Justifying the Unforgivable
How ideology shapes patterns of violence of Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab
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UPPSALA UNIVERSITY
Spring 2018

Master Thesis in Peace and Conflict Studies
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Abstract
The question of how armed group ideology influences its behaviour has been tentatively explored in the past decade. However, which role distinct ideological commitments play in civilian targeting has not been satisfactorily discussed thus far. This thesis turns to research on genocide and mass violence and incorporates the concepts of ‘exclusionary ideologies’ and ‘threat perceptions’ to fill this research gap. It addresses the following question: to what extent do exclusionary ideologies of armed groups influence their use of violence against civilians during civil conflicts? When revolutionary armed groups pursue their goals, threat perceptions determine which groups are considered legitimate targets for attack. Therefore, it is hypothesized that exclusionary groups will employ more violence against civilians than inclusionary groups because the former have a more expanded understanding of legitimate targeting than the latter. Through a structured focused comparison, discourse analysis and process tracing applied to the cases of Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab, moderate support for this hypothesis is found. It is shown that both armed groups to varying extents invoke threat perceptions regarding certain out-groups to legitimize and rationalise their patterns of violence. Nonetheless, a descent into indiscriminate violence by Boko Haram and data shortage of Al-Shabaab attacks warrant caution.
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1. Introduction
In the past decade, conflicts in Syria, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic (CAR) have continued to highlight atrocities perpetrated between seemingly distinct societal groups. In Syria and Iraq, the Islamic State (IS) has targeted Christians and Yazidis as well as people whom they view as Muslim dissenters (Counter Extremism Project (CEP), ISIS). In the CAR, Muslim sections and Christian groups have been attacking civilians over the past few years, leading to thousands of deaths (Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) 2018). Analysing how and why these sorts of groups continue to attack civilians from other societal groups could be an important step towards combating such violence.

The role of ideology\(^1\) in armed groups during civil conflict recently received its due attention (e.g. Gutierrez Sanin and Wood 2014). Amongst other topics, researchers have explored how ideology might have an impact on armed group mobilization (Costalli and Ruggeri 2015) and how emotions such as fear or resentment interact with ideology to condition specific behaviour of armed groups (Schubiger and Zelina 2017; Moro 2017). Moreover, the question of how ideological commitments feature in rebel recruitment has been examined into some detail (Eck 2010; Ugarriza and Craig 2013; Toft and Zhukov 2015). Overall, these authors have demonstrated that variation in armed group behaviour and organization is at least partly influenced by different ideologies.

However, how ideology may affect the use of violence by armed groups is a puzzle which has been somewhat neglected thus far. This is surprising because if ideology indeed plays a vital role in armed group behaviour (Ugarriza 2009; Gutiérrez Sanin and Wood 2014), then the destructive practice of civilian targeting deserves special attention. Some authors have begun to explore this puzzle. Thaler (2012) showed that ideologies influenced the use of selective versus indiscriminate violence by two African armed groups in the latter half of the twentieth century, whereby an erosion of ideology was related to practicing the latter sort. Hoover Green (2016) examined armed group restraint in the use of violence and argued that “political education” may play a role here (p. 626-627). Nonetheless, how different audiences and targets within ideologies can explain variation in patterns of violence\(^2\) across armed groups has not been examined yet.

To fill this gap, I will turn to research on genocide and mass violence, where the concept of an ‘exclusionary ideology’ in the context of revolutionary movements has been used to examine...

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\(^{1}\) For now, ideology is defined as “a set of more or less systematic ideas that identify a constituency, the objectives pursued on behalf of that group, and a program of action” (Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood 2014, p. 213).

\(^{2}\) I hereby use the definition of a ‘pattern of violence’ by Gutierrez Sanín and Wood (2017). They delineate it as “the repertoire of violence” (i.e. forms) wherein an armed group “regularly engages and, for each element of the repertoire, its targeting, frequency, and technique” (p. 23).
which factors might be conducive to these violent phenomena. From this discussion, the research question follows: to what extent do exclusionary ideologies of armed groups influence their use of violence against civilians during civil conflicts? In other words, can variation in civilian targeting across armed groups be traced back to their respective ideologies?

Theoretically, the thesis contributes to the field by combining the aforementioned literatures to explore how questions which have been neglected in one can be examined using concepts from the other. I turn to the field of social psychology to theorize upon the concept of ‘threat perceptions’ in relation to exclusionary ideologies, and how different perceptions of threat may lead to different patterns of violence against civilians. I argue that revolutionary armed groups want to transform society and reform its social, political and/or economic relations. These groups single out societal groups they deem a threat to the achievement of their revolutionary goals. Such societal groups are then considered legitimate targets to attack next to, for instance, the government or its army. Through higher threat perceptions, exclusionary groups have a more extensive understanding than inclusionary groups of who or what constitutes a legitimate target for attack. Thus, in the context of civil conflict, more exclusionary groups should display higher levels of violence against civilians than armed groups who are more inclusionary. In summary, exclusionary groups should show less restraint in civilian targeting compared to more inclusionary groups because the former designate more legitimate targets than the latter.

The theory is tested through conducting a structured focused comparison (SFC) between two cases, namely Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al-Shabaab in Somalia. This contributes towards more systematically addressing the gap between the proposed theoretical mechanisms and empirical observations, whereby the cases will be analysed separately before a between-case comparison is presented. To uncover ideological commitments of the armed groups, a content analysis is employed to determine to what extent they are either inclusionary or exclusionary. The thesis thereby delves deeper into what the armed groups declare about themselves rather than disconnecting discourse from practices. Lastly, through process tracing the thesis examines the use of violence to more accurately ascertain whether the proposed causal mechanism holds.

The causal mechanism finds limited support in the case of Boko Haram and considerable support in the case of Al-Shabaab. The ideology of Boko Haram is highly exclusionary, focused on an extremely limited in-group and an extensive out-group. Up until the middle of 2013, its use of violence tends to largely reflect these ideological commitments, while its use of indiscriminate violence escalates afterwards. In the case of Al-Shabaab, its levels of violence reflect ideological commitments fairly well, focusing mostly on pro-government officials and troops. Moreover, Al-Shabaab’s one-sided violence against civilians indeed indicates that the group is inclined to target
civilians based on their group characteristics, most visibly in Kenya. Nevertheless, a lack of data warrants caution.

The structure of the thesis is as follows. Chapter two presents an overview of previous research on the topic and argues into more detail that the role of ideology in the use of violence against civilians has been unjustly overlooked thus far. Chapter three delineates the theoretical framework based on the social-psychological concept of ‘threat perceptions’. Chapter four outlines the research design and methodology and delves deeper into methodological choices and the case selection. The next two chapters present the findings of the variables in the cases of Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab. Afterwards, chapter seven analyses whether, how and why the use of civilian targeting differs within and across cases as well as determining to what extent the causal mechanism is present or not. Chapter eight offers the conclusions of the thesis, whereas chapter nine presents the bibliography.
2. Literature Review
The thesis builds upon two distinct literatures. It employs research on the role of ideology within armed groups, as well as incorporating research on the use of violence during civil conflicts. The first set has explored how ideological commitments can explain the behaviour and organizational structure of armed groups, thereby highlighting new ways to think about variation between them. However, while it points towards the importance of ideology in aspects such as rebel recruitment, how ideology relates to the use of civilian targeting has hardly been studied. The second set focuses on strategic and opportunistic functions of civilian targeting, whereby I argue that the role of ideology has been surprisingly overlooked. This literature review outlines what these fields of research have found thus far, and argues that combining them and incorporating genocide studies can improve the understanding of why armed groups exhibit varying patterns of violence during civil conflict.

2.1 The Role of Ideology within Armed Groups
Academic interest in how ideology relates to the behaviour of armed group during civil conflict has developed quite recently (Gutiérrez Sanin and Wood 2014). Around the start of the 21st century, most influential works on the onset of and armed group behaviour during civil war, for instance, dismissed the role of ideational factors therein in favour of economic incentives. The widely cited article *Greed and Grievance in Civil War* by Collier and Hoeffler (2004) concluded that “indicators of grievance add[ed] little explanatory power” to civil war onset (p. 588). Likewise, authors examining the link between natural resources and conflict argued that the presence of the former positively correlated with the onset of the latter (Collier and Hoeffler 2000; Fearon 2004). On the other hand, Ross (2004) concluded that while natural resources were not necessarily correlated with the onset of conflict, they did have a positive influence on the duration of it. An exception here is an article by Ron (2001) which traced how ideology drove Peruvian group Sendero towards violently escalating its campaign to transform society.

Within the past decade however, theorizing upon the role of ideology within armed groups has become more widespread. Several authors (e.g. Ugarriza 2009; Thaler 2012; Ugarriza and Craig 2013) have traced how ideological commitments relate to armed group behaviour and their organizational structures. Thaler (2012) used process tracing and discourse analysis to examine how ideology guided two armed groups during civil conflicts in Angola and Mozambique. He concluded that ideological commitments restrained the use of violence against civilians initially, and that violence increased when ideological norms were increasingly abandoned once the armed groups were actually in power.

Furthermore, Gutiérrez Sanin and Wood (2014) argued that ideology can play a two-fold
role within armed groups. First, they argue that ideology can be employed as an instrument by armed group leaders to increase internal cohesion and to align individual goals with those of the group to decrease principal-agent problems (ibid.). Secondly, they suggest that ideology can serve as a normative commitment for leaders as well as ordinary group members, whereby ideology constrains or encourages certain actions such as violence against civilians. Other authors have utilised their definition and approach to further analyse the role of ideology within armed groups. Wood and Thomas (2017) examined why some armed groups attract and employ female fighters while others do not. They concluded that groups who challenge the status quo are likelier to employ female fighters than those who pursue more conservative values. While certainly promising, the underlying theoretical mechanisms connecting armed group ideology to their behaviour are still under-developed and ripe for further research. Questions of how ideology features into the stated goals of armed groups and how armed groups justify their own behaviour, for instance, have hardly been addressed. This thesis aims to address this gap.

2.2 The Use of Violence against Civilians
Research on why armed groups use violence against civilians dates back quite some time and is well-developed. Research aiming to explain the use of violence against civilians has recently explored theories of rebel capabilities (Weinstein 2007; Hultman 2009); militia groups (Cohen and Nordås 2015; Stanton 2015); and civilian attitudes towards an insurgent (Hirose, Imai and Lyall 2017). Nevertheless, questions of how and why ideology is employed are still being debated.

On the one hand, violence against civilians is viewed as strategic and therefore carried out with a clear goal in mind. For instance, while downplaying the role of ideology or emotions, Kalyvas has written extensively on the logics behind it. He argued that territorial control dynamics (2006) and civilian defections and denunciations (1999; 2006) were two of the most important explanations of why governments and rebel groups target civilians. Here, targeting is a rational act whereby armed groups need information about opponents, the population, and the area in general. Violence is viewed as a cost-effective way to collect the information. In addition, some authors argued that rebel groups use violence to force the government to act (e.g. Hultman 2009) or resort to violence as a result of battlefield losses (Wood 2014). Furthermore, in research on the prevalence of sexual violence, Cohen (2013) maintained it is used as a method of socialization to increase internal cohesion within armed groups. Violence here creates a shared experience which increases loyalty to commanders and between group members. Ideology, however, hardly features in this part of the research field.

On the other hand, armed group violence can be viewed as opportunistic, and a result of principal-agent problems. Surprisingly, the role of ideological commitments is frequently discussed
here, often being treated as a possible mitigating factor. Weinstein (2007) addressed civilian targeting by rebel groups and asserted that “low-commitment” members will more easily resort to forced extraction of resources (p. 9). He opposed these to “high-commitment” individuals who are committed to the group goals and do not need economic incentives to stay loyal to the group (ibid.). Furthermore, Wood (2009) argued that sexual violence occurs when commanders do not exert enough influence over their combatants. She maintained that ideologies can prevent this from happening, if and when those ideologies prohibit it (ibid.). This is similar to the argument by Humphreys and Weinstein (2006). Treating violence as a defection from common group goals, they implied that “ideological mobilization” tends to lead to fewer defections, more behavioural norms, and a tighter individual connection to group goals (p. 445).

While these explanations have uncovered interesting mechanisms, theories linking ideology to the use of violence by armed groups are dismissed in most of the explanations. However, there is a related research field where ideology has time and again been theoretically and empirically linked to civilian targeting: the literature on genocide and mass violence. For a long time, this field has turned to ideational aspects to explain why these events occur, influenced by the Holocaust, the Rwanda genocide, and the crimes of communist regimes under Stalin and Mao.

Harff (2003) found that “[c]ountries in which the ruling elite adhered to an exclusionary ideology were two and a half times as likely to have state failures leading to geno-/politicide as those with no such ideology” (p. 66). Moreover, she theorized that genocides and politicides happen in the context of social upheaval such as revolutions, whereby a specifically defined group is targeted by authorities with a “transforming vision of a new society purified of unwanted or threatening elements” (p. 61). Valentino (2014) indicated that ideologies played an important role in mass political violence, whether they were used as a strategy or as an opportunistic mechanism. Moreover, Brehm (2016) and Kim (2018) both found through quantitative analyses that revolutions and revolutionary ideologies make the occurrence of episodes of mass violence more likely. In general however, these authors still focused on governments and a state context rather than non-state actors, a gap which this thesis addresses. In short, while ideational factors do not feature much in general conclusions regarding the use of violence during civil conflicts, the literatures on genocide and mass killings show a different story. The thesis theoretically contributes to these fields by combining several aspects of them and applying some of the ‘logic’ of genocides and mass killings to the behaviour of armed groups.

A justification for these choices is appropriate here. Although exclusionary ideologies have been applied to the research on genocides and other forms of mass violence, I believe the concept could also be applied to violence against civilians more generally. Not all (selective) violence against
an out-group automatically constitutes genocide. Some authors would argue that any intent to destroy an out-group, however defined, could be considered genocide. They might argue that the number of victims does not matter so long as perpetrators work to “eliminate or intend to eliminate so many people that the group ceases to function as a social or political entity” (Harff 2003, p. 59, emphasis mine). Nonetheless, I argue that there is a difference between genocide on the one hand, and committing violence against a specified out-group during civil conflict in general. I posit that this difference is exactly one of intent: genocides are specifically designed processes to destroy a group. Armed groups employing exclusionary ideologies in a civil conflict do not have to intend to destroy a civilian out-group per se.

Hence, I follow Eck and Hultman (2007) who argued that while violence against civilians can include events which may be classified as genocidal, the practice should be considered more broad than that. In the first instance, the process of violence and destruction of a group is the goal. In the second instance, the violence could either be a means to an(other) end (e.g. transforming society) or a by-product of the conflict and not the specific goal itself (e.g. Straus 2012). Thus, what I investigate here is whether armed groups employing exclusionary ideologies differ in their use of violence against civilians when compared to armed groups who do not employ such ideologies. What I do not want to argue is that armed groups employing exclusionary ideologies automatically commit genocide when using violence against civilian out-groups. This is clarified in the theoretical framework.
3. Theoretical Framework

How can exclusionary ideologies lead to the use of violence against civilians by a revolutionary armed group during civil conflict? This chapter lays out the theoretical mechanism which will be applied to the cases of Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab in the analytical chapters. It argues that revolutionary groups display a transforming vision of the society or world they live in, whereby exclusionary groups have a more restricted understanding of who should be part of their vision. They perceive certain societal groups as antithetical to their transforming visions, perceiving them as threats and consequently as legitimate targets. Exclusionary ideologies should therefore have a more expanded sense of legitimate targets than inclusionary ideologies, leading the former to use more violence against civilian groups than the latter. The argument is simplified in the graph below.

