

Christoph Zürcher

The impact of development aid on organised violence

A systematic assessment

August 2020

Working
Paper 37

Multisector



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About this working paper

This paper, *The impact of development aid on organised violence: a systematic assessment*, reviews existing literature about the impact of development aid on violence in fragile and conflict affected states. This paper has not been copyedited but has been formatted for publication by 3ie.

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The impact of development aid on organised violence: a systematic assessment

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University of Ottawa and the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)

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Executive Summary*

Purpose

To provide a systematic assessment of existing literature about the impact of development aid on violence in fragile and conflict-affected states.

Sample

32 high-quality studies published since 2001 covering 36 aid interventions were analysed.

These studies investigate the impacts of eight different aid types: Commander emergency response program; community driven development; conditional cash transfer; employment and training; large-scale infrastructure; humanitarian aid; food aid; and the impact of aggregated aid /all aid types.

All reviewed aid programs were DAC eligible.

Regionally, the sample is dominated by cases from Afghanistan and Iraq. 21 out of 36 cases refer to either Afghanistan or Iraq. Other cases refer to India, Philippines, Colombia, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Sudan. Furthermore, there is regional evidence from samples consisting of all civil war countries between 1969 and 2008, 125 non-OECD countries, 22 sub-Saharan African states and African countries with more than 1 million inhabitants, 1995 – 2012.

13 out of the 36 cases list stabilization as one of the main objectives of the programs. The other cases refer to normal development programs without a specific focus on stabilization.

Main Results

- a) Of the analyzed cases¹,
 - Fourteen find a violence-increasing effect
 - Eight find no effect at all
 - Seven find that aid has a violence-reducing effect
 - Five find a heterogeneous treatment effect (meaning that a specific type of aid can, depending on the context, either increase or reduce violence)
- b) These results suggest that the probability that aid has a violence increasing effect in regions in conflict is higher than the probability that aid has a violence-reducing effect.
- c) There is a widespread assumption in the literature that some types of aid / sectors are more likely to reduce violence than others. We find no support for this. None of the aid types covered in the sample is systematically associated with less violence.

* This study was originally prepared for Global Affairs Canada (GAC), International Assistance Evaluation division. The author gratefully acknowledges financial support from GAC.

¹ The studies cover 36 cases. However, two studies are essentially update versions of previous studies. In order to not overrepresent their findings we collapse the two versions of the same study into one observation. This leaves us with 34 cases.

- d) Vice-versa, we find that every type of aid, depending on the context, can have a violence-increasing effect.
- e) The studies suggest that aid can, depending on the context, reduce violence by (1) winning hearts and minds; (2) incentivizing local communities to share information about the insurgency with the government; (3) reducing grievances and (4) providing employment thereby increasing opportunity costs for insurgencies.
- f) However, all of these mechanisms can be undermined (“sabotaged”) by insurgents: When insurgents have enough capacity, they may violently sabotage projects. Thus, aid can trigger a strategic reaction by insurgents, which leads to more violence.
- g) Aid can also lead to more violence when aid flows are misappropriated by insurgents (“predation”). Predation can be violent per se, or it can provide insurgents with resources for organizing violence.
- h) Predation can be indirect and may be hard to detect by donors.
- i) No aid type is immune to predation: All types of aid can be “looted” or “taxed.”
- j) Whether a specific aid intervention has a positive, a negative, or no impact, depends on the context (“scope conditions”). This meta-review has identified a number of important scope conditions. It appears that in order to maximize the probability that aid has a stabilizing effect, the following is required:
- Aid is given in a fair, transparent and equitable way by a respected authority
 - Aid is locally meaningful, perceived to be beneficial, and ideally contributes to better livelihoods and more employment
 - The beneficiary group is internally coherent and not fractionalized
 - The aid project is relatively small, low-tech and implemented with the participation of the community
- In addition, the insurgency
- is locally rooted
 - is mainly grievance driven
 - has little or no capacity to sabotage
- k) It is evident that these scope conditions are rarely met, which explains why aid in conflict zones is more likely to increase violence than to reduce violence. Nevertheless, these scope conditions can serve as important guidelines for aid programming in fragile states.
- l) Most studies equal “success” with “more security”, which they define as a reduction in physical violence. Studies employ measurements for both “objective” and “subjective” security. Objective security is measured by a count of security incidents, often disaggregated by the target of violent attacks, the perpetrator of violent attacks, the means of the violent attacks, and the number of victims of violent attacks. These measurements are taken from existing databases. “Subjective” measurements for security are self-reported, based on surveys. These surveys inquire about the perceptions of respondents with regard to their own security, or the security of their households and communities.
- m) Other measured concepts for “success” refer to perceptions of legitimacy of the national and subnational government, the economic situation and the provision of public goods.

- n) In rare cases, the studies also employ measures of the economic situation of individuals or households and how respondents assess the provision of basic services by government and development actors.
- o) The measured concepts refer to different spatial and temporal units. Spatially, the preferred unit is the district, followed by the village or the municipality. Occasionally researcher also use grid cells.

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1. Introduction

Over the last few years, there have been increasing concerns about whether international assistance is always helping to reduce violence and promote stabilization. There have been some well-publicized cases where foreign aid exacerbated conflicts and civil wars. There is a high demand along development partitions to better understand the impacts of aid on violence. This study provides an overview of existing empirical results.

The study is an updated version of a previously published systematic review on the same topic which included peer-reviewed articles only published between 2001 and November 2016.² This current study now includes grey literature as well and extends the temporal range to 2001 – to 2019.

The review will summarize the main lessons from the included studies with regard to:

- a) Which interventions were successful in reducing violence / had a positive effect on related benign outcomes (see chapter “Outcomes”).
- b) Which scope conditions enabled these successes (see chapter “Causality, esp. section “Scope conditions”).
- c) The types of projects that were used and whether they were official development assistance (ODA) eligible. This will provide a sample of ODA-eligible stabilization projects (see chapter “Evidence Base, esp. section “DAC eligibility. For a complete and detailed list of projects, see appendix A, “Overview of Reviewed Studies”).

Furthermore, the systematic review will also list

- d) The metrics that were applied and a preliminary assessment whether they could be expanded and applied elsewhere. This will be helpful in creating an initial overview of “stabilization metrics” (see appendix B, “Towards a Stabilization Metrics”).
- e) To the extent possible, information on the role of these projects in the “stabilization portfolio” of major donors. This will surface how the different donors have interpreted “stabilization” at the practical level and what they are doing for their stabilization programming (see chapter “The Evidence Base, esp. section “Reference to Stabilization”).

2. Methodology

A systematic assessment differs from a traditional literature review in important ways. It is designed to identify all available evidence on a given topic.³ A systematic assessment requires a transparent search strategy based on a search protocol and transparent criteria for inclusion and exclusion, which are a priori defined in order to minimize any selection bias. Systematic assessments are thus different from traditional reviews, where authors are at liberty to include and exclude studies based on, for example, theoretical preferences or anticipated findings.

² Zürcher, Christoph. 2017. “What Do We (Not) Know About Development Aid and Violence? A Systematic Review.” *World Development* 98 (October): 506–22.

³ I follow the standard definition for systematic reviews; for example, see the Campbell Collaboration, “What is a systematic review” (Campbellcollaboration.org). Also, Waddington et al. (2012). Similar definitions are offered by DFID (2012) and Petticrew & Roberts (2006).

Whether or not a study meets the inclusion criteria is determined by reliable and replicable coding procedure.

Five inclusion and exclusion criteria were used:

- 1) The independent variable is development aid, or a closely related concept, such as foreign aid, foreign assistance, humanitarian aid, etc. Military aid was excluded. Also excluded were studies which used only Official Development Assistance (ODA) at the national level as their independent variable because this high level of aggregation masks important differences between aid sectors and made it impossible to infer causal processes ⁴
- 2) The dependent variable is violence, or a closely related concept such as armed conflict, civil war, insurgency etc. Also included were the opposite of these concepts, such as security, stability, counterinsurgency, etc.
- 3) Published studies as well as working papers and grey literature were included.
- 4) Studies had to be published in English between 2001 and end of 2019.
- 5) Only studies with a clear and transparent identification strategy allowing for causal inference were included. The minimum threshold for this criterion is that the methodological set-up of the studies allows assessing the counterfactual: what would have happened without the intervention. Such a criterion does not a priori exclude qualitative studies. Careful process-tracing or structured comparison allow for discussing the counterfactual. Nevertheless, all but two of the included studies turned out to be quantitative studies with an experimental or quasi-experimental design.

The following steps were carried out to identify studies to be included. The researcher had previously identified ten seminal papers that needed to be included in the review. Search terms based on concepts found in these studies were selected and tested in preliminary searches conducted in the data base "EconLit". This helped determine appropriate keywords that would yield relevant results.

A final search strategy was then devised that included the two core concepts of this review: development aid and violence. For each of these concepts, keywords were identified along with relevant subject terms found in the database's unique thesaurus, when appropriate. A sample protocol of the search strategy is given in appendix C.

Searches were executed by a research librarian in the following electronic databases:

- PAIS International (ProQuest)
- EconLit (ProQuest)
- International Political Science Abstracts (EBSCO)
- Worldwide Political Science Abstracts (ProQuest)
- Web of Science (Social Sciences Citation Index).

Results were then exported to a bibliographic management tool and duplicates were removed. Upon completion of the database searches, the identified articles were screened based on title and abstract to exclude those which did not meet the criteria for inclusion. A total of 11,343 studies were screened. 164 studies were selected to be read full-text. An additional 33 studies were identified based on the bibliography of the studies

⁴ cf. Findley et al. 2011; Young & Findley 2011.

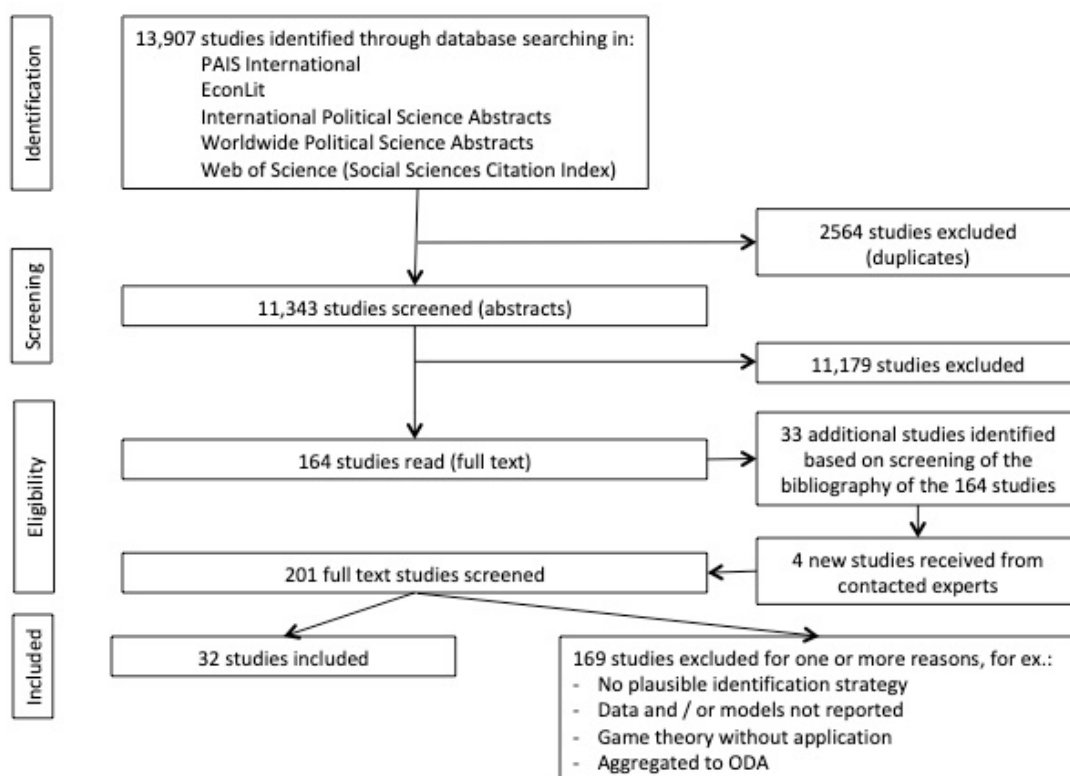
that were read full-text, bringing the amount of studies that were read full-text to 201. Of these 201 studies, 32 studies that met all criteria were included in the final sample

169 (of the 201 studies that were read full-text) were excluded because they did not meet all inclusion criteria. By far the most frequent reason for exclusion was that the study was descriptive in nature without a clear causal identification strategy. Also excluded were studies that made a formal game-theoretic argument but did not provide an empirical application, and studies that used the “wrong “independent variable (for example, transnational terrorism).

In a final step, the following data were extracted from the studies and used for the narrative in this study: Author(s); Aid measure: Dependent variable; Type of aid tested; Population; Comparator; Outcome (s); Moderators; Causal explanation / strength of test.

Figure 1: The Screening Process

Systematic Review: Flow Diagram



3. The Evidence Base

3.1 Included Studies

The following studies were included in the final sample (all URLs and doi were accessed March 24, 2020):

1. Adams, Greg. 2015. “Honing the proper edge: CERP and the two-sided potential of military-led development in Afghanistan”. *The Economics of Peace and Security Journal*, v. 10, n. 2: 53-61
<https://www.epsjournal.org.uk/index.php/EPSJ/article/download/227/220>

2. Arcand Jean-Louis, Bah Adama and Julien Labonne. 2010. "Conflict, Ideology and Foreign Aid." *CERDI, Etudes et Documents, E 2010.21*
<https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00553121/file/2010.21.pdf>
3. Beath, Andrew, Fotini Christia, and Ruben Enikolopov. 2012. "Winning Hearts and Minds Through Development: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Afghanistan ". *Policy Research Working Paper 6129*. (The World Bank)
<https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/pdf/10.1596/1813-9450-6129>
4. Beath, A., Fotini, C., & Enikolopov, R. (2017). Can development programs counter insurgencies? Evidence from a field experiment in Afghanistan. World Bank. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1809677
5. Berman, Eli, Jacob N. Shapiro, and Joseph H. Felter. 2011. "Can Hearts and Minds Be Bought? The Economics of Counterinsurgency in Iraq." *Journal of Political Economy* 119, no. 4: 766–819.
<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/661983>
6. Berman, Eli, Joseph Felter, Jacob N. Shapiro, and Erin Troland. 2013. "Modest, Secure and Informed: Successful Development in Conflict Zones". *American Economic Review: Papers & Proceedings*, 103(3): 512–517
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/23469785.pdf>
7. Blattman, Christopher, and Jeannie Annan. 2016. "Can Employment Reduce Lawlessness and Rebellion? A Field Experiment with High-Risk Men in a Fragile State." *American Political Science Review* 110 (1): 17.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0003055415000520>
8. Böhnke, Jan, Jan Koehler, and Christoph Zürcher. 2015. "Assessing the Impact of Development Cooperation in North East Afghanistan 2005–2013. Final Report". German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development.
<http://www.bmz.de/de/ministerium/evaluierung/reviews/index.html>
9. Böhnke, Jan Rasmus, and Christoph Zürcher. 2013. "Aid, Minds and Hearts: The Impact of Aid in Conflict Zones." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 30, 5: 411–32. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0738894213499486>
10. Child, Travers B. 2014. "Hearts and Minds Cannot Be Bought: Ineffective Reconstruction in Afghanistan." *Economics of Peace and Security Journal* 9, 2: 43–49. <https://epsjournal.org.uk/index.php/EPSJ/article/view/184>
11. Child, Travers Barclay. 2018. "Conflict and Counterinsurgency Aid: Drawing Sectoral Distinctions." *Journal of Development Economics*, June, 102245.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2018.06.003>.
12. Chou, Tiffany. 2012. "Does Development Assistance Reduce Violence? Evidence from Afghanistan." *Economics of Peace and Security Journal* 7, no. 2: 5–13.
<https://unioncrossfd.com/~epsjourn/index.php/EPSJ/article/view/138>
13. Crost, Benjamin, Joseph Felter, and Patrick Johnston. 2014. "Aid under Fire: Development Projects and Civil Conflict." *The American Economic Review* 104, no. 6: 1833–56. DOI: 10.1257/aer.104.6.1833
14. Crost, Benjamin, Joseph H. Felter, Patrick B. Johnston. 2016. "Conditional Cash Transfers, Civil Conflict and Insurgent Influence: Experimental Evidence from the Philippines." *Journal of Development Economics*, v. 118 (Jan. 2016): 171-182
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2015.08.005>
15. Dasgupta, Aditya, Kishore Gawande, and Devesh Kapur. 2017. "(When) Do Antipoverty Programs Reduce Violence? India's Rural Employment Guarantee and Maoist Conflict." *International Organization* 71 (3): 605–32.

