do so by researching whether refugees of one-sided violence actually worsen the economic situation in the host country, for example by analyzing food prices, housing prices and average wages. They may then also analyze whether these changes actually cause violence against the refugees. Analyzing these factors would provide a better understanding of whether the influence of one-sided violence in neighbouring countries on conflict onset happens through the causal mechanisms as presented in the theory. As this thesis studied whether one-sided violence in neighbouring countries influences conflict onset, and not how this occurs, these analyses were

beyond the scope of this thesis. Researching how one-sided violence influences conflict onset would follow up on the findings of this thesis and further test the theory and causal mechanisms and therefore would be a useful topic for future research. Future studies may also research the influence of other factors that may influence conflict onset in a neighbouring country without the presence of conflict. One such factor is the effect of environmental crises, such as climate change, as this has been shown to cause an increase in refugees as well, without necessarily meaning conflict is occurring (Berchin et al., 2017). Studying the relation between environmental crises in neighbouring countries and conflict onset may contribute to our understanding of how conflict occurs, just as studying the influence of one-sided violence in neighbouring countries did. The results of this thesis also provide further empirical support for the theory that refugees can increase the likelihood of conflict.

The analysis in this thesis has covered all cases of one-sided violence and conflict in Africa, as Africa provides a suitable most-likely case design, due to its high numbers of one-sided violence (Fisk, 2018), high number of refugees (Fisk, 2014) and its high number of conflicts (Cilliers, 2014; Venkatasawmy, 2015). While this provides a valuable insight into how one-sided violence in neighbouring countries influences conflict onset, it may be helpful to study this relation in other regions of the world as well, to study if the relation between one-sided violence and conflict onset is also present in other regions. One such region is the Middle East, which has also experienced relatively more one-sided violence compared to other regions and a high number of conflicts (Cilliers, 2014). Alternatively, the relation between one-sided violence in neighbouring countries and conflict onset may also be studied on a global scale, including all countries in the world. This may offer a more complete picture of how one-sided violence affects conflict onset, but it would still be beneficial to control for regions in this analysis, as there are large differences between regions in experiencing one-sided violence and conflict. Europe, for example, experiences very little one-sided violence and civil conflict,

while regions such as Africa and the Middle East experience far more one-sided violence and civil conflict. Additionally, I used the log value of the total number of refugees hosted in a country in my analysis. This includes refugees who were already residing in the host country in previous years, as well as refugees who entered the country in that year. As my theory is based on refugee streams following one-sided violence in neighbouring countries, it may also be useful to instead measure the number of incoming refugees in a year as opposed to the total number of refugees. It may also be useful to differentiate between refugees from one-sided violence committed by non-state actors and by state actors, as the refugees' experience of the violence may differ depending on who commits it, altering their attitudes toward state actors (Garcia-Ponce & Pasquale, 2013). However, this thesis intends to study whether one-sided violence in neighbouring countries influences conflict in general, so I chose not to make this differentiation. Lastly, I intended to add a control variable for ethnic fractionalization. However, the available data was not suited for my analysis, either only offering a binary variable, with 0 meaning no ethnic fractionalization, and 1 meaning the country was highly fractionalized, or only offering data over less years than useful for my analysis. Because of this I excluded this variable, despite ethnic fractionalization being a potentially valuable control variable.

Policymakers should take notes of the findings in this thesis and recognize that they face a higher risk of conflict when a neighbouring country experiences one-sided violence. They should be prepared for an increase in incoming refugees. They should be particularly attentive to the risk of conflict if their country is already experiencing ethnic tensions involving the ethnic group of the refugees or if resources such as housing, employment and water are already scarce. They may mitigate the risk of conflict by providing better living conditions for refugees and by including them in the political process, so as to prevent grievances from

forming and disincentivize joining or forming rebel groups, as well as take measures to prevent economic deterioration.

Section of Acknowledgement

In this section I would like to thank the people who have helped me during the writing of this thesis, as well during the rest of my Masters programme. I would like to thank my parents, my brother and sister, as well as all my friends, who have been very important to me. Without their support and encouragement every step of the way, I would not have been able to write this thesis. They were there for me when I needed support, helped me through the tough moments and encouraged me to get to work to write this thesis the best I can. I am very thankful, and would be remiss not to acknowledge and appreciate the support they have given me.

I would also like to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. Roos van der Haer. Her feedback and guidance over the course of this thesis seminar have been very helpful and supportive. She has helped me improve tremendously and her guidance has enabled me to write this thesis.

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