Graph 1: visual presentation of how an exclusionary ideology might lead to more violence against civilians. The mechanism is conditional upon the armed group actually engaging in a violent conflict. A more extensive graph can be found in Appendix 2.

3.1 Concept Definitions

A civil conflict is understood as “a contested incompatibility between a government and an internal opposition group where the use of armed force results in a certain number of battle-related deaths on both sides in a year” (Bernauer 2016, p. 17). Moreover, because the thesis mainly relies on the UCDP during data collection, violence against civilians is defined following Eck and Hultman’s (2007) understanding of one-sided violence as “civilians that are deliberately and directly targeted by governments or non-state groups” (p. 235). As the thesis focus on non-state armed groups, civilian targeting by government authorities or their agents is left out. Furthermore, while the main focus is on fatal violence following the reliance on the UCDP, analysis also incorporates other
types of violence. Thus, while Eck and Hultman (2007) only include actual fatalities, the thesis also endeavours to include non-fatal violence.

3.1.1 Revolutionary Armed Groups and Ideologies

Brehm (2016) and Kim (2018) argue that revolutionary movements or events make the occurrence of mass violence more likely. Nonetheless, this treats revolutionary movements as a unitary category, whereas I am more interested in variance between them. Thus, I suggest that the relationship between revolutions and mass violence is dependent upon the revolutionary ideology being more inclusionary or exclusionary, as expressed in the graph above.

A revolutionary armed group is defined as “a group that aims not just to gain power but self-consciously to transform society in a deep and radical way” (Kalyvas 2015, p. 43). A revolutionary ideology is an ideology which describes what such a transformation entails in terms of, for instance, social, political or economic relations (ibid.). Such ideologies may either be more inclusionary or exclusionary, depending on the group itself. Nonetheless, because revolutionary ideologies have a specific view of an ideal society, certain groups might easily be regarded as antithetical to their goals. When applying these aspects to armed groups, it follows that revolutionary armed groups which adhere to more exclusionary ideologies should relatively commit more violence against civilians than more inclusionary groups.

3.1.2 Exclusionary Ideologies

Harff defined an exclusionary ideology as “a belief system that identifies some overriding purpose or principle that justifies efforts to restrict, persecute, or eliminate certain categories of people” (2003, p. 63). The connection between revolutionary armed groups and exclusionary ideologies should be clear: a prevailing aim to radically transform society might lead to the belief that certain societal groups are not associated with the new order, who may therefore be persecuted. In the context of a civil conflict, such ‘purposes or principles’ could be overthrowing a regime and thereby excluding perceived supporters of it; transforming a society to fit a specific worldview and thereby attacking the validity and salience of another worldview (and by extension its adherents); or addressing perceived grievances and thereby targeting persons associated with being the root of those grievances. Most importantly for the purpose of this thesis is that exclusionary ideologies delineate groups of people or certain worldviews based on specific group characteristics. These groups are then justifiably excluded from the “universe of obligation” (Fein 1987, p. 13). In other

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3 See ICRC website, Geneva Conventions IV art. 3 and art. 27.
4 Note that these definitions do not necessarily include civilian targeting, and that revolutions can also be done in a non-violent way.
words, members of the excluded group are put outside the scope of moral obligation, no protection is owed to them, and abuse against them is not addressed.

Hence, exclusionary ideologies create an in-group as well as an out-group based on, for instance, ethnicity, religion, language, skin-colour or political views. The restriction, persecution or elimination of categories of people or worldviews is justified based on the characteristics of both groups. Exclusionary ideologies in principle allow no existence or expression of the Other, however that is demarcated. They do not merely disagree with another worldview and promote that of the in-group in a respectful way. Instead, there is a sense of moral superiority involved. Social psychology argues that in-group tolerance of dissenting worldviews decreases or disappears when the morality of an in-group or their worldview is regarded as absolute truth (Brewer 1999). This invites contempt or hatred, which could even lead to so-called ethnic cleansing (ibid.). Exclusionary groups do not tolerate other viewpoints and may actively persecute or (attempt to) eradicate adherents to other worldviews. Likewise, “at the expense of some of its [society’s] members” such groups often seek “the radical ethnic, national or religious transformation of society” (Valentino 2000, p. 38; similar to the definition of revolutionary groups). Therefore, revolutionary armed groups who conform to exclusionary ideologies should be found to explicitly promote policies to restrict, persecute or eliminate the people it targets.

To summarise, an exclusionary ideology is defined as an ideology which divides a society into groups, legitimizing the derogation, persecution or elimination of out-groups. The use of violence against civilians is viewed as a strategic choice rather than as an irrational or opportunistic by-product of conflict per se. The violence is strategic and selective as civilian groups are arguably targeted to bring about an ideal society. Violence within those civilian groups may still appear indiscriminate, but groups should be targeted because of the (symbolic) threat they represent (e.g. Gutierrez Sanín and Wood 2017). The remainder of the theory section utilizes this definition to examine how exclusionary ideologies may lead to civilian targeting. To better understand different types of ideologies, the following table is adapted from Polo and Gleditsch (2016, p. 819):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusionary/Exclusionary</th>
<th>In-group Audience</th>
<th>Case Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inclusionary</td>
<td>Most of society “without significant communal differences” (ibid.)</td>
<td>Frelimo in Mozambique, and MPLA in Angola⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusive-Ethnic</td>
<td>“only […] specific ethnic group[s]” (ibid.)</td>
<td>Hutu uprising in Rwanda in 1994; Tuareg rebellions in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁵ This does not mean that these armed groups did not occasionally attack civilians. However, this should not be a consistent practice: attacks should generally be limited to, for instance, armed forces, and the overall ideology should reach out to most if not all civilians.
Table 1: types of ideologies. This does not denote a spectrum whereby one type is inherently more exclusionary or inclusionary than the other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exclusive-Religious</th>
<th>“[T]rue believers” (ibid.)</th>
<th>Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda; IS in Syria/Iraq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exclusive-Political</td>
<td>Political affiliates e.g. socialists, Marxists etc.</td>
<td>Sendero Luminoso in Peru (see Ron 2001); several groups during the Troubles in Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not defined</td>
<td>No “specify domestic constituency (e.g. mainly driven by foreign support or looting)” (ibid.)</td>
<td>LURD in Liberia; RUF in Sierra Leone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 A Theory of Threat Perceptions
As mentioned before, Kim (2018) examined the tendency of revolutionary leaders to commit genocide or other forms of mass violence. She found that they are associated with a higher likelihood of committing mass violence than non-revolutionary leaders, but thereby pointed to the significance of exclusionary ideologies: only revolutionaries employing such ideologies were likelier to instigate mass violence. She argued that this may be because exclusionary ideologies often lead to threat perceptions related to out-groups, whereby violence is seen as appropriate or necessary to remove that threat (ibid.). The Holocaust and Rwandan genocide exemplify this: Jews were not just seen as unworthy of life, but as a threat to the survival of the Aryan race, while Tutsis and moderate Hutus were seen as threats to the survival of the Hutu ethnic group (MacNair 2003). Threats may be applied to several group aspects such as its “social identity, its goals and values” and “even its existence” (Hewstone et al. 2002, p. 586). Accordingly, threat perceptions might play a crucial role in exclusionary ideologies and a resort to violence against civilians.

3.2.1 Defining Threat Perceptions
In social psychology, a perception of threat is a powerful concept which influences the way people perceive the world around them, in particular out-groups. Intergroup threat, for example, refers to the idea that another group can harm the in-group, where a distinction is made between realistic and symbolic threats (Stephan et al., 2009). A realistic threat refers to a threat to a group’s economic situation, for instance, while a symbolic threat is directed against a “meaning system” such as a cultural worldview (ibid., p. 3). Both aspects can feature in an exclusionary ideology: a realistic threat may be when indigenous people perceive immigrants as threatening their economic standing, while a symbolic threat may be when Buddhist convictions threaten those of Islam, or vice versa. Stephan et al. (2009) stress here that theories of intergroup threat are all about perceptions, which may be ‘true’ or not. As the rest of the theoretical framework will show, however, “[p]erceived threats have real consequences” (ibid., p. 6).
3.2.2 McDoom’s Four Mechanisms of Inter-group Threat Perception

McDoom (2012) presents four mechanisms which relate threat perceptions to the occurrence of intergroup conflict and violence, namely boundary activation, outgroup negativity, outgroup homogenization, and ingroup solidarity. These mechanisms elucidate how threat perceptions within exclusionary ideologies might lead to civilian targeting.

First, boundary activation refers to the delineation of in-groups and out-groups within society, whereby the out-group purportedly presents a threat to the in-group whether that is real or imagined (ibid.). As the definition of an exclusionary ideology already showed, it cannot exist without such boundary activation and a target group to focus on. What is crucial here to understand is that this not merely means a simple categorization of people into groups, which every human being on the planet engages in to some extent. It is specifically characterising a group and its members as inherently threatening which then merits a response from the in-group. It is the first step of an ideological narrative of ‘us versus them’ whereby group identities are increasingly exploited and reinforced (ibid.).

However, even categorising people into different groups leads to distinctive responses towards them which are not at all favourable (Brewer 1999; Hewstone et al. 2002). Merely favouring an in-group, for instance, means not extending the same benefits to an out-group which can lead to basic distrust, racist tendencies or more extensive social differentiation (whether based on reality or not, see Brewer 1999). A simple process of socially differentiating between ‘us’ and ‘them’ ultimately affects the way we see and treat others, even subconsciously (Hornsey 2008). Thus, boundary activation is an important first step in both (morally) excluding people from the aforementioned ‘universe of obligation’ and legitimizing violence against them.

Second, out-group negativity refers to stereotypical, disparaging and otherwise denigrating attitudes and understandings towards out-group members following the threat they supposedly represent (McDoom 2012). It could perhaps be described as a much stronger version of the social differentiation, whereby the differentiation of the out-group is distinctly and consistently negative compared to the in-group. Such demonization of others in the form of negatively differentiating ‘them’ from ‘us’ psychologically eases a descent into violence, as it “reduces the inhibitions about violence and murder” (Garaigordobil 2012, p. 101). When feeling under constant threat from an out-group, such a reduction in inhibitions is persistent as the threat and the desire to address the threat are constantly reinforced (ibid.). In an exclusionary ideology, such a threat can be perceived as realistic or symbolic whereby an adherence to such an ideology perpetuates these perceptions. As Leader Maynard argues: “[s]ufficiently suffuse an ideological environment, so that a belief becomes something “everybody says,” and it is liable to receive wide endorsement even if never properly substantiated” (2014, p. 828).
Similarly, Garaigordobil (2012) theorizes that a negative mentality of us vs. them serves as a way to reinforce the perceived threat and therefore the decision to use violence. Such differentiation will invite various emotional reactions from fear to disgust which in turn strengthen the perceived threat (Hewstone et al. 2002). This ties into the argument that certain emotions can work as so-called push-factors to mobilize people against a common threat, especially when radical (or revolutionary) ideologies are involved (Costalli and Ruggeri 2015). Emotions then work as a trigger to prompt people into action, because emotions can shift someone’s way of thinking and open up alternative ways of ‘doing’ (ibid.). In short, an exclusionary ideology which constantly reiterates an out-group threat can easily lead to the promotion and psychological legitimation of violence. Such an ideology thereby poses a dangerous threat to the out-group.

Third, outgroup homogenization refers to the process whereby all members of the out-group are increasingly deindividualized and seen as indistinguishable from each other (McDoom 2012). Whereas individual members of the out-group are usually negatively stereotyped through the second mechanism, the third mechanism takes it one step further. Here, all members of the out-group are identified according to those negative characteristics whereby individual personalities and circumstances become irrelevant. This not only includes members who wield weapons, but also non-combatants such as children and the elderly. One should easily see the danger of applying this knowledge to the context of (armed group) exclusionary ideologies. After all, when out-group members or adherents to another worldview are collectively seen as constituting a threat to the in-group or favoured worldview, all members of the out-group become legitimate targets. Thus, it is especially through this mechanism wherein a resort to violence is considered a credible and legitimate option to address a perceived threat.

Thus, a revolutionary armed group adhering to an exclusionary ideology might view the use of violence against civilian out-groups as a legitimate option to eliminate threats to the achievement of their goals, even when they are non-combatants (Sémelin 2007). This spiralling into violence might be perceived as a “war of self-defence” on the part of the in-group who “destroy them to save us” (ibid., p. 48; note the narrative of us vs. them). In the worst scenario this results in the complete dehumanization of an out-group, whereby people are not merely deindividualized, but reduced to an object ripe for discarding. Unsurprisingly, dehumanization has been associated with genocidal violence because it tends to place groups outside the ‘universe of obligation’ and therefore not worthy of protection accorded to in-groups (Hagan and Rymond-Richmond 2008). In the context of a revolutionary ideology, however, this does not have to be so. Rather than the destruction of the out-group per se, its main goal should be the achievement of an ideal society which may designate legitimate targets but does not necessarily warrant the destruction of all of them.
Fourth, in-group solidarity refers to the process whereby members of the in-group are increasingly expected to ‘close ranks’, i.e. display loyalty to their in-group to retaliate against the out-group threat (McDoom 2012). In the case of an exclusionary ideology this makes intuitive sense: if an entire group or worldview is threatened, then it is logical to expect that all members of the in-group defend themselves against the out-group (e.g. Sémelin 2007). If not, such in-group members may in turn be perceived as a threat and legitimate to attack, as happened with moderate Hutus in Rwanda. This also demonstrates that the concepts of in-groups and out-groups within an exclusionary ideology are fluid. Thus, the understanding of who is ‘us’ and who is ‘them’ can change over time, which should be reflected in discourses and the behaviour of armed groups. When members of out-groups are seen as legitimate targets because they are perceived as a threat, in-group members who are also perceived as threats should be treated accordingly to further protect the in-group. Thus, the out-group may expand depending on conflict developments.

An important point warrants emphasis. It would be impossible to argue that every group adhering to an exclusionary ideology automatically uses violence or initiates a civil conflict. Instead, the thesis argues that once an armed group has decided to engage in a violent civil conflict, an expanded understanding of who constitutes a legitimate target (beyond the military, for instance) should be associated with a higher level of violence against civilians. Therefore, it needs to be stressed that the theory is conditional upon an armed group actually deciding to engage in conflict.

3.3 Causal Mechanism and Hypothesis
In summary, the causal mechanism in this thesis runs as follows:

Revolutionary armed groups want to transform society and reform its social, political and/or economic relations. Exclusionary groups thereby single out societal groups they deem a threat to the achievement of their goals, which are then considered legitimate targets to attack. Through more extensive threat perceptions, exclusionary groups have a more expansive understanding than inclusionary groups of who constitute legitimate targets. In the context of a violent civil conflict, more exclusionary groups should therefore display higher levels of violence against civilians, specifically out-groups, than armed groups who are more inclusionary.

From this causal story, the following hypothesis is drawn and will be used in the analytical section:

**H1:** A revolutionary armed group which is more exclusionary should relatively perpetrate more violence against civilians, specifically out-groups, than a more inclusionary group
4. Research Design

This thesis aims to expand current theories on civilian targeting and contribute to the knowledge on the interplay between ideologies and violence against civilians. The proposed distinction between inclusionary and exclusionary ideologies cannot easily be measured quantitatively. However, a qualitative case study approach allows the testing of the proposed theoretical mechanism in more detail to see if its explanation holds across cases. Although this means that external validity will be more difficult to establish than internal validity, the case study approach nonetheless provides researchers with a way to generalize findings beyond the actual studied cases (see Gerring 2007). It can more accurately specify the causal mechanism connecting exclusionary ideologies to violence against civilians and thereby offer insights which can be valuable to other cases. The rest of the section explicates the methods of SFC and process tracing, after which the variables are operationalized and the scope and limitations of the research are discussed.