- <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818317000236>.
16. Fishstein, P., & Wilder, A. (2012). Winning hearts and minds? Examining the relationship between aid and security in Afghanistan. Feinstein International Center
<https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/Examining%20the%20Relationship%20Between%20Aid%20and%20Security%20in%20Afghanistan%20Jan.%202012.pdf>
 17. Gehring, Kai, Lennart C. Kaplan, and Melvin H.L. Wong. 2018. "Aid and Conflict at the Subnational Level – Evidence from World Bank and Chinese Development Projects in Africa." *SSRN Electronic Journal*.
<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3292036>.
 18. Hoelscher, Kristian, Jason Miklian, and Krishna Chaitanya Vadlamannati. 2012. "Hearts and Mines: A District-Level Analysis of the Maoist Conflict in India." *International Area Studies Review* 15, 2: 141–60.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2233865912447022>
 19. Iyengar, Radha, Jonathan Monten, and Matthew Hanson. 2011. "Building Peace: The Impact of Aid on the Labor Market for Insurgents". *NBER Working Paper No. 17297, Issued in August 2011 (National Bureau of Economic Research)*
<https://www.nber.org/papers/w17297>
 20. Karell, Daniel, and Sebastian Schutte. 2018. "Aid, Exclusion, and the Local Dynamics of Insurgency in Afghanistan." *Journal of Peace Research* 55 (6): 711–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343318777566>.
 21. Karell, Daniel. 2015. "Aid, Power, and Grievances: Lessons for War and Peace from Rural Afghanistan." *The Economics of Peace and Security Journal* 10 (2).
<https://doi.org/10.15355/epsj.10.2.42>.
 22. Khanna, Gaurav, and Laura Zimmermann. 2014. "Fighting Maoist Violence with Promises: Evidence from India's Employment Guarantee Scheme." *Economics of Peace and Security Journal* 9, no. 1: 30–36.
 23. Lee, Carrie A., and John Kendall. 2019. "Use It or Lose It: The Political Economy of Counterinsurgency Strategy." *Armed Forces & Society* 45 (3): 399–429.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X18790570>.
 24. Mercy Corps. (2015). Does youth employment build stability? Evidence from an impact evaluation of vocational training in Afghanistan.
https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/MercyCorps_AfghanistanINVEST_ImpactEvaluation_2015.pdf
 25. Narang, N. 2014. "Humanitarian Assistance and the Duration of Peace after Civil War." *Journal of Politics* 76, no. 2 (April 2014): 446–60.
 26. Narang, N. 2015. "Assisting Uncertainty: How Humanitarian Aid Can Inadvertently Prolong Civil War." *International Studies Quarterly* 59 (1): 184–95.
<https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1017/s0022381613001382>
 27. Nunn, Nathan, and Nancy Qian. 2014. "US Food Aid and Civil Conflict." *American Economic Review* 104 (6): 1630–66. DOI: 10.1257/aer.104.6.1630
 28. Sexton, Renard. 2016 "Aid as a Tool against Insurgency: Evidence from Contested and Controlled Territory in Afghanistan," *American Political Science Review*, 110, 4: 731-749. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055416000356>
 29. van Weezel, Stijn, 2015. "A Spatial Analysis of the Effect of Foreign Aid in Conflict Areas" (June 22, 2015). Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2450867> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2450867>

30. Weintraub, Michael. 2016. "Do all good things go together? Development assistance and insurgent violence in civil war." *The Journal of Politics*, 78(4):989-1002. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/686026>
31. Wood, Reed M., and Emily Molfino. 2016. "Aiding Victims, Abetting Violence: The Influence of Humanitarian Aid on Violence Patterns During Civil Conflict." *Journal of Global Security Studies* 1 (3): 186-203 <https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogw007>
32. Wood, Reed, and Christopher Sullivan. 2015. "Doing Harm by Doing Good? The Negative Externalities of Humanitarian Aid Provision during Civil Conflict." *Journal of Politics* 77 (3). <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/681239>

In addition, the findings of four relevant reviews were also considered:

33. Zürcher, Christoph. 2017. "What Do We (Not) Know About Development Aid and Violence? A Systematic Review." *World Development* 98 (October): 506–22. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2017.05.013>.
34. Gilligan, Michael 2016. "Employment and Rebellion in Conflicted and Fragile States." *IZA World of Labor*. <https://doi.org/10.15185/izawol.271>.
35. Iyengar, Radha, Jacob N Shapiro, and Stephen Hegarty. n.d. "Lessons Learned from Stabilization Initiatives in Afghanistan: A Systematic Review of Existing Research" <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/bafe/166924334437c0110d22c2f29a04a3ebdbf7.pdf>
36. Ferguson, Neil T.N., Eleonora Nillesen, and Tilman Brück. 2019. "Can Employment Build Peace? A Pseudo-Meta-Analysis of Employment Programs in Africa." *Economics Letters* 180 (July): 99–101. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2019.03.033>.

3.2 Regional Distribution

The included 32 studies cover 36 cases (one study can cover more than one case; studies which are essentially an updated version of a previous study were collapsed into one observation).

These studies provide country evidence from Afghanistan, Iraq, India, Philippines and Colombia, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Sudan. Furthermore, there is regional evidence from samples consisting of all civil war countries between 1969 and 2008, 125 non-OECD countries, 22 sub-Saharan African states and African countries with more than 1 million inhabitants, 1995 – 2012.

21 out of 36 cases refer to either Afghanistan or Iraq.

Evidently, the sample is not balanced at all, but dominated by Afghanistan and Iraq, and by aid which was given in the context of US military operation there. This may be partly caused by the increased interest of researchers and practitioners for these two protracted wars. More broadly, however, it appears that the sample is data driven: Researchers carried out studies when there were enough quality data available. This was the case for the commander emergency response program, for which we have good data. In addition, the military forces (the US in Iraq and ISAF in Afghanistan) also collected data insecurity incidents, thus making complex analyses possible.

3.3 Types of Aid

The studies investigate the effects of eight different aid types:⁵ Commander emergency response program; community driven development; conditional cash transfer; employment and training; large-scale infrastructure; humanitarian aid; food aid; and the impact of aggregated aid /all aid types.

Nine out of 36 sector/cases are on Commander emergency response program, eight are on community driven development, six investigate the impact of multi-sectoral aid, five are on employment programs, four on humanitarian aid two on conditional cash transfers and one of food aid. The next table shows the evidence bases by regional and sectoral dimensions.

⁵ One study can cover more than one aid type; thus the numbers here do not add up to 32.

Table 1: Evidence Base per Region and Sector

	Total / Region	Commander Emergency Response Program	Community Driven Development	Aggregated aid /all aid types	Employment and training programs	Humanitarian aid	Conditional Cash Transfer	Food aid	Large-scale infrastructure	Total all sectors
	36	9	8	6	5	4	2	1	1	36
Afghanistan	14	5	4	4	1					
India	3				3					
Iraq	7	4	2						1	
Philippines	3		2				1			
Colombia	1						1			
Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia and Sudan	1			1						
All civil war countries between 1969 and 2008	2					2				
125 non-OECD countries between 1971 and 2006 which receive US food aid	1							1		
22 sub-Saharan African states between 1990 and 2008	2					2				
All African countries with more than 1 million inhabitants, 1995 – 2012	1			1						
Liberia	1				1					

3.4 DAC Eligibility

All of the 36 cases (programs or projects) reviewed in our sample were ODA eligible and qualify as official development assistance according to the criteria of the OECD DAC.

26 of these cases were funded through civilian structures. Ten were funded by the US Department of Defence (DoD). Eight out of the ten cases funded by DoD refer to the Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) which was implemented in Afghanistan and Iraq. Despite the fact that the funds came from DoD and were distributed by military commanders with the explicit objective to stabilize regions in conflict, CERP was still classified as ODA.

Ten cases refer to the impact of ODA commitments and thus do not refer to a specific project, but rather to aid dollars committed by the donor community at large.

Another ten cases refer to national programs predominately funded by the World Bank

Five cases refer to programs funded by USAID.

Two cases refer to programs funded by non-governmental organizations.

3.5 Reference to Stabilization

Out of the total of 36 cases, 13 explicitly list stabilization as one of the main objectives of the programs. The other programs are “normal” development programs and not formally included in a stabilization portfolio of the donor.

The 13 stabilization cases consist of CERP (eight cases), community driven development programs funded by USAID in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria (three cases), one program by the US Army Corps of Engineers, and one program by an international NGO in Liberia.

12 out of these 13 cases are US programs, and one is a program by an international NGO.

It should be noted that the distinction between “stabilization” programs and other programs is to a very large extent only a matter of labelling. On the ground, stabilization programs do the same things as non-stabilization programs. They typically provide small infrastructure such as irrigation, roads, bridges, rehabilitation of school buildings and health centers, etc.; they often work with communities and the subnational administration; some of the work is done with local labor (cash for work); and the projects are usually low-cost, low tech, and quick to implement. In other words, the outputs of stabilization programs are not distinguishable from the outputs of other community level programs.

The US stabilization programs in our sample took place between 2005 and 2013, during the heydays of US stabilization efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq when funding earmarked for stabilization surged and the relative share of the Department of Defense (DoD) of aid funding grew. By 2007, the DoD accounted for over 20 percent of U.S. official development assistance (ODA).⁶

⁶ Patrick, S. and Brown, Kaysie. 2007. “The Pentagon and Global Development: Making Sense of the DoD’s Expanding Role”. Center for Global Development, *Working Paper Number 131* (November 2007).

In Afghanistan, “peak-stabilization aid” was reached in 2010, when USAID spent \$664.88 million on stabilization programs, and the DoD spent another \$329 million via its CERP program on stabilization. In comparison, USAID’s non-stabilization aid was \$1,834 million. In sum, around one third of US aid in that year was stabilization aid.

Despite these staggering spending levels, stabilization was rarely clearly defined, and the use of the term was not unified among US agencies on the ground and even changed over time within agencies.

In the early days of 2003, the main vehicle for stabilization were the Provincial Reconstruction Teams, which were deployed in order to extend the reach of the Afghan state and to project security into Afghan provinces.

PRTs also executed small-scale, quick-impact development projects which were thought to create buy-in of the population for the state-building project. From this early beginning, the stabilization agenda soon grew much broader. Civilian and military organizations would work side-by-side in Afghanistan to stabilize priority areas from the bottom up. There were three primary lines of effort—security, governance, and development—with the assumption that the State Department and USAID would predominantly do the latter two, while DoD would provide security.⁷

By 2010, USAID ran 12 programs aimed at stabilisation, among them the ones reviewed in this study. At the same time, DoD continued to run its massive CERP program.

The civilian USAID program had a wide range of activities, such as support for the justice system and training for government officials, but also such “normal” development activities such as seed distribution, agricultural training, repairing irrigation canals and building roads⁸. The military CERP projects, despite their different funding source, provided very similar outputs.

CERP projects were implemented in insecure regions where the US army was active, but civilian programs were also increasingly concentrated in insecure key districts which were of strategic importance. As a result, CERP programs and civilian stabilization programs at the community level were quite similar. While there never was a unified theory of stabilization, the thinking was that a combination of military presence and massive and rapid investment in livelihoods and local governance would stabilize these regions.

Unfortunately, according to a 2018 SIGAR lessons learned report, stabilization proved to be an immensely costly failure.⁹ Stabilization strategies were not tailored to the context of Afghanistan and the US overestimated the Afghan government’s capacity and performance. Also, stabilization projects prioritized the most insecure and dangerous zones where aid was rarely effective, and too much money was spent too fast, without oversight and monitoring of results. The large sums of stabilization dollars often exacerbated conflicts, enabled corruption, and bolstered support for insurgents.¹⁰

⁷ SIGAR 2018: 42.

⁸ SIGAR 2018: 43.

⁹ SIGAR. 2018. 18-48-LL (May 2018), Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. experience in Afghanistan.

¹⁰ SIGAR 2018: xii

Such sobering results led the US to reflect on its overall stabilization approach. Results from this reflection were published in 2018 in a joint report by the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of Defense (DoD).¹¹ The report found that the performance of U.S. stabilization efforts was consistently limited by the lack of strategic clarity, organizational discipline, and unity of effort. The review cautioned against future overambitious large-scale reconstruction efforts and suggest that the US should be more selective and targeted in its stabilization missions. Stabilization was now defined as an

“inherently political endeavor that requires aligning U.S. Government efforts — diplomatic engagement, foreign assistance, and defense — toward supporting locally legitimate authorities and systems to peaceably manage conflict and prevent violence. Stabilization requires adaptive and targeted engagement at subnational and national levels. More important than dollars spent is having a singular, agreed-upon, strategic approach to unify efforts in support of a consolidated local impact executed through sequenced and contextual assistance”.¹²

In short, the 2018 assistance review is a reversal of the overambitious, lavishly funded large-scale stabilization approach that dominated the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Instead, it argues for more context appropriate, smaller, local-level initiatives for creating island of stability and assumes that at the core, stabilization is a political process. However, the report is largely silent about how such an approach would be implemented on the ground and what kind of programs and projects would be most effective. While the report is clear in its rejection of overambition, hubris, ignorance of the local context and bad monitoring policies, it does not provide an alternative theory of change or a blueprint for what is supposed to really work on the ground.

The next table lists the cases by sector, donor/implementor, and reference to stabilization.

Table 2: Donors, Implementers, Reference to Stabilization

Aid Sector / Program	Donor / Implementer	Reference to stabilization?
CERP: Commander Emergency Response Program	DoD	Yes
CERP: Commander Emergency Response Program	DoD	Yes
CERP: Commander Emergency Response Program	DoD	Yes
CERP: Commander Emergency Response Program	DoD	Yes
CERP: Commander Emergency Response Program	DoD	Yes
CERP: Commander Emergency Response Program	DoD	Yes
CERP: Commander Emergency Response Program	DoD	Yes
CERP: Commander Emergency Response Program	DoD	Yes
Programs by the US Army Corps of Engineers	DoD	Yes
Humanitarian aid commitment	Multiple donors / ODA	No
Humanitarian aid commitments	Multiple donors / ODA	No

¹¹ Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of Defense, 2018: “Stabilization Assistance Review. A Framework for Maximizing the Effectiveness of U.S. Government Efforts to Stabilize Conflict-Affected Areas

¹² Ibid, p. 2

Humanitarian aid commitments	Multiple donors / ODA	No
Humanitarian aid commitments	Multiple donors / ODA	No
Multi-sector aid	Multiple donors / ODA	No
Multi-sector aid	Multiple donors / ODA	No
Multi-sector aid	Multiple donors / ODA	No
Multi-sector aid	Multiple donors / ODA	No
Multi Sector aid	Multiple donors / ODA	No
Multi Sector aid (ODA) and Chinese aid disbursement	Multiple donors; China	No
NREGA: Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee Act 2005, India	National program by the Indian Government	No
NREGA: Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee Act 2005, India	National program by the Indian Government	No
NREGA: Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee Act 2005, India	National program by the Indian Government	No
KALAH-CIDS, a community-driven development program in the Philippines	National Program funded by World Bank	No
KALAH-CIDS, a community-driven development program in the Philippines	National Program funded by World Bank	No
Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program: CCT program in the Philippines	National Program funded by World Bank	No
NSP: National Solidarity Program, Afghanistan	National Program, funded by World Bank	No
NSP: National Solidarity Program, Afghanistan	National Program, funded by World Bank	No
NSP: National Solidarity Program, Afghanistan	National Program, funded by World Bank	No
Familias en Acción: Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program in Colombia	National Program, funded by World Bank and IADB	No
Action on Armed Violence, Liberia	Non-Governmental Organization	Yes
INVEST: Training and Employment Program in Afghanistan	Non-Governmental Organization	No
Food aid (US)	USAID	No
OTI: Office of Transitional Initiatives, Syria	USAID	Yes
USAID Community Action Program (CAP) in Iraq	USAID	No
USAID Community Stabilization Program (CSP) in Iraq	USAID	Yes
USAID Governance Local Community Development in Afghanistan	USAID	Yes

4. Outcomes

4.1 Overall Outcomes

We now present the outcomes of these interventions. The studies cover 36 cases. However, two studies are essentially updated versions of previous studies. In order to not overrepresent their findings we collapse the two versions of the same study into one observation. This leaves us with 34 cases.

Of these 34 cases,

- Fourteen find a violence-increasing effect
- Eight find no effect at all
- Seven find that aid has a violence-reducing effect
- Five find a heterogeneous treatment effect (meaning the aid can, depending on the circumstances, either increase or reduce violence)

Taken together, this suggests that the probability that aid will have an unintended violence increasing effect in regions in conflict is much higher than the probability for aid to have the intended violence-reducing effect.

4.2 Outcomes per Type of Aid

The 34 cases cover the effects of eight different aid types: Commander emergency response program; community driven development; conditional cash transfer; employment and training; large-scale infrastructure; humanitarian aid; food aid; and the impact of aggregated aid /all aid types.

There is a widespread assumption in the literature that different aid types lead to different outcomes, and that some types of aid are better suited for conflict settings than others (Berman et al.; 2013, Crost et al. 2014; 2016). As the following discussion of the effect of various types of aid shows, such assumptions, while theoretically tempting, do not hold empirically. **None of the aid types covered in the sample is systematically associated with less violence. The evidence strongly suggests that every type of aid, depending on the context, can have a violence-increasing effect.**

In the next section I will discuss in more details the main findings of the studies and their methodological setup.

Table 3: Aid Types and Outcomes

Aid Type / Sector	Aid Program Author/Year	Country/Region	Outcomes
Community driven development (CDD)	USAID Community Stabilization Program (CSP) Berman et al. (2013)	Iraq	Violence reducing
	National Solidarity Program Beath et al. (2012; 2017)	Afghanistan	Heterogeneous treatment effect Violence reducing, only in districts with locally embedded (not foreign) insurgents
	USAID Community Action Program Berman et al. (2013)	Iraq	No effect
	National Solidarity	Afghanistan	No effect

	Program Chou (2012)		
	USAID Governance Local Community Development in Afghanistan Chou (2012)	Afghanistan	No effect
	Asian Development Bank KALAH CIDSS- National Community-Driven Development Project in the Philippines KALAH-CIDS Croft et al. (2016)	Philippines	Violence increasing
	Asian Development Bank KALAH CIDSS- National Community-Driven Development Project in the Philippines KALAH-CIDS Arcand et al. (2012)	Philippines	Heterogeneous treatment effect Violence increasing for ideology driven insurgents; Violence reducing for grievance driven insurgents
Aid given by the military in counterinsurgencies	Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) Berman et al (2011, 2013)	Iraq	Violence reducing
	Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) Sexton (2015)	Afghanistan	Heterogeneous treatment effect Violence reducing in regions under control; violence increasing in contested regions
	Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) Chou (2012)	Afghanistan	No effect

	Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) Child (2014)	Afghanistan	No effect
	Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) Iyengar et al. (2011)	Iraq	Violence increasing
	Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) Adams (2015)	Afghanistan	Heterogeneous treatment effect Small CERP projects (below \$50,000) reduced violence, larger projects increased violence
	Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) Karell & Schutte (2018)	Afghanistan	Violence increasing
	Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) Lee & Kendall 2019:	Iraq	Violence increasing
Conditional cash transfer (CCT)	Pantawid Familyang Pilipino Program / Bridging Program for the Filipino Family, Phillipines Crost et al. (2014)	Philippines	Violence reducing
	World Bank / Interamerican Development Bank, Familias en acion, Colombia Weintraub (2014)	Columbia	Violence increasing

Employment program	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) Dasgupta (2014)	India	Violence reducing
	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) Khanna & Zimmermann (2014)	India	Violence increasing
	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) Hoelscher et al. (2012)	India	Violence reducing
	Action on Armed Violence (AoAV) Blattmann & Annan (2016)	Liberia	No effect (on attitudes towards violence)
	INVEST program Mercy Corps (2015)	Afghanistan	No effect
Aggregated aid / more than one aid sector	Aggregated small scale aid Böhnke et al. (2015)	Afghanistan	Violence reducing
	Aggregated small scale aid Böhnke and Zürcher (2013)	Afghanistan	Violence increasing
	Aggregated subnational aid spending Van Weezel (2015)	DR Congo, Ethiopia, Sudan	No effect
	Aggregated small scale aid Fishstein & Wilder (2012)	Afghanistan	Violence increasing
	All aid projects by PRTs, USAID, Combined Security Transition Command, World Bank, WHO and UN ageinces	Afghanistan	Heterogenous effect Education projects increase violence Health projects

	Child (2018)		reduce violence Security projects reduce violence
	World Bank aid disbursement and Chinese aid disbursement at first level of subnational administrative unit / year Gehring et al. (2018)	All African countries with more than 1 million inhabitants, 1995 - 2012	Violence reducing
Large-scale infrastructure	Program of US Army Corps Berman et al. (2013)	Iraq	No effect
Humanitarian Aid	Humanitarian Aid Narang 2014:	All civil war countries 1969 – 2008	Violence increasing
	Humanitarian Aid Narang 2015:	All civil war countries 1969 – 2008	Violence increasing
	Humanitarian Aid Wood & Molino 2016	22 sub-Saharan African states	Violence increasing
	Humanitarian Aid Wood & Sullivan 2015	22 sub-Saharan African states	Violence increasing
Food Aid	US food aid Nunn and Qian 2014	125 non-OECD countries between 1971 and 2006 which receive US food aid	Violence increasing

4.3 Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP)

CERP is the only aid type which is primarily intended to reduce violence. Development outcomes are a secondary objective. Two of the most influential studies on CERP are provided by Berman et al. (2011, 2013). Berman et al. (2011) measure violence as the number of attacks against US and Iraqi government per district half-year. Data come from a declassified version of “significant activity” (SIGACT) reports collected by the US army. The studies employ a first-difference design where changes in violence are regressed on changes in aid spending, controlling for previous levels of violence and troop strength. Berman et al. (2011) find that smaller CERP projects (under \$50k) reduce insurgent violence. Berman et al. (2013) improve over their preceding study by adding a control for troop presence, recognizing that their previous finding might have captured the effect of troop presence rather than the effect of CERP. The measurement for troop presence is based on newspaper reporting. The revised study finds again that smaller CERP projects (under \$50k) reduce insurgent violence, but only in interaction with larger numbers of troops (e.g. it is the interaction term which reaches significance).

The authors explain the violence-reducing effect by an information-centric model of counterinsurgency. The model assumes that local communities possess critical information on the activities of insurgents. The prospect of rewards in the form of development aid acts as an incentive for local communities to share this information with the government and its international allies. As a result, the government's counterinsurgency efforts become more effective and security eventually increases.

The Berman et al. studies has been replicated three times in Afghanistan, where CERP was also widely used by the U.S. military. Two studies (Chou 2012 and Child 2014) could not find an effect of CERP spending on insurgent violence.

Adams (2015) also replicates the Berman et al. study in Afghanistan. The study finds that small CERP projects (<USD50,000) are associated with a statistically significant reduction in violence but larger CERP projects actually led to an increase in violence. It is possible that Adams (2015) found an effect whereas Chou (2012) and Child (2014) did not because of slightly different data sources and model specifications. Chou (2012) and Child (2014) use one-month lags, and Child (2014) also used a different source for measuring violence (the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System).

Sexton (2016) provides another study on the effects of CERP in Afghanistan. He uses variation in week-per-week CERP spending per district week in all Afghan districts (instead of levels of CERP spending, as the previous studies did). This measure is chosen because it is assumed that this variation is quasi random (caused by the unpredictable bureaucracy), whereas CERP spending per se is endogenous to violence. The study finds that CERP has a violence-reducing effect in regions which are under the control of the government and its allies, but a violence-increasing effect in regions which are contested or under insurgent control. Control is proxied by the presence or absence of a FOB (a battalion level forward operating base). The author argues that the violence-increasing effect is caused by the attempts of insurgents to sabotage aid programs which might win over the population to the government. These attempts at sabotage can only be carried out in districts which are not yet secured by the government. This is why more aid creates more violence in non-secured districts, but can dampen violence in secured districts. Sexton (2016) also rejects the information-centric model. He argues that if increased CERP spending would buy actionable information, then increased spending should be associated with increased COIN activity. However, he finds no evidence for this.

Karell and Schutte (2018) find that CERP in Afghanistan in general increased violence, but CERP projects which targeted only particular groups (as opposed to CERP projects that provided public goods) were more violence-inducing. They suggest that "exclusionary" aid can fuel inter-group rivalry and thereby fuel conflicts.

Karell (2015), in a single case qualitative study on the city of Marjah also finds that CERP increased violence. He argues that CERP aid predominately benefitted local power brokers. Since power-brokers are non-traditional / non-legitimate authorities, the aid flows upset traditional power structures and increased inter-communal tensions, leading to more insurgent violence.

Finally, Lee and Kendall (2019) observe an increase of violence associated with CERP spending in the last quarter of the budget cycle. They argue that US army commanders

indiscriminately spent their CERP budget at the end of the fiscal year (as most bureaucracies tend to do – use it or lose it!). As a result, there was no oversight, funded projects were poorly planned, receiving partners not vetted, etc. The aid flows thus ended up in the pockets of local strong men and insurgents, fueled intercommunal tensions and contributed to corruption, all of which fuels violence.

Iyengar et al. (2011) investigate the effect of CERP in Iraq between 2004 and 2008 at the district level. They focus on labor intensive CERP projects, which are theorized to reduce violence by providing peaceful employment for potential insurgents. However, their findings do not lend support for the theory. They find that CERP projects led to more attacks on the military and more civilian fatalities per attack (but a lower number of attacks on civilians). Overall, violence was not reduced, but targets and lethality changed.

With nine studies dedicated to CERP, it is among the best-researched aid type in our sample. The overall evidence for a violence-reducing effect is weak. Only one study finds a straightforward violence decreasing effect (Berman et al. 2011). Two studies find no effect (Chou 2012 and Child 2014). Three studies find qualified and heterogeneous effects: Berman et al. (2013) find that CERP dampens violence but only in conjunction with increased troop levels. Adams (2015) finds that CERP increases violence when projects are >\$50,000 and dampens violence when projects are < \$50,000 and Sexton (2016) finds that CERP increases violence in territories which are not under the control of the counter-insurgents, but dampens violence where counterinsurgents have control. Three studies (Lee and Kendall 2019; Karell and Schutte 2018; Iyengar et al, 2011) find a violence increasing effect.

In sum, the evidence from these studies strongly suggest that CERP has not met its objectives of stabilizing regions in conflict, but has actually made the situation worse.

Similar conclusions are reached by a comprehensive lessons-learned report published by the office of the Special Inspector General for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan.¹³ This report looked at the results of 15 years of stabilization efforts, conducted by U.S. forces and U.S civilians aid providers in Afghanistan, during which \$3.88 billion were spent.¹⁴ The report is based on publicly available material, including reports by USAID, State, DOD, and coalition partner nations, as well as congressional testimony from government officials. These official sources were complemented by hundreds of nongovernmental sources. Not publicly available sources such as cables, internal memos and briefings, strategy documents, analytical reports, and civ-mil planning and programmatic documents were also analyzed. In addition, more than 100 individuals with direct knowledge of U.S. efforts were conducted. The research team also interviewed 20 Afghan government officials. Finally, the report underwent an extensive process of peer review by nine reviewers. The conclusion of the report is that “the large sums of stabilization dollars the United States devoted to Afghanistan in search of quick gains often exacerbated conflicts, enabled corruption, and bolstered support for insurgents”.¹⁵

¹³ SIGAR. “Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan”, May 2018. Accessed January 25, 2019.

¹⁴ Combined spending by the Commanders Emergency Responses Program CERP and USAID on stabilization; numbers from SIGAR. “Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan”, May 2018. p. 56 and p. 95, p. 56 and p. 95.

¹⁵ SIGAR. “Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan”, May 2018.

Similarly, a synthesis report of 89 studies on development and stabilization programming in Afghanistan, authored by researchers from Princeton, found that “most stabilization programs will have – at best – modest impact (...). Based on the Afghanistan experience, policy makers and implementers should not expect to generate either large or persistent effects (...) The evidence consistently indicates stabilization programming has small, generally transitory, impacts (both positive or negative), (...) but they do not appear to generate large shifts in security, attitudes, or capacity.”¹⁶

In conclusion, CERP was not an effective tool for stabilization. On the contrary, CERP aid more often than not exacerbates inter-group tensions and attracted violence.

4.4 Community Driven Development (CDD)

Unlike CERP, CDD programs are not designed as a counterinsurgency tool. CDD programs are classical development tools primarily aimed at poverty-reduction. CDD is widely used in fragile contexts because the programs are flexible, small-scale and demand driven, thereby promising local ownership and quick results. CDD requires the participation and continuous involvement of the local communities. Typically, communities first assess their needs and prioritize them in a participatory way and then apply for a grant, which is often a blockgrant to be spent on small infrastructure or capacity building.

Four studies in our sample are devoted to testing the effects of a specific CDD program (Beath et al. 2012 and 2017; Crost et al. 2014 Arcand et al. 2012). Two studies, while primarily focusing on the impact of CERP, also each include two CDD programs in their investigation (Berman et al., 2013; Chou 2012).

Of the eight community driven development programs under review here, only one had an unqualified violence dampening effect. One had a violence-dampening effect only in relatively secure regions, but not in insecure regions. One had a violence dampening effect in regions dominated by grievance driven rebels, but a violence increasing effect in regions dominated by politically motivated rebels. Three had no effect, and two increased violence.

The best researched program is the National Solidarity Program (NSP) in Afghanistan. NSP was a nation-wide, community-driven development program which gave block grants to Afghan communities in order to implement projects selected by the communities themselves. The average size of the block grants was around US \$30,000.

Beath et al. (2012, 2019) investigate the impact of NSP. The studies identification strategy employs the fact that the World Bank, as the main donor, administered a randomized experiment in order to measure the impacts of NSP. In each of 10 districts, 50 villages were selected to be included in the study, 25 of which were then selected as treatment villages using a matched-pair randomization procedure. Results suggest that NSP improved villagers’ perceptions of security and reduced the number of security incidents recorded by ISAF in the long run (15 to 30 months after projects were

¹⁶ Iyengar Plumb, Radha, Jacob N. Shapiro, and Stephen Hegarty, *Lessons Learned from Stabilization Initiatives in Afghanistan: A Systematic Review of Existing Research*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017: 8.

selected). However, these positive effects were only observed in eight of ten districts. In two eastern districts, located closer to the borders of Pakistan, where initial levels of violence were higher, no effect was found. The study also estimated the effect of NSP on a number of other outcomes and finds that NSP is associated with perceived welfare gains, improved attitudes toward government officials, NGOs and ISAF soldiers. Again, these positive effects were not found for the two eastern districts.

The authors offer two explanations for the observation that NSP had a positive impact only in districts which were not closer to Pakistan. Firstly, the border districts had higher level of violence to start with. In these districts, the population may be primarily concerned with security. The government's attempts to improve material wellbeing are likely to have a strong effect on attitudes toward the government only in regions where the population is primarily concerned with economic conditions rather than security. When public goods are provided in these regions, community members are less likely to join the insurgency. In regions with high levels of violence, however, security is likely to be the primary concern, so that marginal improvements in economic outcomes will be insufficient to change people's attitudes toward the government.

Second, the authors argue that NSP only has a positive effect when insurgents are mainly home-grown and come from the local population. This would be the case for regions relatively far from Pakistan, where many Taliban are trained and have their base. These insurgents can operate relatively freely in the border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan. They have the capacity, therefore, to interrupt and sabotage aid flows to communities. In sum, the authors argue that their results suggest that development programs are more effective in preventing the spread of violence, rather than in reducing the level of violence in already insecure regions.

Arcand et al. (2012) find that the treatment effect of a CDD program is heterogeneous so that the association between aid and violence has a different direction depending on the group who perpetrates the violence. They estimate the causal effect of KALAHI-CIDSS, a community-driven development (CDD) program implemented by the Philippine government and funded through World Bank on civil war casualties. Between 2003 and 2008, more than 4,000 villages in 184 municipalities received aid through KALAHI-CIDSS. Typically for CDD programs, KALAHI-CIDSS objectives were to mobilize communities by giving grants which could be used for small local infrastructure or capacity building projects. Similar to NSP in Afghanistan, eligible "poor-enough" municipalities received block grants. Communities within the municipality could then apply on a competitive base for funding. Participating communities received approximately US\$6,000 per grant. The independent variables are whether a municipality participated in the program or not, the number of years during which the project has been implemented, and the amount of money a municipality had received. The effect is measured as violent events per year within a 100km radius of the municipality, and as the number of conflict related casualties within a 100km radius of the municipality per year. Importantly both variables can be disaggregated in MILF (Moro Islamic Liberation Front) events and NPA (New Peoples Army) events. A cross sectional model is used for the full sample and a regression discontinuity design for a sub sample. When looking at the full sample, and not distinguishing between the MILF and the NPA, the program appears to increase violence. However, when looking at the two rebel groups separately, it is found that the program reduced the number of violent events committed by MILF by 35%,

whereas it increased the number of violent events committed by the NPA by 41%. The authors argue that MILF is predominately a grievance driven, identity based rebel groups that can be accommodated by CDD programs which lead to a greater sense of inclusion in local decision-making, a greater sense of empowerment, and concrete improvements in access to government services all of which reduced the sense of grievance towards the central government. Conversely, the ideologically motivated, profit oriented driven NPA might have perceived the project as increasing the legitimacy of the government and reducing popular support for the rebels. Increased violence might therefore be seen as an attempt to sabotage the program.

Crost et al. (2014) also investigate the effects of KALAHI-CIDSS. Their dependent variable is casualties of civil war, measured at the municipal level per month. The data come from original reports of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) between 2002 and 2006. These data are similar to the US military's "Significant Activities" (SIGACTS) database. The data allows distinguishing between government- and insurgent-initiated incidents, as well as between casualties suffered by government forces, insurgents and civilians. Since eligibility of the program was restricted to the poor household in the fourth quartile only, the study exploits this "cut-off" by using a regression discontinuity design that compares municipalities just below the cut-off (treatment) with municipalities just above the treatment. The results indicate that the program led to increased casualties over the entire three-year period. The effect is, however, small in actual casualties and translates to less than 3 killed within a municipality of an average population size of around 30,000. The study does not intend to test one specific causal mechanism. However, the authors suggest that the most likely causal mechanism linking the CDD program to increased violence is sabotage. Since rebels benefit from anti-government sentiments, they may have an incentive to sabotage programs, which may repair negative attitudes of local communities towards the government. Hence they may seek to derail the possible positive effects of CDD programs.