4.1 Structured Focused Comparison and Process Tracing

According to Powner (2015) the method of SFC basically entails asking the same questions in all the cases the research has selected. By structuring the questions during the data collection, comparison between the cases is made “systematic” and “consistent” (ibid. p. 129). It allows for approaching both cases in the same way, which should minimize the prioritising of certain aspects in one case while ignoring them in another. This ensures a more comprehensive and efficient between-case analysis. Moreover, by focusing on just those questions and answers, the thesis is limited to discussing those aspects which facilitate an answer to the research question. It can thereby more clearly focus on ideological commitments, violence against civilians, and the interplay between them. It helps to organize and structure both the research design and the analytical section which should make it easier to follow and find emerging patterns between and within cases. Therefore, the independent and dependent variable are operationalized according to several questions to be asked during data collection and analysis.

Nonetheless, while SFC is both systematic and consistent to compare between cases, the thesis also aims to study the proposed theoretical mechanism in-depth within the cases. Because process tracing can more accurately uncover how causal mechanisms work within a case compared to SFC (e.g. Powner 2015), this method will also be employed in the thesis. Process tracing allows researchers to trace developments and changes over time, and detect how different variables interact with each other. Hence, combining the approach of SFC with process tracing leads to a more complete analysis as to what extent specific ideological commitments influence the use of violence by armed groups. In other words, while SFC provides a systematic and consistent framework for analysing the proposed relationship between cases (Powner 2015), process tracing
adds to that a more in-depth analysis *within* cases. Moreover, process tracing helps to better control for other variables such as military capabilities of an armed group, and uncover other potential confounding variables.

4.2 Operationalization of Variables
The main independent variable this thesis examines can be described as ‘armed group exclusionary ideology’, while ‘violence against civilians’ is the main dependent variable.

4.2.1 Ideological Commitments
To trace ideological commitments the thesis chiefly uses the method of content analysis. It is a technique designed to analyse written and verbal communication in order to infer their messages, or to infer “attitudes, views, and interests” from a communicator (Drisko and Maschi 2015, p. 2). Often, armed group ideologies vary from group to group even when they seemingly have the same goals (Warner & Thaler 2017). Discourses reflect how (groups of) people view themselves and others, while also indicating their understanding of the social world and the inherent power relations therein (Winther and Philips 2002). These power relations might be especially important within revolutionary ideologies, as they usually reveal how an ideal world should function and which groups are designated in-group or out-group. Therefore, the thesis will look at discourses of armed groups to examine the latter’s ideological commitments.

The method enables the tracing of ideological commitments across revolutionary armed groups and determine their inclusionary or exclusionary content following the theoretical framework. In the table below, questions for the SFC are outlined, as well as their indicators. The questions are based on the theoretical chapter and relate to what the armed group proclaims it wants to achieve, whether it addresses specific in-groups or out-groups, and whether out-groups are implicitly or explicitly demeaned in discourses. The prevalence and form of these ideas in the discourse indicate the exclusionary or inclusionary content of the ideology.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are the stated goals of the armed group?</td>
<td>Ideological goals and desires for society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) In which manner do they mention they would achieve them?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) To what extent is this connected to a specific in-group?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do armed groups refer to specific ethnic, religious, or political ideological elements in their own discourses?</td>
<td>Specific ideological commitments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. On whose behalf does the armed group claim to fight?  
   a) Does the armed group associate itself with and address specific societal groups in their communication?  
   b) Do they identify themselves with an overarching in-group?  
   c) To what extent do they recruit from specific communal groups?

   Identification of the in-group
   Ideological goals/desires for ideal society

4. Against whom or what does the armed group claim to fight?  
   a) Are other ethnic, political or religious worldviews in any way denigrated?  
   b) Which (societal) groups are singled out negatively?

   Identification of the out-group(s)
   Demeaning of out-groups or worldviews

5. Do the discourses/narratives mention any specific perception of fear or hate towards other worldviews or societal groups, and why?

   Inclusionary vs. exclusionary content
   Uncovering threat perceptions

Table 2: questions to guide data collection and analysis of ideological commitments

4.2.2 Violence against Civilians
To trace the use of violence against civilians, the thesis employs a process tracing method (see above) specifically focused on civilian targeting. However, the questions below deliberately leave room for alternative explanations of the use of violence as mentioned in the literature review, such as variance in rebel capabilities. The questions are designed to capture as many aspects of the violence as could be relevant to the research question, such as targets, places and timing of attacks.

It should again be emphasized that the thesis focuses on exclusive attacks on civilians, thereby not incorporating civilians which have died in the course of state-based violence. Whereas the first four questions chiefly look into the patterns of violence of armed groups, it is the last question in particular which looks into whether these patterns support the causal mechanism put forward in the thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. *Who* are targeted i.e. who are the victims of the armed group attacks?  
   a) What societal/communal group do targets belong to?  
   1. Specific communal characteristics of victims |
| 2. *Where* do groups attack?  
   a) Do places of attack signify specific communal characteristics associated with the out-group, or are they situated in communal areas?  
   1. Specific communal characteristics of places of attack |
| 3. *What* forms of violence are used?  
   a) How and to what extent is lethal violence used?  
   1. Differences in the use of violence against distinct groups |

6 See UCDP definitions.
7 See Gutierrez Sanin and Wood (2017).
b) How and to what extent is non-lethal violence used?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. <strong>When</strong> do armed groups attack?</th>
<th>Use of violence as response to battlefield developments or independent of them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Do armed groups mainly use violence before, during or after controlling a territory?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>How</strong> is the use of violence justified, if at all?</td>
<td>Justifying violence against specified out-groups Contrasting legitimizing or rationalizing of attacks against different groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Who are considered legitimate targets?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) How are attacks rationalized afterwards?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: questions to guide data collection and analysis of violence against civilians

4.3 Case Selection

The classification of an armed group as inclusionary or exclusionary requires extensive analysis of its discourses. Moreover, the thesis specifically aims to examine whether differences between inclusionary or exclusionary content of armed group ideologies is related to variation in the use of violence against civilians. Therefore, selecting on ideological commitments of armed groups would prove extremely difficult as it would have to be apparent beforehand to what extent armed groups are inclusionary or exclusionary. For these reasons, case-selection is based on differences in the dependent variable, namely the level of violence against civilians. The population of cases can be described as ‘revolutionary armed groups engaged in civil conflict’.

The case selection initially focused on African armed groups since that continent “has experienced a disproportionately large number of armed conflicts” (Williams 2017). For this, a matrix of 54 African ideological insurgent groups active from 2004-2013 was used (Warner and Thaler 2016). Groups with fewer than three conflict-years were excluded, to allow for sufficient data collection. From the groups that were left (approximately seventeen), sources of incompatibility were compared to their use of violence according to UCDP data. Selecting different armed groups in the same conflict would be ideal, because that could control for confounding variables. However, due to difficulty untangling the ideologies and use of violence of armed groups in one conflict, as well as data constraints regarding smaller armed groups, it was decided to choose two armed groups engaged in different conflicts instead. This meant that the armed groups had to be as similar as possible on other variables such as rebel capacities, however.

For these reasons, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab\(^8\) were selected, following the most-likely case design. According to UCDP data, while both armed groups have engaged in state-based as well as one-sided violence, their use across both categories significantly differs, with Al-Shabaab

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\(^8\) Several spellings circulate of this armed group. I will use Al-Shabaab following the UCDP website, unless using a direct quote from another source.
engaged in one-sided violence far less than Boko Haram. Moreover, while both could be characterised as jihadist armed groups, their intentions for society supposedly differ meaning that their respective ideological commitments might show variation too. Here, the fact that Nigeria is more ethnically and religiously diverse than Somalia might easily lead to variation in ideological goals (Harvard Africa Map 2018a; ibid. 2018b). Moreover, both groups emerged in a dysfunctional state and security context (Fund for Peace), are embroiled in a conflict with their governments, and both have controlled significant parts of their countries while also losing territory (Foucher 2016; CEP Al-Shabab). Moreover, because these groups are both high-profile, (translated) data should be more available than information about groups such as Ansar Dine for instance. Lastly, although Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab fighters have previously trained together the armed groups have not actually worked together, which could have confounded the analysis.

4.4 Choice of Time-Period
For the use of violence against civilians, the start of a violent civil conflict by the armed groups is used as the reference point. Although Boko Haram was established before 2009, that year is considered the actual start of the violent conflict with the government (UCDP 2018). For Al-Shabaab, despite the fact that here too the armed group had previously been established, the reference point is put at 2006 (ibid.). To trace ideological commitments, previous years are included as well since it is not unlikely that the leaders of Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab have disseminated ideological messages before engaging in actual violent conflict. Analysis of both armed groups ends in December 2014, since Boko Haram pledged itself to the Islamic State in March 2015 (ibid.) which potentially confounds both ideology and the use of civilians. Secondly, this will allow for databases and reports not (yet) including later years in their data.

4.5 Sources, Constraints & Limitations of the Research
To examine discourses, the thesis draws on a variety of sources. Examples include public statements of leaders and/or members, as well as social media of the armed group (see Ugarriza 2009). These may be found in academic research, public archives, newspapers, as well as reports by NGOs or other organizations. Next, to examine the use of violence against civilians the thesis mainly relies on the UCDP, which is a well-known and well-researched database. Country reports from humanitarian organizations such as Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch usually discuss violence against civilians. Furthermore, such information might be found in government reports, newspaper articles, as well as academic articles or books.

Several problems may arise with these sources. First, it is not always clear who is an authority within an armed group and who has the ‘right’ to communicate on behalf of it (Zenn 2013). Secondly, governments as well as armed groups have an interest in either understating or
overstating the use of violence during civil conflicts (Kalyvas 2014). Related to this, there may be a lack of information on violence against civilians, its perpetrators, as well as forms and justifications for it. Third, while armed groups often make use of their own language in their communication, limited personal capacities force me to rely on sources which have been published or translated in English. These problems all potentially limit the validity and/or reliability of sources as knowledge may be lost in translation or simply not always available. To mitigate these problems, source triangulation is employed as much as possible whereby the research is based on different sources as are appropriate and available. Moreover, for the discourses I will primarily limit myself to analysing statements made by known leaders of the armed group.

In addition to that, as the thesis concerns itself with ideological commitments and the use of violence, this invites source issues such as principal-agent problems. Should discourses of armed groups be taken at face value although groups have incentives to omit the truth? Who are in charge and to what extent do leaders have a grip on group combatants? These questions are essential to keep in mind throughout data collection and analysis. Nevertheless, “someone does not have to be a card-carrying member of an explicitly ideological movement for ideology to influence their behaviour” (Leader Maynard 2014, p. 826). Ideology can motivate, legitimize and rationalize violence against civilians even if members do not fully ascribe to it (ibid.). For these reasons, as with the aforementioned problems, triangulation of sources will be used to provide as clear a picture as possible.
5. Boko Haram
The conflict between Boko Haram and the Nigerian government is rooted in economic as well as political and religious challenges. For example, as other African states, Nigeria has long suffered from economic problems such as corruption, high unemployment and an unequal distribution of economic welfare leading to feelings of discontent and resentment in society (Blanchard 2016). The predominantly Christian south economically fares better than the predominantly Islamic north, although conflicts have usually followed ethnic rather than religious lines (Campbell 2011). Moreover, Nigeria has had a history of religious militancy dating back to at least the beginning of the 19th century, including movements in the latter half of the 20th century which argued against the influence of Western thought on Nigerian society (Agbiboa 2013). In fact, sharia law was established in a few northern states around 1999 but this was sometimes met with fierce resistance from Christian minorities (ibid.).

In this restless context, Boko Haram was established in 2002 by then-leader Mohammed Yusuf, initially rallying against secularism and elite corruption, as well as propagating a strict interpretation of Islam (Amnesty International). The movement was officially called Jama'atu Ahlis-Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad, which means ‘People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad’ in Arabic (UCDP 2018). However, the armed group became more famously known as Boko Haram, often translated as ‘Western education is forbidden’ according to the local Hausa language (ibid.). From 2002 to 2009, the movement established a mosque and a school where children of poor families were sent to, meanwhile aiming to create an Islamic state in Northern Nigeria (BBC News 2016). The actual conflict did not truly start until a series of violent clashes with Nigerian security forces ended with the extrajudicial murder of Yusuf in July 2009, after which the movement regrouped and retaliated (Allen 2017).

5.1 Ideological Commitments
To trace ideological commitments of Boko Haram, I primarily focus on statements made by Boko Haram leaders Mohamed Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau as well as spokesmen such as Abu-Qaqa. I hereby largely follow the order as set out in the research design.

In terms of stated goals, the aim to “Islamize Nigeria” (Cook 2011, p. 15) might be the claim that is most consistently put forward by leaders and spokesmen for Boko Haram. For instance, in 2006, Yusuf mentioned in an interview that he thought that “an Islamic system of

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9 Or ‘civilization’.
10 Abubakar Shekau has been the leader of Boko Haram since the death of Mohamed Yusuf (Apard 2015). Abu-Qaqa is a known spokesman for Boko Haram and has regularly claimed attacks (Crisis Group 2014), although the name is also used as an alias. See also Mahmood (2017).
government should be established in Nigeria, and if possible all over the world, but through dialogue” (Goujon and Abubakar 2006). In a sermon given in the same year, however, he stated that “infidels must be killed” to take revenge for their dishonesty and killings of Muslims all over the world, including Iraq, Israel, and Guantanamo Bay (Apard 2015, p. 46). In the same sermon, Yusuf implies that ‘infidels’ are the people in power, as well as Christians and non-Muslims more generally. Moreover, Yusuf argued that his movement wanted to advance jihad\(^{11}\) to “put an end to democracy, to western education and western civilization” and to “return to the original state of Islam” (Zenn et al. 2013, p. 50).

Shortly after Yusuf’s death, a spokesman argued that Boko Haram should be considered “an Islamic revolution” focussed specifically on Nigeria, invoking the waging of violent jihad as the way to implement a strict version of sharia (Cook 2011, p. 14). Throughout his leadership, Shekau has multiple times referred to these goals as well as detailing ways to achieve them. In 2011 he advocated jihad in Nigeria to install Islamic governance while simultaneously rejecting all other forms of government (Agbiboa 2013). Spokesmen reiterated the desire to install a government based on Quranic teachings, asserting that Boko Haram “would keep on fighting against democracy, capitalism, socialism and whatever” because of its incompatibility with Islam (Idris 2011). Furthermore, the same statement pointed to various groups and institutions designated as legitimate targets. These include “the Nigerian government”, “its military and police”, “anybody who assists the government in perpetrating illegalities” as well as any education not based on “Islamic teachings” (ibid.).