Berman et al. (2013) find some evidence for a violence-reducing effect of a CDD program, the USAID-funded Community Stabilization Program (CSP).¹⁷ It should be noted, however, that their study is predominately interested in CERP, and testing for the effect of CDD programs is done en passant. Chou (2012) also included two CDD programs (NSP, and USAID Local Community Development in Afghanistan) in her evaluation of CERP in Afghanistan, but found no effect.

In sum, we find little evidence for a violence-dampening effect of CDD programs in conflict zones. As with CERP project, CDD projects appear to have a violence-reducing effect only when the environment is reasonably secure. Under more adverse conditions, however, CDD can increase violence. This effect may be driven by attempts of insurgents to sabotage the cooperative relations between local communities and the government, or because rebels violently loot aid.

¹⁷ This finding is in contrast to a report on the same program by the office of the inspector general which states that "we do not have a reasonable basis for asserting that CSP activities in the community infrastructure and essential services component were contributing to the overall improvements in security in Iraq" (Office of Inspector General 2008: 4). Moreover, the audit also pointed out that "CSP projects are highly vulnerable to fraud and exploitation which may have in fact occurred, with potential adverse consequences to Coalition personnel (Office of Inspector General 2008: 4).

4.5 Conditional Cash Transfer Programs (CCT)

CTT are another staple of traditional development programming. CCT intend to reduce poverty by providing grants to poor households, based on some conditions, for example, that households ensure that their children attend school and receive a variety of medical treatments. CCT transfers are typically small, but can make a significant contribution to the income of the poorest households.

Two studies estimate the effect of CCT on violence, and reach opposite conclusions. While Crost et al. (2016) find a violence-reducing effect, Weintraub (2015) finds a violence increasing effect.

Crost et al. (2016) estimate the effect of a nation-wide conditional CCT which financed transfers to approximately one million households in all regions of the Philippines. The study estimates the effects of the CCT on two outcomes. The first is a measure for conflict intensity, based on the annual number of conflict incidents per village. Data come from reports of the Philippine army. The second is a measure for insurgent influence, indicating the extent to which a village is under insurgent influence according to assessments made by Philippine military. The study exploits the fact that the program was designed by the World Bank as an experiment where 130 villages were randomly divided into a treatment group and a control group. Observations were aggregated to one year pre-treatment period and a one year post treatment period. Results suggest that the CCT reduced the number of incidents in treatment villages within one year after treatment. Also, treated villages experienced a decrease in insurgent influence compared to control villages, suggesting that the program reduced conflict by weakening rebel presence.

The authors propose two possible explanations for the observed violence suppressing effect: The first is the opportunity cost model, which implies that the program reduced conflict by making it costlier for insurgents to recruit combatants in treated villages, so that these villages could “export” fewer combatants to carry out attacks in other regions. The second is the information-centric model, which implies that the program increased popular support for the government. As a result, the population was more willing to provide information on insurgents to government forces, which led to more effective counterinsurgency. Both explanations are compatible with the data.

Weintraub (2014) tells a different story. This study investigates the effects of the nation-wide CCT program Familias en Acción in Colombia, rolled out in 2002, using a sample of 57 treated and 65 untreated municipalities. Data are drawn from the Human Rights Observatory Database compiled by the Presidency of Colombia. This dataset has municipal-level data on violent events, including the type of armed action perpetrated by various violent non-state actors. Three dependent variables are used: FARC Civilian Killings (the total number of civilians killed by the FARC in a municipality-year); FARC Attacks (the number of non-reciprocated (unilateral) violent actions carried out by the FARC in a municipality-year); and FARC Indiscriminate Violence (the total number of indiscriminate violent acts committed by the FARC). The effect of the program is estimated with a difference-in-differences strategy. The study exploits the fact that an earlier evaluation study of the program constructed a data set where treated municipalities were matched with untreated (Attanasio, Meghir and Vera-Hernandez 2004).

The results suggest that the program had a statistically significant positive (in sign) effect upon killings and indiscriminate violent incidents by the FARC. The effect on indiscriminate violence was still discernible in the second year after treatment. For civilian killings, no effect was observed in the second year. Furthermore, the effect appeared to be especially accentuated in the poorest municipalities and in municipalities where coca was cultivated.

The observed patterns are explained with a version of the information centric model. The assumption is that, as in the information-centric model, aid can buy the gratitude of the local population who then is more inclined to share intelligence with the government, which helps the government gain or maintain control over a territory. Insurgents, facing the threat of losing territorial control, will penalize “collaborators” with violence. Perhaps insurgents would prefer to selectively target informants, but when their position is weakened, they have to rely increasingly on indiscriminate violence.

Further specifying the mechanism, the study argues that poor communities who depend most on aid will be more likely to become collaborators, and therefore will be more likely to become a target of insurgent violence. Moreover, the study also hypothesizes that insurgent violence will be higher in location which are rich in natural resources, especially coca cultivation, because the loss of resource-rich territories means forfeiting important revenue streams for insurgents. The empirical results are compatible with these mechanisms. But it should be noted that this study, as other studies, does not offer evidence of the “information-sharing-model” which is at the core of the causal chain. No information on actual information sharing of (poor) households with the government is offered. The data is also compatible with the sabotage-mechanism, which assumes that insurgent violence against civilians is a means to derail improved relations between the government and local communities.

In sum, we are left with contradicting evidence about the impact of CCT. Two possible explanations for the diverse result seem possible. Firstly, it could be that two different causal mechanisms are at work: In Colombia, the CTT led to more information sharing, which in turn triggered counter-violence by the insurgents. By contrast, in the Philippines, the CTT led to higher opportunity costs for the insurgents, which explains the decrease in violence.

A second explanation is that in both cases, the CTT triggered better information sharing, but only in the Philippines were the army capable of acting efficiently on the better information. This would explain why better information led, in the Philippines, to reduced violence. Again, further research is needed to confirm or refute this mechanism.

4.6 Employment Programs

Employment programs are another widely used development tool. Employment programs usually bundle skill development, training and a small grant or loan. The objective is to create economic opportunities for beneficiaries, which, among other things, would make it less attractive for them to join the insurgency.

We have five studies on employment programs. Once covers a program in Liberia (Blattman and Annan 2016), a second once covers a program in Afghanistan (Mercy Corps 2015), and three studies investigate the effect of the massive National Rural

Employment Guarantee Act” (NREGA) in India. Again, the evidence is mixed. Two of the three studies on NREGA found a violence reducing effect, while one found a violence-increasing effect. The remaining two studies found not effect at all.

NREGA is an employment development program introduced in 2006 that guarantees at least 100 days of wage-employment to every rural household. It is vast public employment scheme reaching up to 47.9 million rural households annually, generating so far 210 million person-days of employment for the rural poor. While key objective of NREGA is poverty reduction, it is clear that the Indian government hopes that it will also contribute to reduce violence in the regions most affected by Maoist insurgencies (Hoelscher et al. 2012). Once more the evidence from the three studies is ambiguous: Two studies see a violence reducing effect and one finds a violence increasing effect.

Khanna and Zimmermann (2014), using a difference-in-difference-design, find that the program led to an increase in of Maoist related violence in the short run. This increase in violence appears to be driven by police-initiated attacks rather than by Maoist-initiated attacks. The authors argue that such empirical patterns are consistent with the information centric model which predicts that civilians are more willing to share information with the police when they are a recipient of a development program, which then allows government troops to crack down more efficiently on the insurgents.

By contrast, Hoelscher et al. (2012) find a violence-reducing effect of NREGA. Using a cross-sectional model for the entire period from 2004 – 2010, the study finds that the percentage of households per district participating in NREGA was associated with less battle deaths, less violent incidents and fewer districts which record violent incidents. The authors attribute the observed effect to the fact that the employment program for the rural poor increased the opportunity costs for the insurgents. It should be noted, however, that the identification strategy of this study is not well suited to detect endogeneity problems and the results should be taken with some caution.

More support for a violence reducing effect of NREGA comes from Dasgupta et al. (2014). Their study investigates whether districts which adopted NREGA experienced lower levels of violence compared to districts which did not adopt NREGA. Results indicated that NREGS caused a large long-run reduction in violence. The estimates suggest a roughly 50 percent reduction in violent incidents and deaths. The study also shows that the effect is largest in districts which experienced too little rainfall, suggesting the NREGA serves as a substitute for foregone agricultural wages. The authors take this as support for the opportunity model: The wage labor which the program provided to the rural poor made recruitment for Maoist insurgents more costly.

One innovative contribution of this study is to highlight the role played by state capacity in shaping these effects. The performance of the program is highly contingent upon local administrative capabilities. The results suggest that NREGS's violence reducing effects concentrated in states and districts which implemented the program effectively and provided therefore greater levels of employment provision under the program.

The authors are aware that their results directly contradict the results of Khanna and Zimmermann (2014). They explain this with different data sources for the dependent variables. Khanna and Zimmermann (2014) used data based on English news clips

which over-report violence in urban regions, whereas Dasgupta et al. (2014) constructed the data based in local language news clips which provide better and more balanced coverage of rural areas.

Blattman and Annan (2016) investigated whether participation in a training and employment program in Liberia could change attitudes of participants towards violence. No effect was found.

Similarly, Mercy Corps (2015) studies the effects of a technical vocational education and training (TVET) program on participating youth in Helmand province, Afghanistan. While the program improved the economic situation of participants, it had no effect on their self-reported willingness to use violence for political or other causes.

In sum, the evidence suggest that employment programs can, sometimes, work (as they did in the case of NREGA in India); but more often they don't have a tangible impact on violence, or on attitudes towards violence. This then prompts us to ask why the intervention worked in India, but not elsewhere.

I offer three possible answers. Firstly, NREGA was, in contrast to the other programs, massive. It reached 50 million households, compared to the approximately 1000 participants of the other projects, and it involved very significant financial transfers. It is very likely that the gigantic difference in scale accounts for the difference in outcome.

Secondly, it is possible that the Maoist insurgency in India is primarily driven by economic deprivation, which would explain why creating economic opportunities can reduce insurgent activities. By contrast, insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan are to a very large extent driven by ideology and religion, which make economic opportunities much less effective.

Thirdly, it is possible that NREGA was implemented in regions where the government was relatively strong to begin with. NREGA requires that government officials collect community level data and are present in order to administer the work program. This is only possible in regions which are largely under government control. The level of control is therefore much higher than in regions where CERP programs or humanitarian emergency programs are implemented. It is possible that the benign effect of NREGA is conditioned on pre-existing government control.

In the absence of these conditions, it appears unlikely that employment programs can have a tangible impact on violence, or on the propensity for violence.¹⁸

4.7 Humanitarian and Food Aid

The evidence on humanitarian aid and food aid is unequivocal: All five studies in our sample find that humanitarian aid increases violence.

¹⁸ This conclusion is supported by two summarising studies. Ferguson et al. (2019), in a meta-analysis from 5 African countries investigating the effect of employment programs on a range of stability indicators, find little support for tangible results. Similarly, Berman et al. (2011), in a study titled "Do Working Men Rebel?" find no significant relationship between unemployment and the rate of insurgent attacks that kill civilians in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Philippines.

Nunn and Qian (2014) study the effect of US food aid on conflict in recipient countries. Their sample consists of a panel of 125 non-OECD countries between 1971 and 2006. Study variables are onset and duration of conflict. In order to counter endogeneity problems, the authors use an instrument for food aid based on exogenous time variation in US wheat production, which is primarily driven by changes in US weather conditions. Surplus wheat is bought by the government at fixed prices and then shipped to developing countries as food aid. Thus, US wheat production is positively correlated with US food aid shipments in the following year. The authors construct the interaction of last year's US wheat production and the frequency that a country receives any US food aid and use this as an instrument for the amount of food aid received by a country in a given year. The study finds US food aid increased the duration of civil conflicts, but had no effect on interstate conflicts or the onset of civil conflicts. The effect is most pronounced in countries with a recent history of civil conflict. The study is not designed to uncover the causal mechanisms, but the authors refer to the large do-no-harm literature which suggests that stolen aid is frequently used to finance the war.

Narang (2014) investigates the effect of humanitarian bilateral and multilateral aid disbursement on the duration of peace, using a panel dataset of civil conflicts between 1989 and 1999. A duration models is employed to estimate the effect of aid on the risk of peace failing in a particular year. He finds that post-conflict states treated with higher levels of humanitarian assistance exhibit shorter spells of peace; however, this effect only occurs after conflicts that ended with a decisive victory. For conflicts which ended in negotiated settlement or stalemates no effect is found. The author argues that humanitarian aid is usually disproportionately given to the losers of the war, and that the aid can help the losing side to reconstitute its war effort. In other words, aid can support or even create a revisionist party with the incentive to change the postwar settlement on the battlefield. It should be mentioned that this is a theoretical argument. The study does not offer supporting evidence for the alleged causal mechanisms. Such a test would have to show that recipients of humanitarian aid diverted aid for their war efforts, by stealing or taxing the aid.

Narang (2015) investigates whether humanitarian aid pro-longs civil wars, using a cross-national panel data on humanitarian aid disbursed between 1969 and 2008. Effects are estimated with Cox proportional hazards models. The study finds that increased levels of humanitarian assistance lengthen civil wars, particularly those involving rebels on the outskirts of a state. The author notes that these findings are compatible with a range of causal mechanisms: Misappropriated aid could finance the insurgency; humanitarian aid could create protected spaces (such as refugee camps) that shield combatants from costly attacks; fungible aid could free up resources for violence; or local power-brokers could prolong the war in order to continue "taxing" the incoming aid. On a more general level, the author suggests that aid may exacerbate information failures: By making war less costly, humanitarian assistance can "inadvertently prolong fighting by slowing down the accrual of information that allows opponents to converge on more congruent estimates of relative strength which would lead to negotiated settlements" (Narang 2015: 184).

Wood and Sullivan (2015) investigate whether humanitarian aid can encourage rebel violence against civilians. The authors suggest two possible causal mechanisms: First, aid may encourage predation, which may result in abuses against the local population. Second, aid may be perceived by rebels as a challenge to their authority, because aid

may increase cooperation between the local population and the government. Rebels may use violence to sabotage that cooperation.

The depended variable is the number of attacks on civilian targets by insurgents. Spatially disaggregated conflict event data come from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's (UCDP) Georeferenced Event data set, which is based on media reports. The independent variable is project-level bi- and multilateral humanitarian aid commitments, lagged by one year. Data come from the UCDP/AidData georeferenced data set. The unit of analysis is grid / year, whereas the grid is based on the PRIO-Grid system. A cell is roughly 55 # 55 km at the equator. The data represents 22 sub-Saharan African states between 1989 and 2008. Effects are estimated by cross-sectional regression models. Supporting evidence comes from a matched sample allowing for a difference-in-difference model. Results support the argument that humanitarian aid is associated with increased rebel violence. The study does not test for whether the effect is caused by predation or sabotage.

Finally, Wood and Molfino (2016) explore whether humanitarian aid increased violence between the government and rebels. The alleged causal mechanism is that injecting humanitarian aid into a locality increases the incentives for rebels to challenge the government for control over territory in which aid accumulates, thus leading to an increased risk of violence. The unit of analysis is first order administrative unit (i.e., districts, communes) / year. The independent variable is humanitarian aid commitments per unit, and the dependent variable are battles between rebels and the government. Data sources are identical with Wood and Sullivan (2015). Effects are estimated with Poisson regression, and supplemented with propensity score matching, allowing for difference-in-difference estimates. Results provide support for the assumption that humanitarian aid increases the subsequent frequency of conflict between rebel and government forces.

4.8 Aggregated Aid / Multi-sectoral Aid

So far, the reviewed studies investigated the effects of specific aid projects, belonging to specific aid sectors. But we also have studies in our sample which investigate the impacts of aid in more than one aid sectors, and the overall impact of aid (usually measured as total aid commitment or disbursement). While the studies in this last group are quite diverse, it is still worth reporting their main results even though it is not possible to draw broadly generalizable lessons.

There are six studies in this group. The first two investigate the effects of aid spending, resp. commitments, at the subnational level on violence. Van Weezel (2015) investigates the impact of aid commitments per province and per district in constant U.S dollars lagged by one year between 1999 – 2008 in DR Congo, Ethiopia and Sudan. He finds no impact of aid spending on the number of fatalities.

Gehring et al. (2018) study the effects of aid disbursements by the World Bank and by China at first level subnational units / years in all African countries with more than 1 million inhabitants, 1995 – 2012. Their dependent variable is the number of battle-related death per district / year. The study's findings suggest that both World Bank and Chinese aid has a violence-dampening effect, but the study does not provide (or test) a possible causal mechanism for this.

The remaining four studies in this group refer to Afghanistan. Child (2018) investigates the effects of aid projects disbursed by the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT), by USAID's Combined Security Transition Command, and a host of other donors, including World Bank, WHO and UN Agencies. The data comes from NATO's C3 Agency's Afghanistan Country Stability Picture which lists 120,000 development projects across Afghanistan, of which over 22,000 were led by foreign armies, rather than traditional aid providers¹⁹ (the data base is not in the public domain, and no assessment regarding its reliability can be made). The author catalogues the projects in three categories: health projects; education projects; and security projects (comprising of police stations; army barracks; checkpoints; fortification of civilian targets; prison repair and the like). The study covers 398 districts in Afghanistan, between 2005 – 2009. Results suggest that health projects reduced violence (which would be compatible with a hearts and minds approach); security projects also reduce violence (suggesting that the projects beefed up the security structures). Education projects increased violence (suggesting that insurgents for ideological reasons targeted school projects, perhaps because they opposed co-education of boys and girls).

Fishstein and Wilder (2012) examine the relationship between aid and security in Afghanistan, based on carefully crafted case studies and a host of open interviews. Their evidence stems from the provinces of Balkh, Faryab, Helmand, Paktia, Uruzgan, and Kabul City. The study does not zoom in on specific types of aid, but asks about the effects of aid mostly in rural areas, hence it's fair to say that results refer to the impacts of small scale aid typically used in rural areas (for example, irrigation, small roads and bridges, rehabilitation of schools, water projects, flood protection, and skills and training measures, etc.). The study suggests that aid had a tendency to increase conflict. The most destabilizing aspect of aid was that it could fuel corruption that served to delegitimize the government. Aid also generated competition and conflict over aid resources, often along factional, tribal or ethnic lines and created perverse incentives to maintain an insecure environment. Also, aid could reinforce existing inequalities and further strengthen regional powerbrokers.

The last two studies in this group (Böhnke & Zürcher 2013, 2015) investigate the impact of multi-sectoral, community level development aid in rural areas of North East Afghanistan.

Böhnke & Zürcher (2013) use data from two surveys among 2000 respondents in North East Afghanistan, conducted in 2007 and 2009. The measurement for aid is based on respondents' perceptions of how much aid their communities received in various sectors. This is a strictly perception-based measure, but the authors demonstrate that it is correlated with an objective measurement of aid (defined as the number of projects in a given community). The results suggest that more (perceived) community aid is associated with higher perceived fear of violent actors. The authors suggest that communities which received relatively large amounts of aid felt threatened because they fear that cooperation with international actors has made them a target for Taliban reprisal attacks.

¹⁹ Cf. Child, Travers Barclay. 2017. «Reconstruction and conflict: Losing hearts and minds». Online at <https://voxeu.org/article/reconstruction-and-conflict-losing-hearts-and-minds> (accessed March 10, 2020).

Böhnke et al. (2015) is an updated version of their 2013 study. The update version is based on four survey waves, and the authors use as dependent variable no longer fear of violent actors, but perceived household security. The authors find that aid is positively associated with increased security for the households for the survey waves in 2011 and 2013, but not for the survey waves of 2007 and 2009. The authors speculate that the benign effects of aid may only become visible after a prolonged interaction between donors and beneficiaries, which would explain why the effect was only found in later waves. The study also finds that aid has no impact on how the population perceives foreign military actors, which they take as evidence that “winning hearts and minds” by development aid does not work. The results of the latter two studies should be taken with some caution, since the repeated cross-sectional design is prone to endogeneity problems. Perhaps the strongest contribution that these studies make is that aid cannot buy more positive attitudes towards military foreign actors.

5. Causality

The previous sections took stock of the outcomes of aid. This section now offers an overview of the causal mechanisms which are supposed to account for the observed outcomes. Table 3 offers an overview of the assumed mechanisms.

Table 4: Causal Mechanisms

Violence Reducing Mechanisms	Assumed in:
<p>Hearts-and-Minds leads to less violence Aid provides public goods to local communities. Local communities value these goods, which makes it less likely that the local population supports or joins the insurgency.</p>	<p>Beath et al. (2012) Böhnke & Zürcher. (2013) Böhnke et al. (2015)</p>
<p>Information-sharing leads to less violence Local communities often have private information on the insurgency. The promise of aid can incentivise local communities to share this intelligence with the government which will make counterinsurgency more effective and eventually will reduce violence.</p>	<p>Crost et al. (2016) Berman et al. (2013) Berman et al. (2011) Child (2014) Chou (2012)</p>
<p>Addressed grievances leads to less violence Aid successfully addresses economic and political grievances, which were drivers of violence. By addressing these grievances, violence will be reduced.</p>	<p>Arcand, Bah and Labonne (2010)</p>
<p>Opportunity cost leads to less violence Aid provides public goods (esp. more employment opportunities), which increases the opportunity costs for the insurgency. Violence is reduced as a result.</p>	<p>Crost et al. (2016) Dasgupta et al. (2015) Iyengar et al. (2011) Hoelscher, et al. (2012) Fetzer (2014)</p>
<p>Aid gate-keeping leads to less violence Local strongmen allow some types of aid, and siphon off rents from aid programs. They reduce violence so that aid flows keep coming “through the gate”.</p>	<p>No example in the sample; however, the observations of Berman et al. (2011, 2013), Arcand et al. (2010) and Dasgupta et al. (2015) are compatible with this mechanism.</p>

Violence Increasing Mechanisms	
<p>Sabotage leads to more violence Aid leads to more cooperation and more intelligence sharing between the local population and government; insurgents response by deterring the local population from cooperating by applying selective or indiscriminate violence, and by sabotaging the aid programs.</p>	<p>Weintraub (2014) Croft et al. (2014) Sexton (2015) Child (2018) Khanna & Zimmermann (2014)</p>
<p>Predation leads to more violence Aid is a lootable and taxable resource. Insurgents compete for this resource, which increases violent competition among fractions. Also, more resources enable insurgents to continue fighting, or aid can fuel corruption. Violence is increased and prolonged.</p>	<p>Lee & Kendall (2018) Narang (2014;2015) Wood & Molfino (2016) Wood / Sullivan (2015) Nunn & Quian (2014)</p>

5.1 Mechanisms that Reduce Violence

5.1.1 Hearts and Minds

The *hearts and minds mechanism* assumes that aid can may help win civilians' "hearts and minds" by providing public goods. Because the goods and services that development actors provide are valuable, communities will develop more positive attitudes towards the government and are less likely to support the insurgency. Beath et.al. (2012) show that large CDD program managed to win heart and minds, at least in relatively stable regions, which led to more positive attitudes towards the government and less reported security incidents. Similarly, Böhnke & Zürcher (2013) show that aid led to more acceptance and more legitimacy for the subnational government. These findings tie in with a large literature that shows that the ability to provide basic public services to the population can increase legitimacy (See McLoughin 2015 for an overview).

However, there is a very substantial literature which demonstrates that the provision of public goods does not automatically translate into greater legitimacy. This only happens when public goods are distributed in a transparent way by accountable actors, and when aid distribution is perceived to be fair. In the absence of these conditions, the provision of public goods may actually erode support for the government.²⁰ These conditions are rarely met in countries in conflict. Furthermore, even if development aid actually leads to more legitimacy, gratitude or acceptance, it is still not a sure that these attitudes then translate into less violence. In other words, the mechanism can explain attitudinal changes, but not the subsequent behavioral changes which are necessary if violence is to be reduced.

Attitudinal changes are, in theory, easy to observe. The instrument of choice is a survey, as shown by Beath at al. (2012) and Böhnke et al. (2015). Behavioral changes that could reduce violence include that communities no longer support insurgents by providing fighters, shelter, food or information; increased internal policing, making it more difficult for community members to be recruited, or increased collaboration with the government by providing information or militia fighters. None of these behavioral changes are easy to observe in a large-n design, but micro-level qualitative field work could pick up some of these changes.

²⁰ Kooy et al. (2015); Bratton, M. (2012); Carnegie et al. (2019); Evans et al. (2019); Mcloughlin (2018).

5.1.2 Aid for Information

The “*information-centric-model*” can be understood as an important extension of the “mind and hearts” mechanism. Berman et.al. (2011; 2013) provided its most complete specification. The model assumes that local communities possess critical information on the activities of insurgents. The prospect of rewards in the form of development aid acts as an incentive for local communities to share this information with the government and its international allies. As a result, the government’s counterinsurgency efforts become more effective, and security eventually increases. Felter et.al. (2013), Berman et.al. (2011; 2013) and Crost et al. (2016) attribute violence reduction to this mechanism.

However, it should be noted that none of these studies provide empirical evidence that the observed outcome is indeed caused by the information sharing beyond the fact that the data seems to be compatible with the mechanism.

One way of testing the mechanism would be to conduct interviews with a sample of commanders or experts on CERP. Commanders who handed out the funds should be able to assess whether their funds bought them reliable information on which they could act. Karell (2015) does this and finds that no respondent observed instances of information sharing. Similar results are also reported by Bourgoin et.al. (2013).

There are other problems. The information-center model makes a number of assumptions which are hard to reconcile with realities on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan. One assumption is that aid is given conditional: “The violence-reducing property of service provision requires conditional provision: the community benefits from services only if the government controls the territory. If the community benefited from services regardless of who won, provision would not motivate information sharing” (Berman et.al. 2013, 523). This assumption appears problematic. If the condition for giving aid is that the government must control the territory *before* the grant is given (*ex ante* conditionality) then it is possible that violence is reduced because the government controls the territory, and not because aid money is given once the government controls the territory. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that such an *ex-ante* conditionality would be practicable, since this would mean that commanders would withhold all funds until control is established, which defies both the universal urge of bureaucracies to spend allocated funds quickly within one budget cycle, and the intended use of CERP, which is using aid as means to establish control. It is also highly implausible that CERP actually based its funding on *ex post* conditionality (aid is given after the conditions are met, in this case, after intelligence has been provided). Applying conditionality is typically complex (it has to be based on verifiable conditions), costly (because it increases the cost for monitoring and evaluation), not risk-free (a withdrawn project can cause friction with the local communities), at odds with the natural inclination of bureaucracies to spend the allocated funds with the given budget cycle (the “use it or lose it problem”) and often not possible (it is not possible to withdraw a block grant once it is given).²¹

²¹ Berman et. al. (2011, footnote 11) refer to a survey among officers and officials with CERP implementation authority in Afghanistan conducted in October and November of 2010 in which 61 percent of the 210 respondents indicated that they would “halt implementation of a CERP project if the local population increased its support for anti-government elements.” It is unclear, however, how many respondents actually *did* halt a project. Another study, based on 44 semi-structured interviews with both civilian and military officials involved in aid projects in fragile states, found not one instance of an aid project that was actually withdrawn. (Bourgoin 2013). While it is not unusual that donors threaten to use conditionality, they almost never apply it. Moreover, local recipients are typically very adept at pretending to having met conditions, and when many donors populate the field, as it is the case in Afghanistan, local recipients also find it very easy to “shop donors” in the rare case that conditionality was applied (Bourgoin et.al. 2013).

There is a second assumption of the model that may be at odds with the messy reality of reconstruction aid in conflict states. The model posits “development programs are more violence-reducing the greater their value to the community, so programs informed by development experts will be more violence-reducing” (Berman et al 2013:523). However, abundant evidence shows that CERP spending, and more broadly, reconstruction spending by the US military, was rarely informed by development experts. As a matter of fact, military reconstruction aid in the context of COIN has become for many development experts a prime example of wasteful spending with poor results. (Wilder and Fishstein 2012, Williamson 2011, Special Inspector 2011, Stein 2011, Suhrke 2006, Committee on Foreign Relations 2011, Wilton Park 2010).

Finally, the “information-sharing model” might also oversimplify and essentially misrepresent the dynamics between foreign counterinsurgents and local communities. According to many testimonials, this dynamic is characterized by an information asymmetry, where local communities use their informational advantage in a much more strategic way than the model presumes. Bourgoin et al. (2013) interviewed 44 practitioners (both military and civilians) and report that the greatest challenge for their respondents when working in countries in or after conflict is that the inner workings of these societies are often unintelligible to international actors. As a result, respondents found it difficult to identify trustworthy partners and to assess their interests. Respondents mentioned that local actors would often release biased or incomplete information in order to influence international actors in a way that favored local interests. In sum, local actors tend to benefit from asymmetric information while donors struggle to identify reliable partners, misread the local political economy and are often misled. It is hard to see how under such circumstance development aid would consistently buy reliable information.

In sum, we think that information-centric model requires rather specific conditions that are not always present on the ground. In the future, further qualitative work may reveal if and when a violence-reducing effect is indeed caused by increased information sharing of whether additional or alternative causal paths are at work.

5.1.3 Reduced Grievances

A third mechanism which might reduce violence is *reduced grievances*. The literature on civil wars has long ago identified group-level grievances, especially the real or perceived lack of current and future political and economic opportunities, as one source of violence (for example Gurr 2000). Most community level development aid is predominately meant for poverty reduction and therefore perhaps not well suited to address political grievances. One exception is when one particular group, typically an ethnic minority, holds economic and social grievances. In such situations, increased and well targeted aid might enable redistributive policies that can lessen inequalities, create solidarity links between population groups and remedy grievances (Azam 2001, Azam and Mesnard 2003; Justino 2007).

The only study in our sample that attributes a violence reducing effect to “addressed grievances” is Arcand et al. (2010). Their results suggest development aid provided for the grievance driven Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Philippines created a greater sense of inclusion in local decision-making, a greater sense of empowerment, and concrete improvements in access to government services and thereby led to a reduced

sense of grievance towards the central government. While this line of argument sounds entirely plausible, we should keep in mind that the reduced grievance mechanism would work only under very specific conditions: The root causes of violence should be group-level grievances, and the nature of these grievances must be such that they can be addressed by socio-economic development. Furthermore, aid programs should be given in a targeted way to that specific group. While this is not impossible, it is rare, because aid organizations are usually very reluctant to target their aid overtly at one specific group only. Furthermore, many group-level grievances are essentially political and cannot be addressed by economic development only.

5.1.4 Opportunity Costs

The violence suppressing effect of aid is often explained by an *opportunity cost model*. Economic opportunities, it is argued, can provide employment for young men, which makes the recruitment of fighters more expensive (Grossmann 1991;1999; Collier 2000, Collier and Hoeffler 2004). Obviously, the opportunity cost model is most closely associated with employment programs, which are, often in the form of cash for work, a widely used development tool.

There are five studies in our sample which assume an opportunity cost effect. Three of them investigate the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act” (NREGA) in India. NREGA was introduced in 2006 and guarantees at least 100 days of wage-employment to every rural household. It is vast public employment scheme reaching up to 47.9 million rural households annually, generating so far 210 million person-days of employment for the rural poor. The key objective of NREGA is poverty reduction, but it is clear that the Indian government also hopes that it will contribute to reduce violence in the regions most affected by Maoist insurgencies (Hoelscher et al. 2012). Dasgupta et al. (2014) and Hoelscher et al. (2012) both attribute the observed violence-reducing effect of NREGA to opportunity costs. Dasgupta et al. (2014) also demonstrate that in regions with unusually little monsoon rain, Maoist violence tended to be higher, and the violence-reducing effect of NREGS stronger than in regions with normal Monsoon, suggesting that insurgent activity was used as a compensation for bad harvests caused by lack of rain.

Blattman and Annan (2016) investigated whether participation in a training and employment program in Liberia could change attitudes of participants towards violence, but find no effect on propensity for violence. Similarly, Mercy Corps (2015) studies the effects of a technical vocational education and training (TVET) program on participating youth in Helmand province, Afghanistan. While the program improved the economic situation of participants, it had no effect on the self-reported willingness to use violence for political or other causes.

The opportunity cost model is not applicable solely for employment schemes. It is, in theory, applicable to every labor-intensive aid program. For example, Iyengar et al. (2011) attribute a violence-reducing effect of CERP projects in Iraq to opportunity costs and Crost et al. (2014) report a violence reducing effect of a CCT program in the Philippines caused by opportunity costs. These cash transfers, they argue, boosted the local economy and created higher incomes from peaceful activities, which in turn made joining the rebellion less attractive.

5.1.5 Aid Gate-keeping

A final causal mechanism which might explain how aid can lead to reduction in violence, at least in the short run, is what I call aid *gate-keeping*. Aid gate-keeping refers to a situation when insurgents prohibit some types of aid projects within the territories they control, and allow other aid projects to be implemented. They benefit from the implemented aid projects, because they can tax them and reap some legitimacy benefits from the population for allowing aid. By prohibiting other types of aid projects, they minimize the threat that some aid projects could increase the reach of the government. Sometimes, projects are also prohibited because they violate the ideological values of the insurgents. Aid gate-keeping requires that insurgents have some control over a territory so that they can allow or ban projects. Aid gate-keeping is beneficial for insurgents. In order to sustain this situation, insurgents will often reduce the level of violence, so that aid flows keep coming “through the gate”.²²

There is abundant evidence that reconstruction aid and contracting has very often enriched local strong men in Iraq and Afghanistan (for example, SIGAR 2009, 2011). Local strongmen are well placed to tap into the aid flows, for example by rigging contracts, extorting rents from contractors, or selling protection to contractors all of which is paid for by the aid program. One of the best documented examples is the transportation sector in Afghanistan. The US government spent hundreds of millions a year to private contractors on trucking services in Afghanistan. These contractors payed large amounts to local warlords across Afghanistan in exchange for “protection” supply convoys to support U.S. troops. (Warlord. Inc., 2010). This protection racket has become a major source of funding for violent entrepreneurs, and they have a vested interest in keeping the funds coming. Local warlords have the capacity to police their community and they can offer their militias for protection. They will offer these services as long as they can extort rents.