In January 2012, Shekau mentioned that Boko Haram wanted to advance “the application of Allah’s religion” and that Christians should convert to Islam (Apard 2015, p. 56). Taking conversion a step further, in February 2014 he stated that the group was “fighting Christians wherever we meet them”, while confronting those who propagated Western education (Vanguard 2014). Likewise, in March 2014 Shekau maintained that he aimed to “[p]ut an end to all those who offend Allah”, repeatedly advocating for and legitimizing the killing of ‘infidels’ (ibid., p. 59). This is similar to a message of December 2014, where he stated that Boko Haram intended to “impose the law of Allah”, and that “[o]ur actions target those who desecrate the religion of Allah” (ibid., p. 64), thereby referring to Shia Muslims, other religious groups, and those who follow democracy. Moreover, whenever spokesmen discussed the existence of broader injustices in Nigeria such as corruption, this was often tied to the lack of having an Islamic state based on sharia law (see for

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\(^{11}\) On the one hand, jihad refers to the struggle against the Self (Malik 2016), and on the other hand it can refer to “the militant struggle to defend Islam” (Piazza 2009, p. 64). When analysing the statements of Boko Haram, it becomes clear they usually refer to the second element.
In terms of Islamic teachings, Boko Haram spokesmen frequently reference them in videos and statements. In a video published after the Chibok kidnapping, Shekau mentioned that all people have to decide whether or not to support Boko Haram (The New York Times 2014). While a specific phrase in the same statement is transcribed as ‘Salafism’ by one source (The Guardian 2014) and ‘solid footsteps’ by another (The New York Times 2014), the implications of the statement are arguably the same. It points to a desire and an attempt to bring the people of Nigeria back to the earliest sources of Islam and to imitate the lifestyle of the first Muslims. Invoking Quranic teachings, Shekau also justified kidnapping women and girls and maintained that taking slaves is allowed (CKN News 2014). Likewise, speeches were regularly interspersed with verses from the Quran or praises to Allah (e.g. Eveslage 2013; CKN News 2014; Sahara Reporters 2014b).

In terms of audience, in most of the examined statements Boko Haram spokesmen chiefly addressed Nigerians. Many of their statements were messages meant to claim responsibility for attacks within Nigeria and against Nigerian targets. Time and again, Boko Haram identified itself with “pious Muslims” and claimed to fight on behalf of them, maintaining that “[w]e will keep on protecting our brothers at whatever cost” (Idris 2011). Statements frequently addressed “my [Shekau’s] Muslim brethren” (AlJazeera 2010), “our brothers” or “our fellow Muslims” (Eveslage 2013, p. 1). Moreover, Shekau explicitly stated that “anyone that embraces Islam is my brother” (CKN News). This is also reflected in statements to claim attacks: when claiming assaults on Christian targets, for instance, spokesmen often stated Boko Haram perpetrated these on behalf of Muslims and to avenge past wrongs done to them in Nigeria (and beyond, see Sahara Reporters 2012 and further below). More broadly speaking, in a message directed at the emir of Kano in December 2014, Shekau argued that he “speak[s] in the name of religion, Allah, Islam” (Apard 2015, p. 64).

Furthermore, spokesmen frequently called upon others to join their cause: in June 2011, Boko Haram called upon Muslims clerics to “preach the truth” (Idris 2011); in February 2014, Shekau beseeched “brethren in Kano to rise up and replicate the Baga attack” (Vanguard 2014); and in May 2014 Shekau called upon his “brethren” to “stand up” and imitate Boko Haram (CKN News). Similarly, Shekau called upon “Muslims to wage war against infidels” (ibid.). Nonetheless, as Boko Haram chiefly concentrated on Nigerian society in its messages, references to other jihadist

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12 Salafism here refers to “the means to return to the pristine purity of Islam” and an aspiration to live like the “pious forefathers” of the earliest Islam (Meijer 2013, p. 4).
13 It is not entirely clear to which attack on Baga he is specifically referring here.
movements were relatively scarce. Al-Qaeda or Osama bin-Laden (allegedly supporting Boko Haram according to spokesmen) were only mentioned thrice in all of its 2012 statements (Eveslage 2013). From time to time, other jihadist conflicts were referred to, but these were usually either a forethought or an afterthought (ibid.¹⁴) making these remarks hardly central to its messages¹⁵.

In terms of recruitment, Boko Haram mostly drew members from one ethnic group called the Kanuri, which primarily lives in the north-east of Nigeria where the movement and insurgency began (Harvard Africa Map; Allen 2017). Indeed, Shekau is from that ethnic group himself (Baca 2015). There are no clear indications that Boko Haram actively recruited beyond the immediate border regions of Nigeria (Zenn et al. 2013). Nonetheless, a report on recruitment patterns by Boko Haram found that while all of the interviewees practiced Islam, only half were from the Kanuri ethnic group (Mercy Corps 2016). The report further revealed that Boko Haram relied on forced recruitment as well and that people who joined the group voluntarily mostly did so following ideological reasoning – often before the insurgency truly developed (ibid.). Next to that, Hausa appeared to be the most common language spoken in videos and other statements of Boko Haram, pointing to its focus on Nigeria’s north-east where the language is mostly spoken (Mahmood 2017).

Additionally, Boko Haram spokesmen frequently spoke in terms of ‘us versus them’. Examples of these included “they continued to capture us and kill us” (Apard 2015, p. 55); “you came to attack us and kill us” (ibid., p. 56); or dividing the world into “those who are with us or those who are against us” (Culture Custodian 2014). Who constituted ‘us’ and ‘them’ was regularly clarified. According to its messages, Boko Haram fought against several societal groups and worldviews, which were subsequently denigrated or otherwise singled out negatively. Christians, other non-believers, and those associated with ‘western education’ were repeatedly called out for their dishonesty, lies, and sinful nature (e.g. Eveslage 2013; Apard 2015; Mahmood 2017). Christians were regularly accused of cheating and killing Muslims and Shekau even denounced them for eating Muslim’s flesh (Sahara Reporters 2012). In that same message, he also singled out Muslims who went against “the tenets of the Quran” and used religion as a disguise. In July 2011, a spokesman argued that “[i]f there are people who profess Islam and do not partake in government or Western education, their blood and wealth are sacred unless otherwise” (Mahmood 2017, p. 19). Likewise, Nigeria’s security forces were regularly confronted with threats because they were associated with the government and thereby helped to persecute Boko Haram members. Threats

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¹⁴ An exception is a statement by Shekau from November 2012 in which he exclusively focuses on the global jihad and conflicts such as the ones in Libya and Pakistan.

¹⁵ See Mahmood (2017) for a more quantitative analysis of Boko Haram statements.
included warnings that “they shall be our next target” (Mshelizza 2011); “[w]e only kill soldiers, police and other security agencies” (Eveslage 2013, p. 6); and “[w]e will continue to hunt for government officials” (ibid., p. 15).

From these statements, it can be inferred that Boko Haram regarded every non-Muslim as a legitimate target (i.e. their blood is not sacred), but also those it deemed collaborators with the government. In January 2012, Abu-Qaqa went even further and insisted that “[e]ven if you are a Muslim and you don’t abide by sharia, we will kill you” (Mark 2012). This indicates that ‘who is sacred’, and therefore not a legitimate target, were those people who lived according to the strict interpretation of sharia law according to Boko Haram. Indeed, Shekau denied in April 2012 that Boko Haram targeted innocent people, and argued instead that every person the group killed had offended Allah in one way or the other and therefore deserved to die (Eveslage 2013, p. 10). In addition, Shekau stated in March 2014 that “we’ll fight all those who do not convert because they are our enemies” (Apard 2015, p. 60).

As with jihadist conflicts elsewhere, Western countries or figures were occasionally addressed but those references are marginal when compared with references to Nigerian people, institutions and events. In a review of statements of 2012 ‘America’ is mentioned seven times, while ‘Bush’ is mentioned only once and Obama’s name is mentioned five times (Eveslage 2013). Four of these references are made in the same sentence. This can be compared with the eighteen times that Christians are directly called out in addition to the dozens of times that Boko Haram indirectly references Christianity using ‘you’ or ‘they’ (ibid.). When tracing the declarations of Boko Haram, it seems that (members of) the Nigerian government or its security forces constitute one of the most challenged out-groups. However, this is partly due to the fact that Christians or so-called false Muslims are considered part of the government or its agencies.

In conclusion, Boko Haram can be classified as a revolutionary armed group committed to an extreme exclusionary ideology, aiming to establish its strict understanding of sharia first and foremost in the north-east of Nigeria and afterwards throughout the rest of the country. It proclaims a mostly localised message focused on Nigerian society and the wish to purify it from non-Islamic elements. The statements by Boko Haram spokesmen are interspersed with threat and hate perceptions towards other worldviews or specific societal groups. The group regularly threatens to kill members of proclaimed out-groups for the apparent injustices they commit to the extent that it can be considered a central tenet of its messaging (e.g. Mahmood 2017). Proclaimed membership of the in-group varies but is generally extremely limited, while several out-groups are frequently denounced and denigrated. Out-groups specifically include the Nigerian government and any of its agencies (with a distinct focus on security forces); members of other religious groups
such as Christians; Muslims who disagree with their message or tactics; and so-called ‘Western’ institutions including a secular educational system.

5.2 Use of Violence

The use of violence by Boko Haram is varied, both lethal and non-lethal, and with devastating consequences for the areas of attack. Violence occurs alongside battles with armed forces, involve the use of terrorist tactics, as well as the targeting of civilian positions such as schools or villages. According to the UCDP (2018), a total number of 15,147 people had died in the conflict between the Nigerian government and Boko Haram from 2009 to the end of 2014. Of those, 6595 people died as a result of what is characterised as one-sided violence against civilians (ibid.), which amounts to 43.5% in total. Non-lethal violence varies considerably and includes kidnappings and burnings.

Because space is limited and to provide more clarity and detail, this section is restricted to reviewing twenty major attacks from Boko Haram in the chosen time period. They are outlined and further justified in Appendix 1. The attacks are primarily traced chronologically, and their characteristics are presented according to the questions formulated in the research design.

After staging a prison break in September 2010 (CNN 2018), the first major attacks were on Christmas Eve 2010 in Jos and Maiduguri, whereby at least 85 people were killed and dozens were wounded (CEP Boko; UCDP 2018). In Jos, a city where the population is religiously mixed, a shopping market was attacked as well as a Christian and Muslim area; while in Maiduguri, at least two churches were targeted (Associated Press 2010). It might be inferred that the victims of attacks included Christians as well as Muslims, and that the timing of the attacks was deliberately chosen to coincide with an important Christian holiday. Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the attacks in a message, stating they were meant to avenge previous killings of Muslims, specifically singling out “disbelievers and their allies and all those who help them” as justified targets (AlJazeera 2010).

In August 2011, a UN compound in Abuja was attacked whereby at least 25 people were killed and dozens were wounded (CEP Boko; Simonelli et al. 2014). Together with the bombings in Jos the previous year, this attack on Abuja represented one of the first operations outside Borno state. Victims were chiefly Nigerian employees of the UN, and Abu-Qaqa argued that Boko Haram had deliberately targeted the UN in retaliation for the Nigerian government detaining members of the group (Nossiter 2011; Mshelizza 2011). Hence, it might be argued that the UN compound was not a randomly chosen target: it was a highly visible international institution, associated with the government as well as the USA (Nossiter 2011).

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16 Limitations due to this choice will be discussed in chapter seven.
Likewise, it could be argued that the bombings of churches in Madalla during Christmas 2011 (CEP *Boko*, Simonelli et al. 2014) and in Kaduna during Easter 2012 (ibid.) were not randomly executed either. The places were clearly and predominantly Christian, although more Muslims than Christians died in the attack in Kaduna outside the church (Zenn 2013). Moreover, both times the bombings coincided with important Christian holidays, when it might be expected that many believers will go to church. Indeed, as many as 37 people were killed in the assault in Madalla while no less than 41 were killed in Kaduna (UCDP 2018) and dozens more were wounded. Regarding Madalla, Abu-Qaqa argued that the attack was a “retaliation” for previous attacks on Muslims in and around Jos (Abbah and Idris 2012). And although the attack on Easter had not been directly claimed by Boko Haram, the attacks followed indirect threats uttered in January 2012 by Shekau himself. He stated that “[w]e are also against Christians”, because they “killed many of our Muslim brothers; they have destroyed our mosques” (Apard 2015, p. 55). Shekau expressly referred to Kaduna, maintained that Boko Haram did Allah’s work, and stated that “nothing you [President Goodluck Jonathan] do matters” (ibid.).

Overall in 2012, the number of assaults by Boko Haram as well the total amount of victims rose slightly compared to 2010 and 2011 (UCDP 2018). On 20 February 2012, there was a major attack on a market in Maiduguri, resulting in 21 deaths (ibid.). Abu-Qaqa justified the attack stating that market vendors had assisted “security operatives” to arrest a suspected member of Boko Haram (Eveslage 2013, p. 8). He maintained that “whoever plans to do same should prepare to pay the price” (ibid.). A few weeks earlier, such reprisals had been threatened when Shekau warned that “[a]nyone who is instrumental to the arrest of our members is assured that their own is coming” (ibid., p. 3). Next, two months after the church bombings during Easter, Kaduna churches and Christians were again targeted, leaving at least 21 people dead. Once again Boko Haram reiterated the same message, invoking former assaults against Muslims or Islam to legitimize the attack against the churches (and Christians in general, see Sahara Reporters 2012). Furthermore, only a week before, Abu-Qaqa stated that Boko Haram would continue to attack churches and “prove the Nigerian security wrong” as well as “debunk[ing] their claim that we have been weakened by the military crackdown” (Eveslage 2013, p. 14).

While attacking churches is definitely a part of the pattern of violence of Boko Haram, other institutions were also frequently selected. Shekau repeatedly threatened to bomb educational institutions, allegedly in retaliation for the destruction of Islamic institutions (Mark 2012; Eveslage 2013). Proving these were not idle threats, two primary schools were burned in Damataru in September 2012 together with attacks on other governmental buildings and communication masts, killing approximately fifteen people (Simonelli et al. 2014). The group again claimed responsibility
(Eveslage 2013). Similarly, a month later, Boko Haram burned down an Islamic school as well as primary schools and governmental buildings in Potiskum, killing around eighteen people (Abubakar 2012; Simonelli et al. 2014). These places were clearly associated with the Nigerian government and the educational system, although it could not be verified whether the victims were members of specific societal groups.

In 2013, the number of fatalities due to one-sided violence perpetrated by Boko Haram doubled compared to 2012 (UCDP 2018), which coincided with the military putting more pressure on the armed group in and around Maiduguri (BBC News 2013a). At least three major attacks occurred this year – two of which were targeted at government-owned schools. The first occurred in July 2013 at a school in Mamudo, resulting in 42 deaths of which many were students (Simonelli et al. 2014). Shekau supported the assault and contended that “[t]eachers who teach western education” were legitimate targets because such education was a “plot against Islam” (Mark 2013). In a second major attack in September 2013, an agricultural school in Gujba was burned down and survivors attacked by gunmen, approximately killing 65 people (CEP Boko; BBC News 2013b). According to a witness, most of the students at the school were Muslims (Adamu and Faul 2013). The third major attack occurred when Boko Haram members killed around 143 people near Benisheik while posing as military forces (Genocide Watch 2016; Simonelli et al. 2014). Afterwards, Shekau taunted the army and justified the attack, contending that the victims were part of a civilian militant group aiding the government (Idris and Mutum 2013). This accusation was only partly true (Associated Press 2013).