The “taxing” of aid can also be much more indirect. For examples, insurgents often demand that contractors implementing aid projects on the ground pay for the permission to work with local communities. Contractors then often roll these “taxes” into overhead costs and pass them on to the development organizations. Also, many contractors who work for development organization hire local armed guards for protecting the construction sites. The communities from where these guards are recruited have often ties with the insurgency. A part of the payment for the local guards will therefore often end up in the pockets of the insurgents. Finally, development aid projects will increase the tax base by increasing the assets of local communities. It is common practice that insurgents tax villages which they control. In Afghanistan, the Taliban typically frame these taxes in an Islamic, traditional narratives, referring to these taxes as *ushr*. *Ushr* means literally one-tenth and is a traditional Islamic tax on agricultural produce.

For development actors, it is often difficult to know that their projects are actually directly or indirectly taxed, hence they keep the aid resources flowing. For insurgents, these resources offer a source of profit, hence they may reduce violence so that aid money keeps coming. None of the studies in our sample explicitly investigate whether the observed effects of aid could be explained by *aid gate-keeping*, but for example the

²² I describe this mechanism in more detail in Zürcher, Christoph. 2019. “The Folly of ‘Aid for Stabilisation.’” *Third World Quarterly* 40 (5): 839–54..

data of Berman et.al. (2011; 2013) and Sexton (2015) are compatible with such a causal model.

5.2 Mechanisms that Increase Violence

5.2.1 Sabotage

The sabotage model is an extension of both the mind-and-hearts model and of the information-sharing model. The logic is simple: As aid leads to better relations and more cooperation between population and government, insurgents are keen to sabotage this relation. Insurgents may therefore increase attacks on aid workers, on government officials, or on communities which plan to implement a development project. As a result, aid projects which threaten to undermine the position of the insurgents will stop.

The violence-increasing effects of a CCT program (Weintraub (2014), a CDD program (Crost et al. 2014) and CERP (Sexton (2015) are all attributed to such a “sabotage model”.

Crost et al. (2014) show that a large-scale CDD program caused an increase in conflict casualties, and that the program's effect was concentrated in its early stages, before funds were disbursed. The effect is strongest for casualties suffered by government forces as a result of insurgent-initiated attacks, all of which is consistent with the assumption that a successful community-driven development can increase support for the government which then leads to sabotage by the insurgency. Weintraub (2014) proposes a two-pronged model that combines the information-centric and the sabotage model: Development aid buys information, and in reaction insurgents target the population to sabotage the information sharing which threatens the insurgents' control of territory. Sexton (2015) shows that CERP funds in districts which are contested between rebels and government increase violence, and argues that this is caused by insurgents attempts to sabotage cooperation between governments and local communities.

5.2.2 Predation

The predation model dates back to the works of Hirshleifer (1989), Grossman (1991), and Skaperda (1992). The model argues that aid rarely brings more stability, but in fact often exacerbates instability and violence, because it is an additional resource which fuels conflict.

Aid is a valuable resource, and insurgents, given the opportunity, will try to predate, e.g. loot and tax aid. The sizeable do-no-harm literature has long ago observed that injecting aid in insecure regions may prompt insurgents to loot and tax the aid and then reinvest the profits into maintaining the capacity for violence.²³

Some aid items are immediately lootable, such as food items, health supplies, fuel or building materials. It is very common that insurgents steal these resources and use the profits for funding their campaigns. Other types of aid may be less easy to loot, to use or sell, but most types of aid flows can be “taxed”.

²³ (or example, Anderson, 1999; Uvin, 1998 Bradbury and Kleinmann, 2010; Goodhand, 2002; De Waal, 1997; Easterly, 2001, Polman, 2010; Duffield 1994; Luttwak 1999.

Five studies in our sample trace a violence-increasing effect of aid back to predation. Narang (2014, 2015) finds that increased levels of humanitarian assistance lengthen civil wars. The author notes that these findings are compatible with a range of causal mechanisms: Misappropriated aid could finance the insurgency; fungible aid could free up resources for violence; or local power-brokers could prolong the war in order to continue “taxing” the incoming aid. But all of these mechanisms ultimately rest on a variation of the predation mechanism.

Nunn and Qian (2014) study the effect of US food aid on conflict in recipient countries and conclude that US food aid increased the duration of civil conflicts. The study is not designed to uncover causal mechanisms, but its authors refer to the large do-no-harm literature which suggests that stolen aid is frequently used to finance the war.

Wood and Sullivan (2015) find that humanitarian aid encourages rebel violence against civilians. They argue that one possible explanation is that the availability of aid encourages predation, which may result in abuses against the local population.

Wood and Molfino (2016) find that humanitarian aid increases violence between the government and rebels. The alleged causal mechanism is that injecting humanitarian aid into a locality increased the incentives for rebels to challenge the government for control over territory in which aid accumulated, thus leading to an increased risk of violence. In sum, predation is another plausible mechanism which explains why aid undermines stability.

Finally, Lee and Kendall (2018) show that CERP funds that were spent without oversight during the last quarters of the financial years led to more violence and attribute this partly to the fact that a lack of oversight made it easier for strongmen to “predate” these funds.

5.3 Causal Paths

The discussion of the seven identified causal mechanisms points to a number of important implications:

Firstly, the relations between the “cause” (the aid) and the “outcome” (increased or reduced violence) are complex and not straightforward. The most important reason for this is that every mechanism which theoretically should lead to *less* violence can be sabotaged by insurgents which then leads to *more* violence. This means that violence-reducing mechanisms can only work when insurgents do not have the capacity to sabotage them.

Second, it is important to note that no type of aid is immune to sabotage: The studies in our sample provide examples of sabotage directed against employment schemes (Khanna and Zimmerman 2014), CCTs (Weintraub 2014), CDDs (Crost et al. 2014) and CERP (Sexton 2015). Sabotaging is a strategic response by insurgents, and can therefore “interrupt” all causal paths which would otherwise lead to less violence.

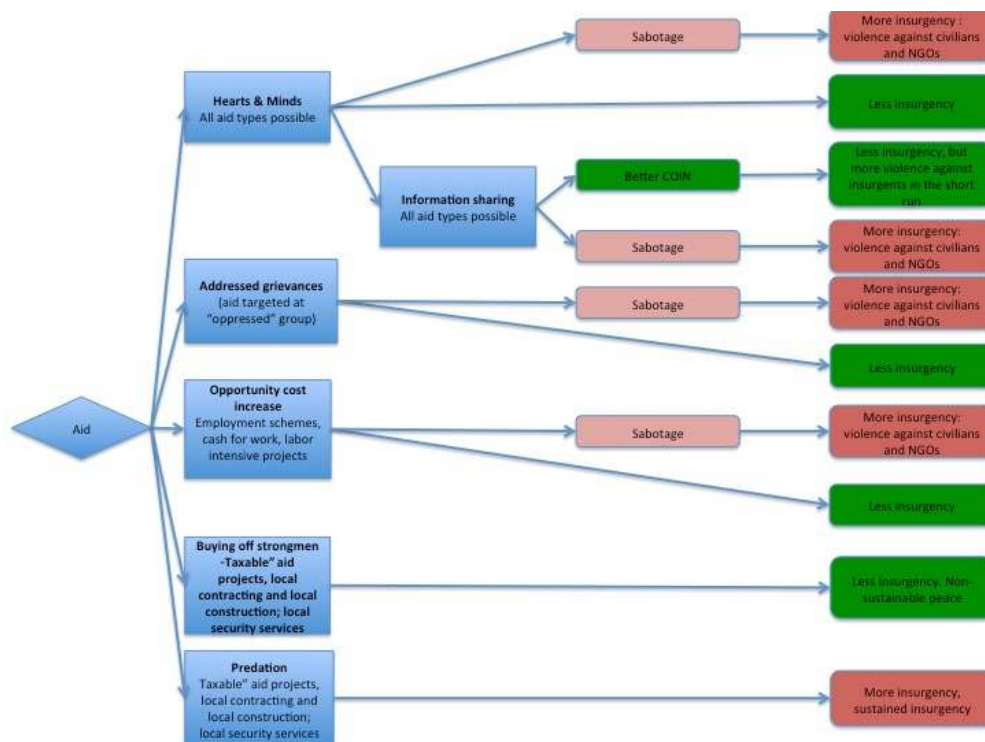
Third, the studies provide very weak tests or no tests at all for the assumed causal mechanisms. Typically, the observation that the data is *compatible* with the assumed mechanism is taken as a confirmation for the presence of this mechanism. But: most data is compatible with more than one mechanism, hence we cannot be sure what

exactly the underlying causal mechanism is. But in order to design effective policies, we need to precisely understand the causal mechanisms.

Fourth, all causal mechanisms are compatible with most types of aid. For example, the “hearts-and minds” mechanisms and the “information-sharing” mechanism can be activated by every type of aid which is perceived as valuable enough by the recipients that they modify their attitudes and behaviour. Most types of aid can achieve this. Likewise, all aid-types can incentive predation, since all types of aid programs can be “taxed”. For “opportunity costs” to work, we would expect that the aid program is labour-intensive, which is the case for a wide range of development programs, not only for employment schemes. The same observation holds for violence-increasing mechanisms: “Sabotaging” can be triggered by every type of aid that is regarded by insurgents as an effective tool for improving relations between the local population and the government. **The implication is that there are no “good” or “bad” types of aid. It is not the intrinsic character of aid type which explains more or less violence, but rather the context in which aid is implemented.**

Fifth, “predation” and “aid gate-keeping” are closely related, yet lead to different outcomes. In both cases, insurgents benefit from aid bay taxing and looting. But in the case of “aid gate-keeping”, insurgents reduce violence, since they want the aid flows to continue. In the case of “predation”, insurgents use the profits to organize more violence. The difference in outcome is caused by a different strategic reaction by insurgents to aid flows, which in turn is influenced by factors such as capacity of insurgents, their political considerations, how effectively they control the population etc. One implication of this is that donors may falsely assume that a reduction in violence equals a weakening of the insurgents, whereas in reality the reduction of violence was a strategic move by insurgents who benefit from aid flows.

Figure 2: Causal Paths



5.4 Scope Conditions

Clearly, the causal relations between aid and reduced or increased violence are rarely straightforward. Rather, the effects are mediated and modified by other factors. In other words: The effects of aid will depend to a very large extent on the context where aid is implemented. Thus, depending on the context, a specific aid intervention will have a positive, a negative, or no impact. I use the term “scope conditions” as a short form for all the contextual factors which shape the effects of aid.

The reviewed studies rarely explicitly address the issue of scope conditions, and almost never provide tests for how aid performs under different scope conditions. Nevertheless, a careful reading of the reviewed studies points seven important scope conditions.

5.4.1 Do insurgents have the capability to react?

The first and best researched scope condition relates to the capacity of insurgents. As we have discussed above, aid has the potential to promote stability by facilitating the cooperation between local communities and the government, or by increasing the costs of insurgent recruitment. If this is true, then we should not be surprised to see that insurgents attempt to interrupt aid flows, to punish “collaborators” and to “sabotage” aid programs in order to undermine the stabilizing effect of aid. When they do, violent acts against local communities, aid organizations and local contractors increase. In short, aid can lead to more violence when insurgents can sabotage aid with violent means. Whether or not insurgents can sabotage aid projects depends on their capacity to react to aid flows. When they have the organisational, logistical, financial and military capacity, it is likely that they will sabotage aid. By contrast, when the environment in which aid is injected is reasonably secure and insurgents do not have a large presence, then aid may increase or at least maintain stability. Five of the reviewed studies suggest that a violence reducing effect is conditional on a relative secure pre-existing environment where insurgents have little capacity (Sexton 2016, Berman et al. 2013, Beath et al. 2012, 2015; and Böhnke et al. 2015).

Note that even if insurgents have the capacity to sabotage aid projects, they may not necessarily choose to do so. For example, in Afghanistan the Taliban often tolerate projects which support the livelihood of rural communities (such as irrigation or health care), but they may sabotage projects which they deem ideologically not acceptable (for example, co-education for boys and girls), or which they think could benefit the government (for example construction of transportation networks, police stations or government buildings etc., see Zürcher 2019).

5.4.2 Is the insurgency identity / grievance based, or political ideological?

Under certain circumstances, insurgents may decide to not sabotage aid flows, even if they have the capacity. For example, an insurgency which is predominantly grievance based (as opposed to politically opposed to the government) is likely to welcome aid flows which benefits their group and mitigates some of their grievances. This is why Arcand et al. (2010) found that an aid program in the Philippines led to more violence by NPA (because NPA is ideologically strictly opposed to government and hence sabotages aid), but reduced violence in MILF regions (because MILF is identity-grievance based, and CDD projects addresses these grievances).

5.4.3 Is the insurgency localized-community based, or external-mobile?

Aid may have a better chance at reducing violence when the insurgents are recruited locally. When communities benefit from aid, they may limit the supply of new recruits. Also, labor intensive aid programs may provide income to local men which would otherwise consider joining the insurgency. These mechanisms do not work when the insurgency is not rooted in the local communities, but based elsewhere. Beath et al. (2015) find that CDD projects reduced violence, but not in villages which were closer to the border with Pakistan and hence accessible to “foreign” insurgents who had no connection to the communities and hence no incentive to reduce violence in exchange for aid for these communities.

5.4.4 Are there multiple competing groups, or is society relatively homogenous?

The do-no-harm literature has long ago pointed out that aid resources can fuel inter-group tensions and thus contribute to an escalation of violence.

Fishstein and Wilder (2012) found that the aid in Afghanistan generated competition and conflict along factional, tribal or ethnic lines, thereby undermining stability and security. We might therefore assume that the probability that aid has a violence-dampening effect is reduced in contexts where there are multiple fractions. These may be ethnically or clan based, but could also be based on competing networks. The more fractionalized a society, the higher risk that aid increases tensions.

5.4.5 Is aid benefitting mainly an ingroup?

The violence-increasing effect of aid in fractionalized settings can be exacerbated when aid is given purposefully to one specific group, at the expense of other groups. For example, Karell and Schutte (2018) found that CERP aid projects which only benefitted some members of the community attracted more violence than projects which provided public goods for all community members. They argue that aid which favors one part of the populace over others intensified notions of ‘rivalry’, ‘jealousy’, ‘injustice’, and ‘exclusion’, and that excluded groups could reject incumbents’ rule and begin supporting armed opposition as a way to ‘punish’ the incumbents. This mechanism, they argue, unfolds through an intracommunity micro-pathway linking aid, exclusion, grievances, and violence.

At first glance, it appears that donors could easily avoid this trap, by avoiding aid programs which are specifically designed to benefit only some groups. In reality, however, this is not an easy task, because the benefits from an aid program, even if it is designed to benefit everyone, can be hijacked by gatekeepers and local strongmen. This then brings us to the next scope condition.

5.4.6 Is aid perceived to be given in a fair, transparent and equitable way by a respected authority?

The basic assumption of hearts and minds is that the provision of benefits will lead to legitimacy for the government. However, theoretical and empirical investigations from developing countries show that the relation between service delivery and legitimacy is rarely straightforward. A recent literature overview identifies several factors which can mediate the effects of public service delivery on perceptions of state legitimacy in fragile

and conflict affected states.²⁴ The findings suggest that we should primarily expect a positive impact when aid is given in a transparent way by accountable and uncorrupted leaders, when aid distribution is perceived as fair, and when aid programs are demand-driven and in line with the expectations of the population. When these conditions are not met, then aid may actually erode support for the local government and increase support for insurgents, even if the aid produces tangible benefits for recipients. None of the reviewed studies takes the importance of a fair, transparent aid allocation by a trusted authority into account. Furthermore, the “hearts and minds” literature has so far also not acknowledged the importance of how and by whom aid is allocated.

5.4.7 Is aid easily lootable and taxable?

Finally, five of the reviewed studies directly attribute a violence-increasing effect of aid to predation, and an additional eight may at least be compatible with a predation mechanism. Clearly, the “lootability” of aid projects and programs is an important factor.

Unfortunately, insurgents and local strongmen have many ways to benefit from aid, and it is not at all easy to make aid immune to predation.

Some aid items are immediately lootable, such as food items, health supplies, fuel or building materials. It is very common that insurgents steal these resources and use the profits for funding their campaigns. Other types of aid may be less easy to loot, to use or sell, but most types of aid flows can be “taxed”. Insurgents can extort payments from communities which want to implement an aid project. Or, more often, insurgents extract payments from development organizations in exchange for the permission to implement a project. Insurgents can also sell “protection” to contractors. In short, no type of aid is completely protected from predation. However, some types may be less prone than others. Common sense suggests that smaller, “low-tech” projects which require little financial investment and which are implemented with the participation of the community may offer less opportunity for looting or taxing. By contrast, larger projects with larger investments and more technological requirements may provide more opportunity for taxing. For example, building small irrigation channels with the participation of the community may offer less opportunity for taxing and kickback than a large construction project involving contractors and heavy machinery. This may explain why Berman et al (2013) and Adams (2015) found that larger CERP projects increased violence, whereas smaller and cheaper ones decreased violence.

In the light of these seven scope conditions, we can now describe a hypothetically ideal stabilization project in a hypothetically ideal context. In order to maximize the probability that aid has a stabilizing effect, the following is required:

- Aid is given in a fair, transparent and equitable way by a respected authority
- Aid is locally meaningful, perceived to be beneficial, and ideally contributes to better livelihoods and more employment
- The beneficiary group is internally coherent and not fractionalized
- The aid project is relatively small, low-tech and implemented with the participation of the community.

²⁴ Cf. Mcloughlin (2015).

In addition, the insurgency is

- locally rooted
- is mainly grievance driven
- has little or no capacity to sabotage

Clearly, these requirements are hardly ever met in conflict affected countries. However, these requirements can still serve as guidelines for donors when designing their aid programs. The more their aid is in line with these requirements, and the more the context meets these requirements, the higher the probability that aid will have a violence reducing effect. Vice versa, when these requirements cannot be met, then the probability that aid will increase violence is high.

Appendix A: Overview of Reviewed Studies / Data Extraction

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
Adams 2015: "Honing the proper edge". CERP and the two-sided potential of military-led development in Afghanistan".	CERP spending per district, adjusted to per capita basis	Enemy initiated acts of violence, from SIGACT (Significant Activities)	CERP	398 districts in Afghanistan from 2011 to 2013	Districts with less / more CERP spending	Heterogeneous treatment effect: Small CERP projects (below \$50,000) reduced violence, larger projects increased violence		No specific causal mechanisms is tested
Arcand, Bah and Labonne 2010: "Conflict, Ideology and Foreign Aid".	KALAH-CIDS, a community-driven development (CDD) program in the Philippines that provides funds to municipalities which then hand out funds to qualifying villages on a competitive base. The variable	a) Violent events per year within a 100km radius of the municipality b) he number of conflict related casualties within a 100km radius of the municipality per year Both variables can be disaggregated in MILF (Moro Islamic	CDD	1023 municipalities Two roll-out phases (2003, 2006) are included in the sample)	Cross sectional model with Possion regression for the full sample and regression discontinuity design for a sub sample. Treated municipalities, compared to untreated municipalities	The program reduced the number of violent events committed by the grievance driven MILF by 35% The program increased the number of violent events committed by the profit driven NPA by 41%. Note that these associations cannot be seen	The study reports differing results for ideology driven and profit driven insurgents, implying that the underlying motivation of the insurgency is an important moderator. Identify based, grievance driven insurgents can be accommodated by CDD programs, whereas	According to the authors, the results suggest the program provided for the grievance / identity driven MILF a greater sense of sense of inclusion in local decision-making. a greater sense of empowerment, and concrete improvements in access to

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
	<p>indicates whether a municipality participated in the program or not. Alternative measures are the number of years during which the project has been implemented and the amount of money a municipality had received. Note the the projects are applied for and implement by villages in that given municipality.</p>	<p>Liberation Front) events and NPA (New People's Army) events.</p> <p>Data cover the year 2003 and 2006</p>				<p>when looking at the full sample to combines both MILF and NPA events. N the full sample, the program is associated with an increase in violence.</p>	<p>ideological / profit driven insurgents perceive such programs as a threat to their support base and hence try to sabotage the programs.</p>	<p>government services and thereby to a reduced sense of grievance towards the central government. Conversely, the ideological / profit driven NPA might have perceived the project as increasing the legitimacy of te government and reducing popular support for the rebels. Increased violence might therefore be seen as an attempt to sabotage the program.</p>

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
Beath et al. 2017: "Can development programs counter insurgencies?"	Whether or not NSP projects were implemented within a community	SIGACT events within 15 km of community security perceptions of male respondents security perceptions of female respondents security incidents in and around villages reported by respondents. Perceptions of individual economic outcomes Perceptions of provision of public goods Perceptions of economic welfare Perceptions of attitudes towards the government and allied forces	CDD (the NSP program)	500 villages in 10 districts in western, central, northern and eastern regions of Afghanistan	250 villages without treatment, matched to 250 villages with treatment. Matching, RCT	NSP results in a lower probability of security incidents and leads to more positive perceptions of the Afghan government, of NGOs and of ISAF troops	Positive effect conditional on communities being not close to Pakistan. This implies that a positive effect requires that insurgents are locals, rooted o	Hearts and minds

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
Beath, Christia and Enikolopov. 2012: "Winning Hearts and Minds through Development?"	Whether or not a community participated in the National Solidarity Program NSP (a CDD program which gives out block grants to communities)	a) perceived security changes in the villages b) perceived security changes for women working for NGOs c) perceived security changes for teenage girls when traveling from and to school. d) number of security incidents in the area surrounding the village as reported by the villagers themselves. e) number of on security incidents in the area of the village as reported by ISAF	CDD	500 randomly selected villages in 10 districts of Afghanistan	250 villages without treatment, matched to 250 villages with treatment. Matching, RCT	NSP is associated with perceived increased security and with reduced numbers of security incidents recorded by ISAF, but only in non-eastern districts. NSP is not associated with the number of incidents reported by the respondents themselves.	These results only hold for the non-eastern districts that were relatively safe.	Minds and hearts: Population less likely to join insurgency when public goods are provided. The study rejects opportunity cost model and information centric model.

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
<p>Berman, Shapiro and Felter 2011: "Can Hearts and Minds be bought? The Economics of Counter-insurgency in Iraq".</p> <p>Berman, Felter, Shapiro and Troland 2013: "Modes, Secure and Informed. Successful Development in Conflict Zones".</p>	<p>a) CERP (Commanders Emergency Response Program)</p> <p>b) Programs by the US Army Corps of Engineers</p> <p>c) USAID Community Action Program (CAP)</p> <p>d) USAID Community Stabilization Program (CSP)</p> <p>All spending's per district / half year / capita.</p> <p>c) and d) are CDD programs</p>	<p>Insurgent violence, measured as attacks per capita per district/ half year against US and Iraqi government forces.</p>	<p>CERP</p> <p>CDD</p> <p>CDD</p>	<p>103 districts in Iraq between 2004 – 2009</p>	<p>Difference-in-difference: The comparator is the level of violence in a given district before the aid programs were implemented.</p>	<p>CERP and CSP have a violence reducing effect. The other (larger) programs do not have an impact.</p>	<p>The study controls for troop levels in a given district. However, the variable is not statistically significant</p>	<p>Information-centric model</p>

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
Blattman & Annan, 2016: "Can Employment Reduce Lawlessness and Rebellion?"	Participation in a training and employment program in Liberia: Action on Armed Violence (AoAV)	Self-reported economic and employment situation; self-reported attitudes towards violence	Employment Program including training, skills and a small grant.	1,123 men of which 57% were assigned to treatment	Randomization, treatment and control group	Increased employment, improved economic situation; No impact on attitudes towards violence		Opportunity costs; attitudinal change
Böhnke & Zürcher 2013: Aid, minds and hearts: The impact of aid in conflict zones	a) Cumulated number of projects that a community received between 2005 and the date of the survey wave b) Perceived benefits for households from household-level development projects over the two preceding years c) Perceived benefits of communities	a) Attitudes toward foreign forces, b) Attitudes toward development actors c) State legitimacy d) Threat perceptions / whether respondents feel threatened by violent actors Data from original surveys among 2000 respondents in North East Afghanistan	Multi-sector aid	2 survey waves conducted in 2007 and 2009, among 2000 respondents in 80 communities in four districts of North East Afghanistan	Cross-sectional regressions Households which report that they received comparatively more aid than other households Households in communities where comparatively more aid projects were implemented	Aid is positively associated with state legitimacy Aid is associated with higher perceived threat levels		Public goods leads to more acceptance for government. No causal explanation for the association of aid and increased threat levels is given

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
	from aid projects to the community over the two preceding years Data from original surveys among 2000 respondents in North East Afghanistan							
Böhnke, Köhler and Zürcher 2015: Assessing the Impact of Development Cooperation in North East Afghanistan 2007-2013. (This is a revised and expanded version of Böhnke & Zürcher 2013)	a) Cumulated number of projects that a community received between 2005 and the date of the survey wave b) Perceived benefits for households from household-level development projects over the two	a) Attitudes toward foreign forces, b) Attitudes toward development actors c) Perceptions of sub-national government d) Perceptions of household security Data from original surveys among 2000	Multi-sector aid	4 survey waves conducted in 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2013 among 2000 respondents in 80 communities in four district of North East Afghanistan	Estimation based on repeated cross-sectional regression Households which report that they received comparatively more aid than other households Households in communities where comparatively more aid projects	Aid is not associated with attitudes towards foreign forces Aid is positively associated with attitudes towards development actors in the 2011 and 2013 waves Aid is positively associated with better perceptions of sub-national	Overall security environment The authors propose that the changes and volatility of association between aid and the four dependent variables are cause by different scope conditions, mainly the security environment at the	The authors conclude that aid has positive impact on how respondents perceive the government, because aid enables the government to provide more services. The effect can be found only in relatively benign security

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
	<p>preceding years</p> <p>c) Perceived benefits of communities from aid projects to the community over the two preceding years</p> <p>Data from original surveys among 2000 respondents in North East Afghanistan</p>	<p>respondents in North East Afghanistan</p>			<p>were implemented</p>	<p>government in 2009 and 2013</p> <p>Aid is associated with better household security in 2011 and 2013</p>	<p>time when the survey was conducted.</p> <p>No empirical test of this proposition is offered</p>	<p>environments.</p> <p>Aid does not have an impact on how respondents perceive foreign military forces, hence no support for the “hearts and minds” mechanism is found.</p> <p>Sustained development cooperation can increase perceptions of household security. No causal mechanism is offered for this last observation.</p>

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
Child 2014: Hearts and Minds cannot be bought: Ineffective reconstruction in Afghanistan”.	CERP spending per capita and district months (57 months)	A measure of violence per 1000 inhabitants constructed from the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS): politically motivated violence directed at police, military, government, and civilians	CERP	227 districts Afghanistan 2005–2009	Difference-in-difference: The comparator is the level of violence in a given district before the aid programs were implemented	No coefficient reaches significance, suggesting that CERP spending does not have a violence suppressing effect.		finds no effect altogether
Child 2018: “Conflict and Counter-insurgency Aid: Drawing Sectoral Distinctions”.	Aid spending per district adjusted per population, disaggregated per sector. Source: NATO C3 Agency’s Afghanistan Country Stability Picture	Security incidents, reported by Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS) and Global Terrorism Database (GTD).	All aid projects by PRTs, USAID, Combined Security Transition Command, and a host of other doors, including World Bank, WHO and UN	398 districts in Afghanistan, 2005 - 2009	Districts which received less aid	Education projects increase violence Health projects reduce violence Security projects reduce violence	Strategic Preferences and political considerations by insurgents	Sabotage; Preferences of insurgents and communities explain why different sectors reduce or increase violence.

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
			Agencies. Disaggregated in sectors: Health; education; security (police stations; army barracks; checkpoints; fortification of civilian targets; prison repair)					
Chou 2012: "Does development assistance reduce violence? Evidence from Afghanistan".	a) NSP b) USAID's LGCD, which seeks to improve Local Governance (LG) and Community Development (CD) in insecure areas. Data is available for 29 months	Insurgent violence, measured as attacks per capita and district month against US and Afghan government forces.	CDD CDD CERP	Between 202 and 398 districts (depending on the availability of aid data) in Afghanistan between 2002 and	Difference-in-difference: The comparator is the level of violence in a given district before the aid programs were implemented	No coefficient reaches significance, suggesting that none of the three development programs has a violence suppressing effect.	Beath et al. (2012) suggested that aid has only a violence suppression effect in relatively stable districts. Chou (2012) test for this by clustering districts using a composite index of stability and then estimating the	Intends to test information-centric model, but finds no effect altogether

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
	c) CERP (only four months of data were available) All spending at district / month level (a and c are CDD programs)			2010. Time series for different aid programs between 4 and 80 months, depending on availability of aid data.			violence-on-spending regressions within each of the four stability category. However, splitting the estimation sample by stability does not change the result that development spending is ineffective at reducing insurgent violence.	
Crost, Felter and Johnston 2016: "Conditional Cash Transfers, Civil Conflict and Insurgent Influence: Experimental Evidence from the Philippines".	A household-level Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program (Pantawid Familyang Pilipino Program) in the Philippines. Maximum annual transfer amount to	a) annual number of conflict incidents per village b) a qualitative measure for insurgent influence within the community Data from Conflict Data of the Armed	CTT	65 treated villages in 8 municipalities in the Philippines 52% of the households within these villages were eligible for	65 non-treated villages, compared to 65 treated villages. Matching, RCT	The program reduced the number of incidents in treatment villages and reduced insurgent influence		The study concludes that data are consistent with opportunity cost and information-centric model

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
	household is 23% of national poverty line. Amounting to 15 – 21 of total annual household spending.	Forces of the Philippines		the CCT program				
Crost, Felter & Johnston 2014: “Aid under Fire: Development Projects and Civil Conflict”.	KALAHY-CIDS, a community-driven development (CDD) program in the Philippines that gives block grants to communities	Causalities at the municipal level per month, disaggregated to causalities suffered by government forces, insurgents and civilians, between 2002 and 2006. Data from Conflict Data of the Armed Forces of the Philippines	CDD	222 treated municipalities Philippines	222 treated municipalities compared to 182 non-treated municipalities A regression discontinuity design is used	The program increases violence during the six months preceding the implementation of the program	The study measures the intent to treat, not treatment per se. An effect is thus caused by the intentions, and not by the program.	sabotage
Dasgupta, Gawande and Kapur 2014: “Anti-poverty Programs	A binary variable indicating whether a	Number of killed civilians, Maoist and security personnel;	Employment program	144 districts in 6 Indian states	This is a difference in difference design. Models based on	NREGA adoption is associated with a decrease of 82% in incidents		

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
Can Reduce Violence: India's Rural Employment Guarantee Act and Maoist Conflict"	district adopted NREGA or not. Note that NREGA is an on-demand program. Adopting the program at district level does not give an indication of how many households actually enrolled in the program,	number of violent incidents from Maoist violence in a district year. Data based on an original data set coded from newspaper analysis		between 1999 and 2009	Poisson regression. Districts which adopted NREGA compared with district which did not yet adopt NREGA- The effect is not due to a violation of the parallel trend assumption: Adopting districts did not show lower levels of violence immediately prior to adoption. However, I did not understand how the authors control for endogeneity. They claim they do. Table 4 includes the variable Y-1, which is	and 87% in conflict deaths <i>after 2 years</i> . The effect is stronger in the second year and hardly noticeable in the first few months. Authors take this as support for opportunity cost model. They provide additional support for this specific causal mechanism: The treatment reduced fatalities also among Maoist fighters. An information-centric mechanism would likely have led to more insurgent deaths. Also, the effect if NREGA is		

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
					<p>“controlling for a lagged value of the depended variable”. How does this control for prior levels of violence?</p> <p>NREGA was assigned non-randomly. Two thirds of the treatment district in phase 1 were selected because they are “left-wing extremism” affected.</p>	strongest after bad Monsoon rainfall, suggesting the NREGA serves as a substitute for foregone agricultural wages.		
Fishstein & Wilder 2012: Winning hearts and minds? Examining the relationship between aid and security in Afghanistan. Feinstein International	Received more / less aid (all types)	Qualitative assessments of security, stability, inter-ethnic and intercommunal conflict.	All aid	Balkh, Faryab, Helmand, Paktia, Uruzgan, and Kabul City, June 2008 to February 2011	Respondents who did receive less / more aid. Based on qualitative interviews	Aid tended to increase conflict between ethnic and communal groups and did not lead to more legitimacy for the government	Ethnic polarization increases negative effects of aid	No causal explanation tested

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
Center								
Gehring et al. 2018: "Aid and Conflict at the Subnational Level – Evidence from World Bank and Chinese Development Projects in Africa."	World Bank aid disbursement and Chinese aid disbursement at first level of subnational administrative unit / year	Battle related deaths. Source: UCDPs GED data set. Binary variable, 1 = > 5 deaths per year / unit.	All aid disbursements	All African countries with more than 1 million inhabitants, 1995 - 2012	Districts with less aid	Both World Bank Aid and Chinese Aid appear to reduced violence		No mechanism tested
Hoelscher, Miklian and Vadlamannati 2012: "Hearts and mines: A district-level analysis of the Maoist conflict in India".	Percentage of households per district participating in NREGA (National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) NREGA is an employment development program that guarantees at least 100 days of wage-employment to every rural household	a) Conflict incidence: whether or not one or more incidences happened at district level b) Sum of all battle deaths c) Sum of all incidents Sources. The date stems from three different, adapted data sets: South Asian Terrorism	Employment program	151 districts in 6 Indian provinces	Cross-sectional design at district level Districts with higher / lower share of NREGA households between 2006 and 2010	Higher percentage of NREGA households correlates with fewer districts with conflict incidences, fewer battle deaths and fewer number of incidents		Opportunity cost model: More employment increases opportunity costs for Maoist rebels. The test is weak since the model (cross-sectional Probit and negative binomial regressions) cannot control for reverse