Of the 6595 people who were killed in one-sided violence by Boko Haram from 2009 to 2014, more than 5000 died during 2014 alone (UCDP 2018). In January a market was attacked in Kawuri after which it was burned down, resulting in 52 deaths (Genocide Watch 2016; CBC 2014). A month later 54 people in Konduga were killed when Boko Haram attacked and burned the town (Genocide Watch 2016; UCDP 2018). It was unclear which groups or places were targeted, but severely damaged buildings included many houses as well as a mosque (Elkaim 2014). In the midst of April, Boko Haram attacked Abuja, bombing a bus station and killing 75 people (CEP Boko). A few weeks before, Shekau had threatened to attack the city, warning that “[w]e always do what we say” (Apard 2015, p. 62). In a video statement, Shekau derided the bombing as a “tiny incident” and maintained it was in response to the killing of Muslims in Nigeria and in other countries (Audu 2014). In addition, he claimed responsibility for “every other recent attacks [sic]” (ibid.), although he did not clarify whether that also includes the attacks on Kawuri and Konduga. Nonetheless, it does again reveal that Boko Haram legitimised and rationalised violence by invoking past wrongs committed against Muslims.
In April 2014, Boko Haram carried out one of its most famous attacks, namely the abduction of hundreds of girls from a school in Chibok (Genocide Watch 2016; CEP Boko). The town is a predominantly Christian community (BBC News 2014a). Such kidnappings were threatened in a video statement by Shekau a few weeks before, when he asserted that girls should stay home, and that “we will start taking women away and sell in the market” (CultureCustodian 2014). Shekau reiterated this in a video later in May showing some of the abducted girls and legitimizing the selling and killing of so-called “infidels” (CKN News). Amnesty International reported that many of the girls were sexually abused, married to fighters, or utilised as suicide bombers (2015). While this kidnapping received worldwide attention, the abduction of hundreds of women and children in Damasak in November of the same year drew “far less public attention” (HRW 2016). According to an eye-witness in Damasak, boys were separated from girls in a public school, and women were separated from their children (ibid.). As of March 2017, many of those taken from Chibok and Damasak have not returned (Segun 2017).

From May until August 2014, Nigeria suffered a series of large-scale attacks across the country, though most attacks were in states in the north-east (Genocide Watch 2016; CEP Boko). Assaults on towns such as Gamboru Ngala and Gwoza resulted in more than a thousand deaths with many more fatalities besides (ibid.; UCDP 2018). Although civilians were apparently targeted indiscriminately, eye witnesses reported that Boko Haram specifically went after people suspected to collaborate with the government or security forces (Amnesty International 2015). Moreover, they reported that while women and children were often spared, men were generally killed (ibid.). Calling the assault in Gwoza a “big victory” and subsequently claiming responsibility for the series of attacks in the previous weeks, Shekau maintained Gwoza was now “part of our Islamic Caliphate” (Sahara Reporters 2014a). He added that “Allah commands us to rule Gwoza by Islamic law”, and that the group would endeavour to capture more territory in pursuit of its caliphate (ibid.). Hence, this suggests that the violence perpetrated in these months should be seen in light of this declaration. The attacks occurred during a time when Boko Haram was advancing rapidly across the north-east of Nigeria, establishing control over increasingly more territory (Amnesty International 2015). Incidentally, in 2014 the number of fatalities due to one-sided violence for the first time exceeded the number of fatalities due to state-based violence (UCDP 2018).

Towards the end of 2014, Boko Haram continued to carry out attacks. In November, group members attacked a government-owned school in Potiskum, using a suicide bomber disguised as a student (CEP Boko). At least 49 people were killed, of whom the majority were students (ibid.; UCDP 2018). According to a report by HRW (2016), the attack followed repeated threats made by Boko Haram directed against the school through letters. Lastly, at the end of November, a mosque
in Kano was bombed whereby no fewer than 91 people were killed and 135 wounded (CEP \textit{Boko}, UCDP 2018). The mosque was situated in an area where the emir of the city lived, who was “a vocal critic of Boko Haram” (Reuters 2014). Shekau directly addressed the emir in a video a few weeks later, mocking him, denouncing his faith and again legitimizing attacks on those “who desecrate the religion of Allah”. (Apard 2015, p. 64).

5.3 Within-case analysis
This section presents a short within-case analysis in view of the previously proposed causal mechanism. Recall that exclusionary groups would relatively use more violence against civilians (especially out-groups) than inclusionary groups because they have a more extensive understanding of who constitutes a legitimate target or not. Hence, to connect the independent variable to the dependent variable I looked for evidence of specific targeting based on specific group characteristics in the ideology as well as the use of violence.

Both in its ideological commitments and the use of violence against civilians, Boko Haram tends to target people and institutions based on their group characteristics. In its messaging, the group regularly separates distinct in-groups (‘us’, most notably Muslims who adhere to sharia law) from out-groups (‘them’, most notably non-Muslims and those associated with the government). Christianity and western education are seen as distinct threats to the existence of Islam, and are subsequently denigrated to the extent that these aspects can be viewed as the two central tenets of its messaging. Hence, Boko Haram’s understanding of who constitutes a legitimate target is incredibly extensive, reflecting its highly exclusionary nature. Throughout the conflict Boko Haram tended to increasingly restrict membership of the in-group, but there was not enough data to consider it a noticeable development.

In its attacks, the same pattern can be found – albeit to a lesser extent. In particular during the first three to four years of the conflict, attacks were mostly sporadically carried out, and mainly targeted against previously delineated out-groups or their institutions. Examples include the numerous attacks on churches, such as in Jos, Kaduna and Madalla, but also the attacks on schools. Nonetheless, members from the in-group were also targeted during this time, and Boko Haram usually acknowledged it attacked in-group civilians, claiming they were government supporters. An example is the deadly attack on the market in Maiduguri. In 2014, the number of fatalities from one-sided violence against civilians rose exponentially and for the first time exceeded the number of fatalities due to state-based violence. Violence also became more indiscriminate than before, with many of the victims belonging to the group on whose behalf Boko Haram regularly claims to fight, namely Nigerian Muslims. Examples of these include the series of attacks in May and June of 2014, when thousands of people across Nigeria were killed, purportedly in the quest to capture
Thus, it can be argued that the ideology of Boko Haram is highly exclusionary in nature and consistently purveys who it considers legitimate targets or not. Moreover, violence against civilians in the first three to four years of the conflict broadly follows the pattern of legitimate targeting, while 2014 witnessed an increase in more indiscriminate targeting. Hence, on the surface it looks as if the causal mechanism holds relatively well at first while losing explanatory value for 2013 and 2014. To delve more deeply into the relation between ideology and the use of violence, I looked into justifications and rationalizations of the violence. Here, Boko Haram persistently justifies and rationalizes violence using its own ideological commitments.

When claiming responsibility for attacks, spokesmen generally cast Muslims as a victimized group while the Nigerian government, its supporters, and Christians are generally cast as perpetrators of heinous crimes. It deems its attacks a means of self-defence on behalf of Nigerian Muslims and constantly uses specific group characteristics of victims and their institutions to justify violence against them. Examples of these include its accounts of attacks on churches, as well as the UN compound and the countless attacks on schools. Even in 2014, such rationalisations frequently occurred, although attacks were so commonplace and indiscriminate that religious or other communal characteristics of victims could often not be verified. Connected to this is the fact that the group acknowledged that it attacked civilian in-group members as well, claiming they supported the government. This forces me to be cautious about to what extent the causal mechanism holds in the case of Boko Haram. In conclusion, therefore, the causal mechanism finds only limited support in the case of Boko Haram.
6. Al-Shabaab
Somalia has consistently been present in the top ten of the Failed States Index, topping the list for six consecutive years from 2008 until 2013 (Fund for Peace website). Since a civil war started in Somalia in 1991 after the fall of the military regime, the country has not had an effective government able to provide its people with security and economic development (Agbiboa 2015). Instead, militias, clans and other movements have fought against each other to establish official authority, whereby Al-Shabaab (i.e. ‘the Youth’\(^{17}\)) has merely been one of many, albeit perhaps the strongest one (Felter, Masters and Sergie 2018). The group, committed to the idea of an Islamic caliphate in East Africa, emerged in the late 1990s as a movement connected to a loose system of local Islamic courts (Blanchard 2013). Nonetheless, in 2004 a transitional government backed by the international community was inaugurated in Nairobi, consisting of members of the largest Somali clans (Agbiboa 2015).

While this was supposedly meant as a new beginning for the Somali people, the struggle did not end then and there. While the transitional government struggled to establish sovereignty, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) took control over Mogadishu with the help of Al-Shabaab members in June 2006 (ibid.). A US-backed Ethiopian intervention subsequently ousted the ICU, after which Al-Shabaab retreated to regroup (Felter, Masters and Sergie 2018). Some researchers have speculated that it was precisely this intervention which ramped up support for Al-Shabaab amongst the Somali people and which enabled the group to grow (ibid.; Wise 2011). Be that as it may, it is clear that Al-Shabaab managed to grow into a full-fledged insurgent actor from 2008 onwards, which as of May 2018 has not been defeated (UCDP 2018).

6.1 Ideological Commitments
To trace the ideological commitments of Al-Shabaab, I primarily look at statements sent directly by al-Katā‘ib Media or given by known leaders and spokesmen\(^{18}\). I will largely follow the order as set out in the research design.

In terms of stated goals, Al-Shabaab generally put forth consistent messages. In May 2008, Godane proclaimed that the group should be viewed as part of the global jihadist movement, while aiming to follow Mohammed’s footsteps and establish sharia (Biyokulule 2008b). Godane repeated this a few weeks later when he declared that the group strove to establish an Islamic state in Somalia

\(^{17}\) The movement is officially called Harakat al-Shabaab Mujahideen, which is translated as ‘Mujahideen Youth Movement’ (UCDP 2018).

\(^{18}\) Al-Katā‘ib Media is the official media outlet of Al-Shabaab, while known leaders and/or spokesmen include Ahmed Abdi Godane (former emir, also known as Abu Zubayr); Mukhtar Robow (former leader); Ali Mohamed Rage (a.k.a Ali Dhere, well-known spokesman); and Abulaziz Abu Muscab (military spokesman). See CEP (Al-Shabab).
while it formed “part of the vanguard of the global jihad” (thereby most likely referring to Al-Qaeda, see Biyokulele 2008c). In February 2010 this was reiterated when Al-Shabaab declared that it aimed to link its jihad to the one carried out by Al-Qaeda (Childress 2010). Moreover, in an interview Ali Dhere asserted that the conflict in Somalia was an ideological one rather than based on tribal issues, that the group wanted to unite Somalia in a Quran-based state, and that it aimed to “eradicate our crusader enemies” (Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF) 2012a, p. 3).

In addition, Ali Dhere maintained that the conflict was “the only choice” for Al-Shabaab, and that there could not be any other outcome besides a victory over the ‘apostates’ (i.e. ‘disbelievers’, ibid., p. 6). In 2013, when asked what Al-Shabaab’s objectives were, Ali Dhere replied that the group wanted to free Somalia, “govern our people under Islamic law”, and for “foreign forces” to leave Somalia (Channel 4 News 2013). Through jihad, Al-Shabaab claimed, it wanted to establish sharia throughout the world (Jihadology.net 2013g; Jihadology.net 2013h). Furthermore, the group stated that its “objective is to bring back Islam to life” and to “remove the tyrannical and parasitical rulers of the Muslim world”, suggesting the rulers were puppets of the West (Jihadology.net 2013g). Lastly, group spokesmen commonly claimed Al-Shabaab fought against any presence or influence of Western or Crusader countries in Somalia (e.g. Biyokulule 2008b; Jihadology.net 2012i; ibid. 2013e).

As might be expected, in news reports and video statements frequent references are made to Quranic verses or Islamic prayers (e.g. Jihadology.net 2012g; ibid. 2012v). In 2008, for instance, Robow expressed that the group engaged in jihad because it was a duty set out by Allah in the Quran (Biyokulule 2008a). Furthermore, Al-Shabaab spokesmen and video messages regularly invoked Islamic teachings or historical events. In a video message of October 2013, Al-Shabaab pointed to the “wide gap between the gloomy darkness” of the contemporary ummah and the “glories of the forefathers” (Jihadology.net 2013h) and indicated that Al-Shabaab was fighting to restore the former glory of Islam. In an interview with the GIMF, Al-Shabaab propagated “jihad against the polytheists with our wealth, souls and tongues”, following a hadith by the prophet Mohammed (2012a, p. 2-3). Politically, Al-Shabaab maintained that it strove for self-determination for the people in Somalia (Channel 4 News 2013), and to establish a society according to Islamic norms and values (Jihadology.net 2011b; ibid. 2012i).

Time and again, Al-Shabaab claimed to fight on behalf of the people of Somalia in general (e.g. Biyokulule 2008a; ibid. 2008b; Jihadology.net 2011i; ibid. 2012s) as well as the “Muslims of Somalia” (e.g. Biyokulule 2008c; Jihadology.net 2011e; ibid. 2011i). In a joint statement with Al-

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19 I.e. the community of Muslims.
Qaeda, spokesmen addressed “brothers and sisters in Somalia” and made references to the wider Islamic ummah all over the world, in particular those who propagated jihad (ibid.). Moreover, Ali Dhere claimed that Al-Shabaab fought on behalf of the “Muslims who live in Mogadishu” so that they would be “freed from the enemy” (AlJazeera English 2014). Broader than that, Ali Mohamed Rage maintained that Muslims in general were the group Al-Shabaab was “fighting for”; that the group would not touch them; and that Al-Shabaab considered it its “duty to take revenge” for crimes committed against Muslims (AlJazeera 2014c).

Additionally, (video) statements regularly discussed conflicts all over the world such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or the massacre in Bosnia Herzegovina (e.g. Biyokulule 2008b; Jihadology.net 2013g). Al-Shabaab usually invoked these images to explain why it waged jihad, particularly referring to crimes committed by the USA and the broader Western world. This indicates that Al-Shabaab identified itself with the worldwide ummah rather than merely the Somali Muslims (e.g. Jihadology.net 2013d). Indeed, it tended to directly speak to or call upon its “brothers and sisters” all over the world to leave their country and “make hijra” i.e. move to a country where Islam would reign (ibid.; ibid. 2013g). Broader than that, Al-Shabaab “pledged to protect the religion of Allah” as well as “the dignity and wealth of the Muslims” (ibid. 2011b). Hence, while the group certainly fought first and foremost on behalf of the Somali people, it identified itself with the wider ummah and occasionally called upon them to join Al-Shabaab (e.g. Biyokulule 2008b; Jihadology.net 2013d).

In terms of recruitment, Al-Shabaab seemed to mainly recruit its fighters from Muslims in Somalia and the countries around it but the group also had quite a few Western foreigners within their ranks (Ani and Ojakorotu 2017). For example, according to hearings conducted by the USA government in 2011, dozens of Canadian and American Somali youth had travelled to Somalia to join Al-Shabaab and many of them subsequently died there (US Congress 2011). Additionally, it had been estimated that by 2010, a hundred British nationals had joined the ranks of Al-Shabaab (Harnisch and Zimmerman 2010) of whom several were martyred according to the group (Jihadology.net 2013h). Indeed, Al-Shabaab prided itself upon its ideology which transcended countries, cultures and ethnicities (ibid. 2013g). Recruitment reports indicate that the recruitment process leaves little room for opportunistic fighters, as prospects are subjected to a long training program after they join Al-Shabaab (CEP Al-Shabab).

Since the beginning of its insurgency, Al-Shabaab has consistently claimed to fight against the ‘occupation’ of the so-called African or Christian crusaders, most notably Ethiopia, Kenya, Burundi and Uganda (Biyokulule 2007a; ibid. 2008c; Jihadology.net 2011i; ibid. 2013e). In one of the first statements attributed to the group, the group “declare[d] war on the Ugandan army”
In a video released in 2010, an apparent British spokesman of Al-Katā’ib recalled how Ugandan ‘crusaders’ were burning inside their tanks in Mogadishu (Al Kataaib 2010). When Kenya crossed over into Somalia in October 2011, Al-Shabaab quickly condemned the move by asking the Somali people whether they would be “ready to live under Christians” and urging them to “defend your dignity and religion” (Howden 2011). Likewise, leaders and spokesmen verbally targeted pro-government forces and those of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). For example, in March 2012 Godane warned government as well as foreign troops that they would face “guerrilla attacks that will destroy them [i.e. AMISOM]” (News24 2012). The weak Somali government and officials supporting them were referred to as ‘apostates’ as well (ibid.), indicating that Al-Shabaab viewed them as people who have denounced their Islamic faith.

Indeed, Al-Shabaab declared that it was on this basis that the group fought against the transitional Somali government and its representatives (GIMF 2012a). In several videos and statements, pro-government groups were frequently referred to as ‘apostates’ (e.g. Al Kataaib 2010; AlJazeera English 2014). Kenya in particular regularly suffered abuse in the statements of Al-Shabaab. Immediately after the country invaded Somalia, group spokesmen threatened that “[w]e shall come into Kenya if you do not go back” (Reuters 2011). In April 2012, Al-Shabaab released an English statement directly targeted at Kenya, wherein the group taunted its army for its lack of successes in Somalia (Jihadology.net 2012k). In the same statement, Al-Shabaab warned the Kenyan public that their cities would be increasingly insecure, and that “[y]our security depends on our security” (ibid.).

Nonetheless, even regarding Kenya, Al-Shabaab usually distinguished between its government and the public (e.g. Jihadology.net 2011f). This is also evident when Al-Shabaab legitimized the attack on the shopping mall in 2013. The group declared that its “target was to attack the Kenyan government on its soil and any part of the Kenyan territory is a legitimate target” (Selsky 2013). Hence, despite the fact that the attack killed civilians, the actual target was the government itself. Moreover, in an interview with AlJazeera, Ali Dhere argued that Al-Shabaab would fight and kill “anyone who works for the apostate government” as well as their supporters and “the Christians who sent them” (AlJazeera English 2014). Here the spokesman did not make a distinction between those who supported the Somali government militarily or passively (ibid.). Moreover, when claiming attacks against the military or government officials, victims were virtually always referred to as ‘apostates’ (Jihadology.net 2012u; ibid. 2012v). Threatening attacks against them, spokesmen warned Somalis to “keep away from government buildings and the bases of their soldiers” (AlJazeera 2011).

Next to that, non-Muslims were regularly denigrated as ‘kuffar’, meaning disbelievers (e.g.
GIMF 2012a; Selsky 2013; Jihadology.net 2013b). Al-Shabaab maintained that it was “obliged by […] our faith” to wage jihad against Zionists and “Christian crusaders” (ibid.), and even referred to it as a tenet of Islam (ibid. 2013g). When referring to ‘crusaders’, however, this was mostly done in the context of foreign states invading or occupying Somalia at several points in time, rather than referring to all non-Muslims as such (Biyokulule 2008a; Jihadology.net 2012u; ibid. 2012v). Nevertheless, Al-Shabaab also called out the “worshippers of the cross” and warned them that the group would avenge their killings of Muslims throughout the world (ibid. 2013f). ‘Kuffar’ (here meaning the enemies of Islam worldwide) were warned that “the only things we have for you” were “explosives, guns and grenades” (ibid. 2013d). In general, messages of Al-Shabaab were advocating against anything the group considered non-Islamic. Clear denigrations, however, were mostly reserved for those Al-Shabaab directly fought against.

Lastly, clear perceptions of fear or hate towards other worldviews or societal groups did not feature much in the videos or statements of Al-Shabaab. In August 2013, spokesmen denied that Al-Shabaab hated specific races or nations but they argued that America was an evil nation regardless, and that “every […] able Muslim” was obliged to wage jihad against the USA (ibid. 2013g). ‘The West’ as a whole was sometimes discussed or addressed mostly in the context of its ‘crusade’ against Islam or Al-Shabaab specifically (ibid. 2013h). Jews were called out for “corrupt[ing] and desecrate[ing] the Holy Land” (Biyokulule 2008b) and were deemed “accursed” in the message eulogizing Osama bin Laden (Jihadology.net 2011a), but these were not frequent occurrences.

In short, Al-Shabaab can be classified as a revolutionary armed group, adhering to a relatively exclusionary ideology. It aims to establish an Islamic state in Somalia based on sharia law and to expel what the group deems foreign occupiers from the country. While Al-Shabaab can be characterised as a localised insurgency mainly focused on driving foreign forces out of Somalia, the group is closely connected to global jihadist networks besides that. Statements are interspersed with Islamic teachings and Quranic verses legitimizing the jihad against the Somalian government and pro-government forces. Proclaimed membership of the in-group is generally limited to Muslims either within our outside of Somalia, but Al-Shabaab has been able to recruit Western foreigners as well, pointing to its linkages with the global jihadist network. Out-group messaging is chiefly directed at the Somalian government, AMISOM, and foreign countries present in Somalia such as Kenya and Ethiopia.

6.2 Use of Violence
As with Boko Haram, the use of violence by Al-Shabaab is highly varied in terms of lethality, intended targets, and the employed forms. According to the UCDP (2018), a total number of
13,306 people had died in the conflict between the Somalian state authorities and Al-Shabaab from 2009 to the end of 2014. Of those 13,306 people, 766 people died as a result of what is characterised as one-sided violence against civilians, which amounts to 5.8%. Attacks included suicide bombings, shootings, and more general attacks against villages. To maintain consistency across cases, this section investigates twenty major attacks from Al-Shabaab in the time-period of 2006 until 2014, a list which can be found in Appendix 1 along with an account of how the list was compiled. The attacks are chronologically traced as much as possible, whereas their characteristics are presented according to the questions formulated in the research design.

Within the time period of this thesis, most of the one-sided violence against civilians by Al-Shabaab was perpetrated across the middle and south of Somalia, although many of its deadliest attacks took place in foreign capitals or towns (UCDP 2018). However, the insurgency and the accompanying direct attacks on civilians did not start until 2008 whereby a grenade attack in Boosaso in February was arguably the first (ibid.). At least 24 people were killed, most of them Ethiopian workers (AlJazeera 2008). Al-Shabaab claimed the attack and asserted that the port was specifically chosen because “some Ethiopian soldiers who fought in Mogadishu live there” (All Africa 2008). It stated that the attack was a warning for those who supported “our historical enemy, the Ethiopian army” (ibid.). Moreover, the attack followed repeated statements targeting Ethiopian soldiers (Biyokulule 2007a; ibid. 2007b). Indeed, Ethiopia was still militarily present in Somalia ever since its army had retaken control of Mogadishu in 2006 (Wise 2011). Nonetheless, from 2007 until 2009 Al-Shabaab mainly focused on assassinating high-profile people associated with either the Somali government or AMISOM, such as governors, ministers and peacekeepers (Harnisch and Zimmerman 2010; CEP Al-Shabab).

In July 2010, Al-Shabaab members for the first time attacked civilians outside of Somalia (UCDP 2018). In Kampala, suicide bombers targeted an Ethiopian restaurant as well as people watching the World Cup, killing at least 74 people and wounding dozens (Rice 2010). Apart from Ugandans, people from Ethiopia, the USA, and Eritrea were among the victims (Tumusiime 2013). Afterwards Ali Mohamed Rage stated the attack was in retaliation for Uganda’s involvement in AMISOM while threatening more attacks if the troops would not leave Somalia (Rice 2010). Additionally, Uganda had previously been targeted in Al-Shabaab statements using the same reasoning (e.g. Biyokulele 2008b). Moreover, throughout 2010 Al-Shabaab was frequently accused of forcibly recruiting children in its fight to (re-)capture Mogadishu (Bader et al. 2012). Allegedly, boys were mainly trained to fight and carry out attacks, while girls were forced to do domestic work (ibid.). According to witnesses and victims, Al-Shabaab invoked religious duties to justify its use of child soldiers, using “Islamic teaching to try and make you join” (ibid., p. 21).
Kenya has been a frequent target in the repertoire of violence by Al-Shabaab. From July 2012 to December 2014, no fewer than eight major attacks in Kenya were attributed to the armed group, although there were many minor attacks besides them as well (e.g. Daily Notion 2012). The first of the major attacks took place in Garissa in July 2012, whereby seventeen people were killed and approximately forty were injured during a shooting in two churches (CNN Wire 2012). Al-Shabaab took responsibility for the attack, saying that the churchgoers were attacked because they did not follow Islam and that Al-Shabaab would “continue until such practice is eliminated” (Khalif 2012). In November 2012, Al-Shabaab allegedly targeted a minibus in a neighbourhood in Nairobi where many people lived who are originally from Somalia (Agence France Presse (AFP) 2012). Approximately ten people were killed, while dozens more were wounded in the attack (ibid.; UCDP 2018). Although a claim of responsibility could not be immediately found, suspicion fell on Al-Shabaab because it had targeted several Kenyan objects in the weeks before (AFP 2012). Moreover, the attacks followed recent losses incurred in Somalia including the strategically important town of Kismayo (AlJazeera 2012).

In the following period, several attacks were launched but information about these was relatively scarce. Two attacks on El Bur (or Ceelbuur) in December 2012 and January 2013 have been rather obscure and there is a distinct lack of information on what exactly happened. Seven people were reportedly killed at the end of December 2012 (UCDP 2018), while ten civilians were killed by Al-Shabaab in January 2013 because they had assisted Ethiopian troops stationed nearby (BBC Monitoring Africa 2013). These reports could not be immediately corroborated elsewhere and no distinct claim of responsibility had been put forward. In September 2013, Al-Shabaab detonated two bombs near a restaurant in Mogadishu killing at least seventeen people and wounding several others (All Africa 2013). In a statement claiming the attack, Abu Muscab told reporters that the restaurant was targeted because government and military officials frequented the restaurant although the attack was not aimed at specific persons this time (Hussein and Sheikh 2013).

September 2013 witnessed one of the most high-profile attacks by Al-Shabaab. For four days, militants wreaked havoc in the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi (Blanchard 2013). Reportedly, Al-Shabaab entered the shopping mall and eventually killed at least 67 people and wounded hundreds of others (ibid.). Many of the victims were foreigners, and nationals from Britain, the Netherlands, South Africa, and China were amongst those who perished (CBS News 2013). Furthermore, witness reports stated that the attackers endeavoured to separate Muslims from non-Muslims by asking questions about Islam; nonetheless, some victims belonged to the Islamic faith regardless (Selsky 2013). The event was live-tweeted by its Twitter account at the time,
where spokesmen wrote that the attack was “retributive justice for crimes committed by their military” and that “over 100 Kenyan kuffar” were killed (Oremus 2013). Moreover, in a Q&A session between Abu Muscab and a journalist from Al-Jazeera, the spokesman explained the rationale behind the attack in further detail. When asked why the group would target a mall full of civilian shoppers, he justified it by pointing to a few distinct groups of people who frequented the mall: foreign diplomats and tourists, Kenyan government personnel, and Jewish and American shop-owners (Mohamed 2013). More importantly, however, Abu Muscab said that “[w]e released all Muslims when we took control of the mall” (ibid.), and that the perpetrators attempted to “separate the Muslims from the Kuffar [disbelievers]” before carrying out the attack (Selsky 2013). This corroborates the witness reports mentioned above.

In March 2014, an attack in Bur Hakaba killed at least eight people (All Africa 2014a). The attack was not directly claimed by Al-Shabaab, but the group has been widely suspected to be behind it (ibid.). The attack occurred mere days after Al-Shabaab lost territory in the area (BBC Monitoring Newsfile 2014a). Moreover, amidst a new military offensive by AMISOM Kenya suffered five major attacks in the latter half of 2014 (Williams 2016). In June, Mpeketoni and Poromoko were attacked. In Mpeketoni, militants entered the town and fatally shot 48 people, as well as burning buildings such as hotels (Grossman 2014). The attack bore similarity to the attack on Kampala, since people watching the World Cup were again amongst those who were targeted (ibid.). A day after, nearby Poromoko was attacked resulting in the deaths of nine people (AlJazeera 2014b). Al-Shabaab claimed that victims were mainly security personnel, but this assertion was not verified (ibid.). Spokesmen provided several justifications for both of the attacks shortly afterwards. They invoked previous violence against Somalian Muslims, while stating the attacks were a response to the continued presence of the Kenyan military in Somalia (AlJazeera 2014a). Furthermore, spokesmen stated that the area in and around Mpeketoni was chosen because it used to be a Muslim area, which had been “invaded and occupied by Christian settlers” (ibid.). Lastly, the group again threatened to carry out more attacks on Kenyan soil if the country would not pull back its troops from Somalia (Daily Nation 2014).

Making good on these threats, in July Al-Shabaab assaulted a shopping centre in Hindi whereby thirteen people were killed (BBC Monitoring Newsfile 2014b). Al-Shabaab maintained it had carried out an attack, but did not explain why the group had attacked the shopping centre specifically. Nonetheless, the attack seemed to fit the pattern of attacks against civilian places in Kenya by Al-Shabaab. Furthermore, in August 2014, Al-Shabaab reportedly killed ten people in Toosweyne in the south-west of Somalia, mainly consisting of elders (BBC Monitoring Africa 2014c). The attack occurred amidst fighting in the area between pro-government forces and Al-
Shabaab militants (BBC Monitoring Africa 2014b). Although Al-Shabaab did not directly claim responsibility for the attack, the group had asserted it had carried out attacks against AMISOM forces in the same region in its fight against the peacekeepers (BBC Monitoring Africa 2014a).

Furthermore, in the end of 2014 Al-Shabaab carried out two major attacks in Mandera (Kenya), a mainly Muslim area (BBC News 2014b). In November, 22 people were killed when militants attacked a bus and shot passengers who were not able to recite the Shahada, an Islamic confession (The Guardian 2014b). Al-Shabaab claimed the attack and stated it was a retaliation for previous raids on mosques by Kenyan authorities (The Guardian 2014b). In addition, Ali Mohamed Rage asserted that the militants had “killed the non-believers” and that “Muslims in Mandera and the Muslims in Somalia are the same to us” (AlJazeera 2014c). Two weeks later, Al-Shabaab carried out a similar attack, assaulting a quarry and executing mostly Christians who could not recite the Shahada (Mutiga 2014). No fewer than 36 workers were killed in the attack, which Al-Shabaab declared was a response to the Kenyan military offensive in Somalia (BBC News 2014b).

In December 2014, fifteen people were killed when a Al-Shabaab suicide bomber detonated two bombs near a restaurant in Baidoa (Khalif 2014). The attack occurred a day after a new region president was sworn in there, while residents said that the restaurant had apparently been “frequented by influential people” (ibid.). According to reports, Al-Shabaab took responsibility but it claimed it had targeted pro-government soldiers instead (All Africa 2014b). Nonetheless, victims included journalists and people trying to help injured people after the first attack. Likewise, fourteen people were killed in two separate attacks on a truck and a bus in the Bakool region at the end of December 2014 (BBC Monitoring Africa 2014c; ibid. 2014f). Although these attacks were not directly claimed either, the attacks occurred after Al-Shabaab lost territory in the area and put up blockades to stop vehicles coming in or out of the town (ibid. 2014d).