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
		Portal; National Counter Terrorism Centre's Worldwide Incidents Tracking System; Global Terrorism Database The data cover the years 2004 – 2010. Incidents aggregated for the period 2004 - 2010						causality
Iyengar, Montan and Hanson 2011: "Building Peace. The Impact of Aid on the Labor Market for Insurgents".	(1) Variation in district-month CERP spending on labor-intensive projects (reconstruction and refurbishment). (2) In order to control for	a) the number of attacks on civilian b) the number of civilian fatalities per attack c) the number of attacks on military targets.	CERP	All 120 districts in Iraq between 2004 and 2008	Districts with more / less available CERP funds per months. Estimation based on OLS regression	Labor intensive CERP spending a) reduces number of attacks on civilians; b) increases number of attacks on military; c) leads to more civilian		The causal chain is: More CERP funds will lead to more spending on labor intensive projects which increases the opportunity costs for insurgents and

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
	endogeneity, the rotation of U.S. military divisions assigned to an area, interacted with the level of total available CERP funds was used as an instrument Data at district / month	Source for a) and b) is Iraq Body Count IBC. Source for c) is declassified version of SIGACT Data at district / month				fatalities per attack		thus leads to less violence. The validity of the instrument depends on the assumption that force rotation is independent from other determinants of violence. Also, the study does not control for strength of military presence in an area.
Karell & Schutte, 2018: "Aid, Exclusion, and the Local Dynamics of Insurgency in Afghanistan."	Received CERP	Security incidents from SIGACT	CERP infrastructure and natural resource projects CERP social protection projects (= projects targeted at marginalized	Afghanistan 2004 - 2009	Did not receive CERP	Both CERP types increased violence, but social protection projects led to more increase	Projects providing public goods are less harmful than exclusive projects which benefit only segments of society	Aid can increase instability via increased perceptions of exclusion

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
			groups)					
Karell 2015. "Aid, Power, and Grievances: Lessons for War and Peace from Rural Afghanistan."	CERP	Qualitative measure of inter-communal tensions, leading to more insurgent violence	CERP	The Marjah district in Helmand from November 2014 to December 2014	none	Aid increased inter-communal tensions, leading to more insurgent violence		Aid was given to non-traditional / non-legitimate authorities, upsetting traditional power structures
Khanna & Zimmermann 2014: "Fighting Maoist Violence with Promises: Evidence from India's Employment Guarantee Scheme"	Whether or not a district received the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) during the first phase (February 2006)	a) Affected (sums up the number of killed, injured, abducted or captured) b) Fatalities c) Abducted d) Major incidents e) Total incidents All data at district / months. Data source is South Asia Terrorism Portal	Employment program	180 treated districts in the first phase (February 2006) and 177 non-treated districts	Model is difference-in-difference regression (in an earlier companion paper, a regression discontinuity design was applied. Results were very similar. Cf. Khanna&Zimmernann 2013) Two comparators are used: Districts which received NREGS	NGERS increases the number of fatalities by 49% per district that received NREGS The increase in fatalities is driven by police-initiated attacks and by a rise in the encounters between police and Maoists.	First phase districts are the poorest and therefore the first to benefit from the program. These districts were also strongholds of the Maoist insurgents. Pre-treatment levels of violence in these districts were on average approximately four times higher than in the districts of phase	Information-centric model (the papers uses interchangeably citizen-support-channel)

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
					compared to districts which did not in a given phase Districts before and after they received NREGS			
Lee & Kendall 2019: "Use It or Lose It: The Political Economy of Counter-insurgency Strategy."	CERP spending per capita / quarter year, at district level	Violence levels in Iraq, measured as violent acts per 1000 population. This includes violence against government, but also sectarian violence. Source: Iraq body count (IBC),	CERP	Iraq 2004 - 2008	Districts with lower CERP spending, using OLS regression	Indiscriminate CERP funding towards the end of fiscal year increased violence		Indiscriminate CERP funding towards the end of fiscal year increased violence. Theorized mechanisms include predation and increased corruption
Mercy Corps. (2015). Does youth employment build stability? Evidence from an impact evaluation of vocational	Participation in the INVEST program.	Self-reported propensity towards violence	Technical vocational education and training (TVET) INVEST is a youth	1129 participants of INVEST in Helmand, in	Participants who had finished the training vs. participants who had enrolled, but not yet began the training. matched	Aid led to decreased unemployment, increased income and greater economic optimism.		Assumed: opportunity cost; updated beliefs about responsiveness of government; increased social

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
training in Afghanistan.			vocational training in Helmand.	February 2014	by propensity scores.	But there was no impact on the willingness to use violence for political or other causes.		status and connections. Since no effect was found, there is no support for any of these mechanisms.
Narang 2014: "Humanitarian Assistance and the Duration of Peace after Civil War."	All humanitarian aid, country level	Duration of peace	Humanitarian aid	Post civil war countries 1989 - 1999	Countries receiving more / less humanitarian aid, using Cox estimates	higher levels of humanitarian assistance leads to shorter spells of peace; however, this effect only occurs after conflicts that ended with a decisive victory		Humanitarian aid is disproportionately given to the losers of the war, and that the aid can help the losing side to reconstitute its war effort. No test is given.
Narang 2015: "Assisting Uncertainty: How Humanitarian Aid Can Inadvertently Prolong Civil War".	All humanitarian aid, country level	Duration of civil wars	Humanitarian aid	All civil war countries 1969 – 2008	Countries receiving more / less humanitarian aid, using Cox estimates	increased levels of humanitarian assistance lengthen civil wars, particularly those involving rebels on the outskirts of a state		The author notes that these findings are compatible with a range of causal mechanisms: Misappropriated aid could

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
								finance the insurgency; humanitarian aid could create protected spaces (such as refugee camps) that shield combatants from costly attacks; fungible aid could free up resources for violence; or local power-brokers could prolong the war in order to continue "taxing" the incoming aid. No test is given.
Nunn and Qian 2014: "US Food Aid and Civil Conflict."	Instrument for food aid at country level based on exogenous time variation in US	onset and duration of conflict	US food aid	125 non-OECD countries between 1971 and 2006 which	Countries that received less US food aid	US food aid increased the duration of civil conflicts, but had no effect on interstate		The study is not designed to uncover the causal mechanisms, but the authors

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
	wheat production			receive US food aid		conflicts or the onset of civil conflicts. The effect is most pronounced in countries with a recent history of civil conflict.		refer to the large do-no-harm literature which suggests that stolen aid is frequently used to finance the war.
Sexton 2015: "Aid, insurgency and the pivotal role of control: Evidence from Afghanistan"	Variation in week-per-week CERP spending per district week in all Afghan districts. This measure is chosen because it is assumed that this variation is quasi random (caused by the unpredictable bureaucracy) , whereas CERP spending per se is endogenous to violence	a) bombings b) Enemy action c) Explosive hazards d) Political violence a, c and d coded from ANSO weekly reports. b from SIGACT data.	CERP	All Afghan district (n= 396) between May 2008 and December 2010)	District with high changes in CERP spending per capita / week compared to district with low changes in CERP spending per capita / week. OSL regression	CERP spending in secured districts reduces the number of enemy actions and explosive hazards CERP spending in not secure districts increases the number of bombings and enemy actions, but decreases political violence.	Whether or not a district is secure by US forces. The presence of an U.S. battalion is used as a proxy for "secured district".	Insurgents in non secured districts try to sabotage aid. Hence an influx of aid increases violence. Only when the district is relatively secure will aid dampen violence.

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
Van Weezel 2015: "A Spatial Analysis of the Effect of Foreign Aid in Conflict Areas"	Aid commitments per province and district in constant U.S dollars lagged by one year. Period is 1999 - 2008 Data sourced from AidData	Change in log count of number of fatalities in a region. Data from UCDP georeferenced event data set	All aid	First (provincial) level and second (district) level administrative units of DR Congo, Ethiopia, Sudan 1999 - 2008	First difference design, where change in conflict levels are regressed on changes in lagged aid allocations. First level and second level administrative units with large changes in aid committed compared to units with small changes.	No statistically significant associations detected		No particular causal mechanism is tested.
Weintraub 2014: "Do All Good Things Go Together? Development Assistance and Violence in Insurgency"	Household level Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program in Colombia in 2002	a) FARC Civilian Killings (the total number of civilians killed by the FARC) b) FARC Attacks (the number of non-reciprocated (unilateral) violent actions	CTT	57 treated municipalities in Columbia in 2002 It is unclear how many of the 4689 households in the	57 treated municipalities compared to 65 untreated municipalities using a difference-in-difference model.	The program increased the number of killings and of indiscriminate violent incidents by the FARC. The effect on indiscriminate violence is still	The effect appears to be heterogeneous, and especially accentuated in the poorest municipalities. The violence inducing effect is also stronger in	The paper proposes a two-pronged model that combines the information-centric and the sabotage model: Development aid buys information, and

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
		carried out by the FARC) c) FARC Indiscriminate Violence (the total number of indiscriminate violent acts committed by the FARC, which typically involve the use of grenades). Data aggregated at municipality-years. Data from the Human Rights Observatory Database		treated municipalities benefitted from the program.		discernible in the second year after treatment. For civilian killings, no effect was observed in the second year.	municipalities where coca was intensively cultivated	in reaction insurgents target the population to sabotage the information sharing.
Wood & Molfino 2016: "Aiding Victims, Abetting Violence: The Influence of Humanitarian Aid on Violence Patterns During	Relative value of humanitarian aid commitments per first order administrative unit (community	One sided rebel violence against government, measured as discrete battlefield engagement between rebels	Humanitarian aid	22 sub-Saharan African states between 1990 and 2008	Units that received fewer projects using cross-sectional regression	humanitarian aid is associated with increased rebel violence against government		Injecting humanitarian aid into a locality increases the incentives for rebels to challenge the

Author(s)	Aid measure	Dependent variable	Type of Aid tested	Population	Comparator	Outcome (s)	Moderators	Causal explanation / strength of test
Civil Conflict.”	or district), per year, compared to the average within the second order unit	and government. Source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program's (UCDP) Georeferenced Event data set						government for control over territory in which aid accumulates, thus leading to an increased risk of violence
Wood & Sullivan 2015: “Doing Harm by Doing Good? The Negative Externalities of Humanitarian Aid Provision during Civil Conflict.”	Project-level bi- and multilateral humanitarian aid commitments, lagged by one year, at grid level/ year. A cell is roughly 55 # 55 km at the equator Source: UCDP/AidData georeferenced data set.	Number of attacks on civilian targets by insurgents. Source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program's (UCDP) Georeferenced Event data set	Humanitarian aid	22 sub-Saharan African states between 1989 and 2008	Grids that received fewer projects using cross-sectional regression	humanitarian aid is associated with increased rebel violence. .		Predation or sabotage. The study does not test for whether the effect is caused by predation or sabotage

Appendix B: Towards a Stabilization Metrics

This section provides a brief overview of the concepts and measurements which the reviewed studies used for measuring the effects of aid on stabilization.

There is a clear tendency towards using measures for physical security. This is not surprising, given that one of the inclusion criteria of this systematic review was that the dependent variable was violence or security (or related concepts).

Other measured concepts refer to perceptions of legitimacy, the economic situation and the provision of public goods.

Studies employ both measurements for “objective” security and measurements for “subjective” security. Objective security is measured by a count of security incidents, often disaggregated by the target of violent attacks, the perpetrator of violent attacks, the means of violent attacks, and the number of victims of violent attacks. These measurements are taken from existing databases. Some of these databases are in the public realm, such as the Worldwide Incidents Tracking System (WITS), which was merged in 2012 with Global Terrorism Database (<https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>); the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's (UCDP) Georeferenced Event data set (available at <https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/>); Iraq Body Count IBC which documents civilian deaths (<https://www.iraqbodycount.org/>).

Other databases are not in the public realm, such as data from the Human Rights Observatory Database Colombia, conflict Data of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. and data collected by the US army in Iraq and Afghanistan, the so called SIGACT (significant activities) data, declassified versions of which were made accessible to some researches.

“Subjective” measurements for security are taken from surveys, most of which were specially designed for one the studies. These surveys inquire about the perceptions of respondents with regard to their own security, or the security of their households and communities. Often, survey data is disaggregated by gender.

Beyond measures for security, some studies also use measures for how the population perceives actors such as foreign forces, development actors or national and subnational administrations. Broadly speaking, these measures ask about legitimacy of important governance actors.

In rare cases, the studies also employ measures for the economic situation of individuals or households and how they assess the provision of basic services by government and development actors.

The measured concepts refer to different spatial and temporal units. Spatially, the preferred unit is the district, followed by the village or the municipality. Occasionally researchers also use grid cells of 100km radius.

Temporarily the studies use months, half-years and years for time series, or take a measurement before and after an intervention.

The next table summarizes the metrics which the reviewed studies employed. More details about the measurements are provided in appendix A, column “depended variable”.

Table B1: Stabilization metrics

Units of analysis		Measurements			
Territorial	Temporal	Security incidents (from databases or news sources)	Self-reported security (from surveys)	Self-reported attitudes towards: (from surveys)	Self-reported perceptions of economic situation (from surveys)
Village		Insurgent attacks against US and government forces	Individual security	Foreign Forces	
Municipality	Per year	Politically motivated violence against police, military, government, and civilians	Household security	Development Actors	Individual level
Per 1000 population	Per half-year	Number of attacks on civilians	Village security	National and subnational administration	Household level
District	monthly	Number of civilian fatalities	Feeling threatened by violent actors (insurgents, militias, police, etc.)	Local councils	National and subnational administration
Grid cells (within 100km from municipality)		Number of killed civilian by one specific group	Number of reported security incidents around village	Self-reported propensity toward political violence	
		Number of affected population: killed, injured, abducted or captured			
		Number of attacks on military targets			
		Duration of civil war / country level			

Appendix C: Sample Search Protocol

EconLit	Search executed on 2015-05-13	
	AID AND POLICIES	
1	TI,AB((foreign OR development OR humanitarian OR economic OR food OR employment OR international) N/3 (aid OR assistance OR program* OR project* OR relief))	
2	TI,AB("public works program" OR "public works programs")	
3	TI,AB("community development")	
4	TI,AB(cct OR "conditional cash transfer")	
5	TI,AB(cdd OR "community driven development")	
6	TI,AB(reconstruction)	
7	TI,AB("hearts and minds")	
8	TI,AB(peacebuilding OR "peace building")	
9	or/1-8	16942
	SECURITY, VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT	
10	TI,AB(stabili*)	
11	TI,AB("international security")	
12	TI,AB(peace)	
13	TI,AB(security)	
14	TI,AB("non-violence" OR nonviolence)	
15	TI,AB(civil N/1 (war* OR conflict*))	
16	TI,AB(insurgen* OR counterinsurgen* OR counter-insurgen*)	
17	TI,AB(violen* N/3 inciden*)	
18	TI,AB(violence)	
19	TI,AB(rebellion* or rebel*)	
20	or/10-19	64094
21	9 AND 20	1701
	LIMITS	
22	YR(>=2001)	
23	LA(English)	
24	Journal articles	698
	EconLit part 1	
	TI,AB((foreign OR development OR humanitarian OR economic OR food OR employment OR international) N/3 (aid OR assistance OR program* OR project* OR relief)) OR TI,AB("public works program" OR "public works programs") OR TI,AB("community development") OR TI,AB(cct OR "conditional cash transfer") OR TI,AB(cdd OR "community driven development") OR TI,AB(reconstruction) OR TI,AB("hearts and minds") OR TI,AB(peacebuilding OR "peace building")	
	EconLit part 2	

TI,AB(stabili*) OR TI,AB("international security") OR TI,AB(peace)
OR TI,AB(security) OR TI,AB("non-violence" OR nonviolence) OR
TI,AB(civil N/1 (war* OR conflict*)) OR TI,AB(insurgen* OR
counterinsurgen* OR counter-insurgen*) OR TI,AB(violence) OR
TI,AB(violen* N/3 inciden*) OR TI,AB(rebellion* or rebel*)

EconLit combined

(TI,AB((foreign OR development OR humanitarian OR economic
OR food OR employment OR international) N/3 (aid OR assistance
OR program* OR project* OR relief)) OR TI,AB("public works
program" OR "public works programs") OR TI,AB("community
development") OR TI,AB(cct OR "conditional cash transfer") OR
TI,AB(cdd OR "community driven development") OR
TI,AB(reconstruction) OR TI,AB("hearts and minds") OR
TI,AB(peacebuilding OR "peace building")) AND (TI,AB(stabili*) OR
TI,AB("international security") OR TI,AB(peace) OR TI,AB(security)
OR TI,AB("non-violence" OR nonviolence) OR TI,AB(civil N/1 (war*
OR conflict*)) OR TI,AB(insurgen* OR counterinsurgen* OR
counter-insurgen*) OR TI,AB(violence) OR TI,AB(violen* N/3
inciden*) OR TI,AB(rebellion* or rebel*))

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