Lastly, Al-Shabaab was notorious for attacking aid workers throughout the conflict (e.g. Humanitarian Outcomes 2018) and forbidding aid organizations to work in the areas under its control (e.g. Jihadology.net 2011j; ibid. 2012f). Attacks included kidnapping aid workers (Rice 2011) as well as killing scores of them (e.g. Humanitarian Outcomes 2018). The group put UN organizations on par with foreign states invading Somalia, threatened that it would not “accept any compromise” (Jihadology.net 2011k) and argued that such organizations were going against Islamic teachings (ibid. 2011j). According to aid organizations, this attitude has led to countless deaths during the famine that Somalia suffered in 2011 (Abdi 2011; Crisis Group 2017).

6.3 Within-case analysis
This section presents a within-case analysis in view of the proposed causal mechanism. Recall that exclusionary groups would use relatively more violence against civilians than inclusionary groups
because the former have a more extensive perception of who constitutes a legitimate target than the latter. Therefore, to connect the independent variable to the dependent variable I looked for evidence of specific targeting based on group characteristics.

In terms of ideology and the use of violence, Al-Shabaab tends to target people and institutions based on group characteristics. In its messaging, the group distinguishes between in-groups and out-groups and presents the latter as threats to the in-group and its worldview. The in-group mostly encompasses the Muslims of Somalia and those in the rest of the world, while references to out-groups are mainly reserved for Somalian or foreign government or military personnel. Non-Muslims and non-Islamic worldviews are routinely denigrated, form part of the out-group and are presented as a threat, but such targeting cannot be considered the central message. Hence, the ideology of Al-Shabaab reflects a coherent view of who constitutes a legitimate target based on the delineation of in-groups and out-groups and threat perceptions. This certainly points to an exclusionary nature, but perceptions of hate or threat were still mainly applied to governments and armies.

These perceptions are reflected in Al-Shabaab’s use of violence. Overall, the group engaged in far more state-based violence compared to one-sided violence against civilians, a trend most visible regarding attacks in Somalia. AMISOM troops or Somalian government officials, for instance, were frequent targets. Nonetheless, Al-Shabaab also engaged in violence against members of its in-group in Somalia, where Muslims represented the majority of the victims. When claiming responsibility, Al-Shabaab usually insisted it had targeted government officials or military personnel instead (e.g. after the attacks in Mogadishu and Baidoa) or refused to claim responsibility (e.g. the executions in Ceelbuur). An exception is the forced recruitment of children, which the group reportedly justified through invoking solidarity with in-group values to defend Islam. That this was an exception, however, indicates that the group did not view Muslim civilians as legitimate targets.

This is also evidenced by the justification given after the 2008 Boosaso attack. This was the sole attack in Somalia whereby Al-Shabaab argued it had specifically targeted the civilian victims rather than government or military personnel, indicating a clear perception of who constitutes the in-group and out-group. Furthermore, some attacks were not directly claimed by Al-Shabaab but were attributed to them nonetheless. These attacks were mainly perpetrated in a time when the militants had lost control over territory in or near the attacked areas (e.g. Baidoa and Bur Hakaba in 2014). They may present a discrepancy between its ideological commitments and the use of

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20 In the context of Somalia, it could almost be argued that Al-Shabaab proclaims a fairly inclusionary message, were it not for the routine denigration of other groups and worldvews.
violence. However, the fact that group spokesmen either deflected or refused to claim responsibility might at the same time point to an awareness of this discrepancy and a need to downplay the role of Al-Shabaab to maintain consistency. However, lack of data regarding these attacks warrants caution here.

Analysing violence committed outside Somalia shows a different pattern, whereby one-sided violence constituted the majority of attacks. The attacks generally support the view that Al-Shabaab consciously distinguishes between legitimate and illegitimate targets. In several attacks in Kenya, a distinction between in-groups and out-groups was highly visible. Examples of these include the attack on the shopping mall in 2013 and the attacks in Mpeketoni and Mandera in 2014. During these attacks, Al-Shabaab targeted civilians based on religious characteristics and separated members of the in-group from those of the out-group. Al-Shabaab actively took the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate targeting into account, as announced by Al-Shabaab spokesmen themselves before and after attacks. Al-Shabaab’s self-proclaimed perception of who was considered part of the out-group went beyond a simple classification of ‘Kenyan’ or ‘foreigner’, and explicitly excluded members of the religious group Al-Shabaab itself declared to represent in Somalia. This suggests that the ideology of Al-Shabaab relates to its view of legitimate targets and subsequently affected patterns of one-sided violence against civilians.

These findings indicate that the proposed theory finds considerable support in the case of Al-Shabaab, though caution is warranted due to a lack of data regarding some attacks. First, highly varying levels of state-based violence versus one-sided civilian targeting correspond to the ideological focus on specific out-groups it considers legitimate targets. Second, when examining patterns of one-sided violence against civilians and the rationalisations that are offered, Al-Shabaab tends to target people based on their in-group or out-group characteristics. Lastly, in cases where members of the in-group were targeted regardless, spokesmen tended to either invoke solidarity with the in-group or downplay its responsibility, indicating the group tried to maintain consistency as well as support from the in-group.
7. Comparisons, Limitations and Alternative Explanations
This chapter represents the analytical section of the thesis and considers the implications of the cases for the theory and to what extent the causal mechanism is supported. Moreover, the chapter presents possible alternative explanations for the patterns of violence as found in the cases, discusses causal criteria as well as several limitations of the thesis.

7.1 Between-case Comparison
The hypothesis leading this thesis posits that *a revolutionary armed group which is more exclusionary should relatively perpetrate more violence against civilians, especially out-groups, than a more inclusionary group*. The section first compares the independent variable between the cases and thereafter assesses to what extent the causal mechanism holds across cases.

Common themes appear in the discourses of Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab. Both armed groups aimed to establish an Islamic state and sharia law in their respective countries, and thereby targeted their governments in their statements. Moreover, both groups delineated in-groups and out-groups and expressed threat perceptions towards them. Both armed groups claimed to fight on behalf of Muslims and true Islam to varying extents, have targeted civilians including in-group members, and both justified the use of violence against (some) civilians. Thus, both groups espoused an exclusionary ideology whereby they “justified[d] efforts to restrict, persecute, or eliminate certain categories of people” (Harff 2003, p. 63).

The groups diverged, however, on several points. Ideologically, Boko Haram tended to exclude more groups than Al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab claimed to fight on behalf of all (Somalian) Muslims and mostly claimed to fight against pro-government states and armies. On the other hand, Boko Haram mainly addressed those who adhered to its own strict version of sharia law, although the group did not explain this further. Boko Haram regularly claimed and justified attacks on in-group civilians by maintaining they supported the government or ‘western education’. Al-Shabaab, on the other hand, tended to either deny responsibility for such attacks or claimed the victims were government or army personnel, while rarely acknowledging they were civilians. An important exception here is the attack on Ethiopian civilians, representing the sole attack whereby Al-Shabaab acknowledged civilian victims. This difference conforms to their ideological commitments: Al-Shabaab repeatedly asserted it only fought against government or army targets, while Boko Haram also regularly targeted various civilian groups in their statements.

Regarding attacks on out-group members, the groups again show many similarities while diverging on other points. Attacks against Christians, for instance, were commonplace within repertoires of both groups, although Boko Haram engaged in far more attacks against them than Al-Shabaab, paralleling the latter’s ideological focus on pro-government targets. Both groups
justified these attacks specifically referring to out-group characteristics. Al-Shabaab, for instance, acknowledged it regarded people in Kenya ‘legitimate targets’ as an extension of their government after the attack on the shopping mall – with the exception of Kenyan Muslims. The major difference between them, however, is that Boko Haram engaged in far more fatal one-sided violence against civilians and civilian out-groups than Al-Shabaab. More than forty percent of the people who died as a result of the Boko Haram insurgency did so in one-sided civilian targeting, compared to less than six percent in the case of Al-Shabaab. This is especially surprising because the total number of fatalities due to their insurgencies up until 2014 does not differ significantly: 15,147 for Boko Haram against 13,306 for Al-Shabaab. This difference corresponds to their respective threat perceptions, however, whereby Boko Haram perceived far more threats from civilian groups than Al-Shabaab did.

Nonetheless, there were several instances of violence not conforming to the expectations of the causal mechanism. For instance, Boko Haram drastically escalated its use of violence against civilians throughout 2013 and 2014 alongside territorial competition and a military offensive against the group. Violence appeared indiscriminate and attacked both in-group and out-group members alike. Out-groups were still attacked and ideological rationalisations were still put forward, but attacks were perpetrated too often and too indiscriminately to genuinely ascribe them to the ideology. This can be contrasted against Al-Shabaab: despite the fact that Al-Shabaab also gained and lost territory throughout the conflict and was subjected to military offensives by AMISOM, there was no similar escalation of violence against civilians. To the contrary, levels of civilian targeting by the group were fairly even throughout the years, particularly when compared to its use of state-based violence. While it may again be argued that it reflects their diverging ideological commitments, it might also indicate that more exclusionary groups are likelier to resort to violence against civilians in general, and not specifically against out-groups per se. In summary, it might be argued that the causal mechanism and hypothesis find modest to notable support across the two cases, though analysis necessitates several reservations to the theory.

7.1.1 Additional Observations
Some additional observations can be made. For example, violence against civilians by the armed groups was relatively scarce during the initial conflict phases of both insurgencies. From 2006 to 2008, Al-Shabaab mainly engaged in targeted assassinations against government personnel such as governors or their deputies. From 2009 to 2011, Boko Haram sporadically used civilian targeting and when it did, it was mostly directed against specific out-groups. This might indicate that revolutionary armed groups only resort to violence against civilians, and especially out-groups, as the conflict drags on and their vision of society is not readily achieved. Although not necessarily
foreseen by the theory, it makes relative sense: armed groups might first attempt to achieve their goals without engaging in civilian targeting, and might increasingly view out-groups as viable threats once their initial attempts fail to overthrow the government.

Second, considering that Boko Haram is fighting against Western education and abhors its influence in Nigeria, it is quite surprising that the West as such is hardly addressed in its messaging. This stands in direct opposition to Al-Shabaab whereby anti-Western targeting was more outspoken. Likewise, it might be surprising that Boko Haram has hardly attacked ‘Western’ targets in- or outside Nigeria besides so-called ‘western’ educational institutions. Al-Shabaab, on the other hand, frequently attacked ‘Western’ or otherwise foreign targets, including aid organizations. Nonetheless, these differences may be due to the context of the respective conflicts and how those have influenced ideological commitments, threat perceptions and legitimate targeting. The conflict in Nigeria was ultimately triggered by a violent crackdown by the Nigerian government in 2009, whereas Al-Shabaab was embroiled in a conflict with foreign armies from the outset.

This strengthens the idea that Boko Haram is a more localised insurgency than Al-Shabaab which is more connected to the global jihadist network. While Boko Haram had no known Western supporters, Al-Shabaab had hundreds of Western fighters within its ranks. Likewise, as opposed to Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab had its own media-outlet which regularly disseminated high-quality videos or news reports. Videos frequently contained English subtitles or spoken English language, whereas Boko Haram for the most part limited itself to speaking Hausa or sometimes Arabic. This might further indicate a different ideological focus of both armed groups, whereby Al-Shabaab tended to align itself more to the global jihadist network than Boko Haram. Though it might be called a serious oversight, the theory and causal mechanism left little room to take the direct context and cause of the conflict into account. However, it easily might have influenced ideological commitments of both groups and perhaps its use of violence against certain out-groups by extension. Therefore, the theory should be refined to include this observation in the first and second component of the causal mechanism, and to allow for a closer interaction between them (see below).

7.2 Limitations of the Study
Several cautionary aspects of and limitations to the study can be identified. This section discusses them based on known causal criteria and research design choices. First, covariation is deliberated upon: does a more exclusionary ideology covary with more violence against civilians? At first glance, it might be argued that this is indeed the case: Boko Haram proclaimed a more exclusionary ideology than Al-Shabaab and also perpetrated more violence against civilians. Moreover, taking counterfactual thinking into account it is likely that Al-Shabaab would have focused more on non-
Muslims in their ideology and use of violence if Somalia had been more religiously diverse. Patterns of violence in Kenya consistently show that Al-Shabaab attacked members of out-groups and spared members of the in-group it claimed to represent. Furthermore, in the case of Boko Haram it is likely that if Christians would not be as significantly present in Nigeria as they were, Boko Haram might have shifted its focus regarding its ideological commitments and violence against them during the conflict. In spite of that, however, the thesis only presents two case studies. The theory would benefit from more case study research, especially looking into more inclusionary armed groups or considering other time-periods. Due to limited space the thesis could not achieve that. Nonetheless, it might be concluded that covariation is at least moderately supported.

Secondly, temporal order must be established. It can be argued that in both cases, the ideology and threat perceptions were already present and announced before the armed groups resorted to violence against civilians. Both Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab had formulated their goals and delineated in-groups and out-groups before their first attacks on civilians. For instance, the attacks on Ethiopian and Kenyan civilians by Al-Shabaab were preceded by verbal targeting in Al-Shabaab’s statements. Boko Haram had threatened to kidnap girls before it entered Chibok in 2014, whereas ‘infidels’ were frequently denounced in statements before the first churches were burned. Generally, no violence against specific civilian out-groups was found to precede the ideology or threat perceptions, apart from the escalation of violence including in-groups in Nigeria. Thus, it can be argued that temporal order is largely as predicted.

Third, isolation should be discussed. Isolation can be achieved through employing a most-similar case design and keeping as many variables constant as possible. Although the thesis aimed to accomplish this, case selection turned out to be quite difficult and in the end was decided based upon differences in the dependent variable. The cases are fairly similar in terms of group capabilities, conflict duration and battlefield developments, while both conflicts occurred during the same time period. These aspects may all have influenced the use of violence against civilians. Nonetheless, the countries differ in two potentially crucial aspects. The first is the higher ethnic and religious diversity of Nigeria compared to Somalia which may have led to different ideological commitments (as mentioned in the research design) and therefore to more violence against out-groups. Second, Somalia is sparsely populated compared to Nigeria and may therefore have given fewer opportunities to attack civilians.

Nonetheless, research found that high ethno-religious fractionalization should reduce the risk of conflict and that such societies are “safer than homogenous societies” (Collier 1999, p. 6). Other research found that conflict intensity should be higher in polarised societies while more moderate in fractionalised societies (Esteban and Ray 2008). This implies that Nigeria should have
suffered less violence as opposed to Somalia, indicating that isolation does not have to be dismissed yet. In terms of population, Somalia is indeed more sparsely populated than Nigeria which could have affected the total number of fatalities due to one-sided violence. Nonetheless, the total number of fatalities between the armed groups across all categories of violence do not differ significantly, suggesting that opportunity did not factor in the limited use of one-sided violence in Somalia. Thus, while isolation cannot be completely established there is reason to suggest that no confounding factors adversely influenced both variables, indicating the relationship between them is not spurious.

The causal mechanism is the fourth criterion and asks whether the covariation between the exclusionary ideology and violence against civilians can be theoretically justified. Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab both intended to transform society and establish an Islamic state, which would leave no room for 'foreign' influences. This constituted an exclusionary ideology in the context of both societies. In-groups and out-groups were delineated based on these intentions, whereby Boko Haram favoured more restrictive ideas than Al-Shabaab. Threat perceptions mirroring these delineations were identified in statements of both armed groups. Furthermore, the use of violence against civilians during the respective conflicts was prone to reflect these ideological commitments: Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab legitimized civilian targeting before and after attacks by pointing to the threat civilians posed to (adherents to) the worldview the armed group claimed to represent. Moreover, both groups sometimes equalized civilians with their respective governments when legitimizing attacks, indicating that threat perceptions played a role in their choice of targeting. This implies that the observed relationship theoretically makes sense.

However, analysis also suggests that there was a continuous interaction between exclusionary ideologies and threat perceptions and that both reinforced one another. In other words, identifying threats and the development of an exclusionary ideology were both dynamic processes which influenced each other. For example, Boko Haram tended to increasingly restrict the in-group as the conflict went on based on threats emanating from conflict developments. Al-Shabaab was prone to identify threats following AMISOM developments, which influenced its ideas of in-groups versus out-groups. Moreover, although Al-Shabaab for a long time addressed governments and armies, civilians were also increasingly verbally and physically targeted as they were viewed as extensions of their governments. This means that the causal mechanism cannot be entirely confirmed, and that it should be refined to account for these interactions between exclusionary ideologies and threat perceptions. This ties into the previous observation that immediate conflict causes should be included in the theory as well, since that may have affected ideological commitments.
In conclusion, it might be argued that both cases suggest that the ideologies via their specific threat perceptions and legitimate targeting contributed to the observed patterns of violence against civilians. Overall, these observed patterns at least moderately conform to the causal criteria as outlined above.

7.2.1 Limitations in the Research Design
In terms of research design, the thesis has several limitations. The first relates to case selection which has already been discussed in the previous section and the research design, which will therefore not be repeated here. The second relates to the lists of attacks: due to space concerns and for the sake of greater clarity I decided to investigate twenty attacks per armed group which were exclusively targeted at civilians. For instance, the final list for Boko Haram is primarily based on other sources, thereby presenting a double selection bias: the three sources presented lists with previously selected attacks according to unknown criteria, and attacks were then selected based on their variety and amount of victims. These choices may have biased the findings since Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab have carried out many attacks besides them, resulting in hundreds of attacks and victims who are ‘overlooked’. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that attacks which were not selected followed widely different patterns as are observed here as they were compared against other attacks.

Third, because the attacks and the number of victims were compared with UCDP data, the thesis heavily relies on UCDP definitions, coders and their analysis of events. However, thousands of civilians died in state-based violence rather than one-sided violence against civilians, whose victims are not counted in the analysis here. Hence, the lists of attacks which can be found in Appendix 1 both offer a somewhat skewed representation of the comprehensive use of violence against civilians. Further research may take these limitations into account and delve deeper into more expanded patterns of violence, including state-based violence, used by specific inclusionary and exclusionary armed groups. At the same time, both lists were subjected to similar criteria, meaning that the attacks include those with the highest amount of victims; were directly targeting civilians; and were not directly alongside battles with armed forces. Moreover, the lists include a variety of attacks in terms of places, times, and victims. The time period includes periods when the armed groups did not control territory, to times where they had established control or were in the process of losing it. Therefore, it is argued that analysing these twenty attacks offer a good representation of the use of civilian targeting by both armed groups.

Fourth, the indicators for the independent variable must be problematized. Do the questions fully capture ideological commitments employed by both armed groups? I attempted to formulate the questions based on the theoretical framework, but that may have overlooked certain aspects regardless. Moreover, the questions assume that armed group narratives can be taken at
face value. It is likely that armed groups attempt to maintain support from the civilian population and thereby distort legitimizations for violence. This may be the reason that Al-Shabaab deflected or refused to claim responsibility for some attacks in Somalia. However, the group regularly claimed attacks whereby in-group members had died regardless, suggesting that such reasoning is not entirely applicable.

Fifth, availability of data turned out to be a limitation in both cases. In the case of Boko Haram, information about attacks was not always available in addition to a lack of statements claiming responsibility. Likewise, in the case of Al-Shabaab I had to rely on the UCDP to create a list of major attacks, but detailed information was scarce at times. Moreover, I could only include English or translated statements. While largely unforeseen and not easily solved, these aspects limit the explanatory value of the causal mechanism nonetheless. Future research should take these limitations into account and aim to assess more statements in the original language, for instance.

Lastly, are the results generalizable? Since I employed a case study approach involving only two cases, generalizability to other cases is necessarily limited. Ideally, the thesis would have employed a mixed method to more accurately establish covariation, and future research may attempt this. Nonetheless, ideological commitments are difficult to quantify so that large-N studies will be complicated from the outset. However, I argue that the cases at least indicate that ideology and threat perceptions consistently played a role in one-sided violence against civilians in the cases of Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab. This suggests that applying the theory to other revolutionary armed groups may indeed explain variation in their violence against civilians. However, generalizability cannot be established as such at this moment.

7.3 Alternative Explanations
Several alternative explanations might be applicable to the patterns of violence as found in the cases of Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab, two of which are discussed into more detail.

7.3.1 Military Strategies
One of the most well-known theories of armed group behaviour posits that groups will engage in violence against civilians as a conscious military strategy. For example, Downes argues that groups use violence against civilians to erode “the adversary’s will to fight”, thereby attempting to convince the adversary to end the conflict (2006, p. 162). Other theories posit that armed groups perpetrate violence against civilians when competing for territorial control (e.g. Kalyvas 2006). Groups may perpetrate both selective and indiscriminate violence to target suspected collaborators with the enemy (ibid. chapter 6).

In the case of Boko Haram, attacks were initially only sporadically carried out whereby the group hardly established territorial control. However, the seemingly indiscriminate attack on
Benisheik in 2013 was specifically legitimized referring to victims’ collaboration with the government (justified or not). Moreover, one-sided violence against civilians rose exponentially over the course of 2014. Many of the 2014 attacks were perpetrated when Boko Haram was in the process of establishing or relinquishing control over territory. Witness reports occasionally supported the idea that civilians were killed throughout May and June because they were suspected collaborators, though Shekau stated that the group captured the territory in light of ideological goals. These patterns and legitimizations imply that the theory of violence against suspected collaborators definitely has explanatory value when applied to some attacks of Boko Haram. Nonetheless, a majority of attacks from 2009 until 2013 were not perpetrated after losing territory and seemed to be less about punishing collaborators than they were about achieving ideological goals.

The case of Al-Shabaab shows a similar story, especially when analysing justifications after attacks in Kenya. The group regularly argued it aimed to convince the Kenyan government to stop supporting AMISOM and pull back its troops. After attacking Mpeketoni, Al-Shabaab maintained that the attacks were “carried out in response to Kenyan military's continued invasion and occupation” (AlJazeera 2014a). This seems to support the proposition that groups may use civilian targeting to weaken the will of their opponents. Nonetheless, when delving more deeply in the details of attacks, it appears that Al-Shabaab frequently targeted specific subsets of the enemy civilian population. The consistent targeting of non-Muslims and how those attacks are rationalised both suggest that there is more to these attacks than merely being perpetrated to convince the Kenyan government to pull back its troops. Instead, it reflects the awareness of who Al-Shabaab considers legitimate targets or not. Statements show that this influenced which part of the enemy constituency would be targeted.

Thus, my theory might improve theories on territorial control. The latter put forth well-researched explanations for the use of civilian targeting in the enemy constituency, while threat perceptions and legitimate targeting contribute explanations for attacking particular subsets of it. Overall, in the case of Boko Haram I argue that my theory might be applicable in the earlier phases of the conflict, while the theory of enemy collaboration better accounts for the violence spiralling out of control in 2014. In the case of Al-Shabaab, the theory of military strategies as outlined above cannot account for the relative lack of one-sided violence when the group lost territory throughout the conflict. I therefore suggest my theory might refine theories on attacking enemy populations by pointing out that armed groups are at times selective in which enemy they attack, which in turn might mirror their ideological commitments.
7.3.2 Principal-Agent Problems
A second well-known theory of armed group behaviour argues that violence against civilians may be committed by opportunistic fighters who are not controlled by the commander(s) of the armed group (e.g. Humphreys and Weinstein 2006; Wood 2009). Violence against civilians is considered “inefficient for the group” and must thus “occur as a consequence of indiscipline” amongst group members (Hultman 2016). Groups using forced recruitment or material rewards should then display higher levels of civilian targeting (ibid.).

In the case of Boko Haram, this theory holds little explanatory value. Boko Haram is known for its forced recruitment of fighters which might have led to its use of violence against civilians, especially during 2014. Nonetheless, there is no indication that violent rampages by Boko Haram were perpetrated by opportunistic fighters. For instance, only one incident was found whereby Shekau outright denied responsibility, while voicing his support for it regardless. Indeed, he almost happily admitted that Boko Haram was responsible for the indiscriminate violence throughout 2014, and reasoned that it was in the pursuit of a caliphate. If opportunistic fighters had perpetrated attacks in the name of Boko Haram, Shekau had ample opportunity to state this, which he failed to do. Moreover, some recruits allegedly joined Boko Haram out of ideological motivations, which should have decreased principal-agent problems.

Likewise, in the case of Al-Shabaab, the theory seems to hold little explanatory value. As mentioned before, the group has a rigorous months-long training program for new recruits, and its Western fighters were attracted to its ideology instead. On the other hand, it has been reported that Al-Shabaab relied on forced recruitment during its fight in Mogadishu. Data from the UCDP (2018) shows, however, that the group hardly engaged in one-sided violence against civilians during that time contrary to what might have been expected. Moreover, the struggle within Al-Shabaab during 2013 (e.g. CEP Al-Shabab) should have resulted in an escalation of violence due to principal-agent problems according to the theory, but this did not occur either. As with Boko Haram, only one instance was found whereby Al-Shabaab outright claimed not to have engaged in an attack on civilians. Combined with regular opportunities to deny responsibility for attacks, it is unlikely that principal-agent problems caused group members to defect from group goals and attack civilians. Thus, overall, the theory of principal-agent problems does not seem applicable in the cases of Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab.
8. Conclusions
The aim of this thesis was to provide an answer to the following research question: to what extent do exclusionary ideologies of armed groups influence their use of violence against civilians during civil conflicts? I hypothesized that during civil conflict, more exclusionary groups should perpetrate more one-sided violence against civilians (and especially out-groups) than more inclusionary groups because the former have a more extensive understanding of legitimate targets than the latter. Through a discourse analysis and process tracing, I found moderate support for the hypothesis in the case of Boko Haram and considerable support in the case of Al-Shabaab.

The thesis contributes to the broader literature by offering explanations as to why armed groups with seemingly similar ideological goals (i.e. establishing sharia) may still reflect widely varying patterns of violence. It shines more light on ideological differences between such groups, and how the use of violence against civilians reflect these differences. Furthermore, the thesis demonstrates the usefulness of examining ideological commitments and threat perceptions in armed groups more broadly and shows that they might serve as a refinement to theories of territorial competition, for instance. It also indicates that combining related research fields may yield interesting results and therefore encourages integrating genocide and mass violence studies with armed group behaviour in more detail. Lastly, the thesis demonstrates that possible patterns of violence may be uncovered before the armed group actually engages in larger-scale violence against civilians. Hence, future research should devote more attention to the way armed groups justify their use of violence to see whether it corresponded to future targets.

Additional observations indicate that the direct causes of conflicts affect ideological commitments of armed groups and therefore the targets of their violence. This goes beyond a simple addition of governments or armies, however, as the results show that the communal groups the governments supposedly represent are also verbally and physically targeted. This is evidenced, for instance, by the fact that Boko Haram was hardly engaged in conflict with foreign governments and armies, and hardly attacked foreign civilians. Al-Shabaab, on the other hand, fought foreign armies from the beginning and attacked much more civilians outside the Somali borders – but mainly those associated with distinguished out-groups.

Future research might apply the theory to broader patterns of violence committed by armed groups, and not limit itself to one-sided violence against civilians. As the cases show, there are considerable differences in the repertoires of violence between armed groups and there is reason to believe ideologies influence these. It is therefore worthwhile to examine into more detail how ideological commitments influence other aspects of violence committed by armed groups, and see whether and to what extent previous threat perceptions, for instance, relate to these. Moreover,
future studies might look more closely to violence perpetrated against people the armed group claims to represent, and how such violence is justified, if at all. After all, the thesis tentatively implies that armed groups offer distinct explanations for this as well, and it might improve current policies aiming to address violence during conflicts. Ultimately, the thesis argues that ideology should not be readily dismissed from theories explaining armed group behaviour, in particular violence against civilians. In any case, however, it strongly recommends that when armed groups speak, we should listen very carefully to what they have to say.
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Appendix 1

Twenty chronological major attacks from Boko Haram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>What happened</th>
<th>Total amount of victims</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24-12-10</td>
<td>Four bombings in Jos and on two churches in Maiduguri</td>
<td>80 killed in Jos, 74 wounded. 5 killed in Maiduguri</td>
<td>START; CEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-08-11</td>
<td>Bombing of UN compound in Abuja</td>
<td>25 killed, dozens wounded</td>
<td>GW; START; CEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-12-11</td>
<td>Bombing of churches in Madalla</td>
<td>37 killed, dozens wounded</td>
<td>START; CEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-02-12</td>
<td>Attack on a market in Maiduguri</td>
<td>21 killed, dozens wounded</td>
<td>START</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08-04-12</td>
<td>Bombing of churches in Kaduna</td>
<td>41 killed, 10 wounded</td>
<td>START</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-06-12</td>
<td>Bombing of churches across Kaduna and Zaria</td>
<td>11 killed in Kaduna, 10 in Zaria, dozens wounded</td>
<td>CEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06-09-12</td>
<td>Series of attacks in Damaturu on telecom masts, government building and a school</td>
<td>15 killed</td>
<td>START</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-10-12</td>
<td>Burning of schools in Potiskum</td>
<td>18 killed</td>
<td>START</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06-07-13</td>
<td>Attack on secondary school in Mamudo, Potiskum</td>
<td>42 killed, unknown wounded</td>
<td>START</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-09-13</td>
<td>Attack on Beni Shiekh, mainly targeting travellers</td>
<td>143 killed</td>
<td>GW; START</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-09-13</td>
<td>Attack on school in Gujba</td>
<td>65 killed</td>
<td>CEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-01-14</td>
<td>Attack on Kawuri village</td>
<td>52 killed</td>
<td>GW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-02-14</td>
<td>Attack (burnings) in Konduga town</td>
<td>54 killed</td>
<td>GW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-04-14</td>
<td>Bombing of bus station in Potiskum</td>
<td>75 killed, dozens wounded</td>
<td>CEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-04-14</td>
<td>Kidnappings from Chibok school</td>
<td>Around 300 girls</td>
<td>GW; CEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May/June '14</td>
<td>Large-scale attacks in several states across Nigeria</td>
<td>376 killed in Gamboru Ngala, 118 in Jos, dozens in Abuja. Hundreds more across Nigeria</td>
<td>GW; CEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-08-14</td>
<td>Seizing town of Gwoza</td>
<td>600 killed</td>
<td>CEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-11-14</td>
<td>Bombing of school in Potiskum</td>
<td>49 killed, dozens wounded</td>
<td>CEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. '14</td>
<td>Kidnappings from Damasak</td>
<td>Around 400 women/children</td>
<td>CEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-11-14</td>
<td>Bombing of mosque in Kano</td>
<td>91 killed, around 135 wounded</td>
<td>CEP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21 Twenty major attacks here means twenty attacks from 2009-2014 which directly targeted civilians, were not alongside attacks against or battles with security forces, and which I argue offer a good representation of the evolution of violence used by Boko Haram. However, to provide a good representation, some attacks with a high amount of victims were excluded based on the fact that they were quite similar to other attacks. In those instances, I either included the attacks with the highest amount of victims (i.e. ‘Kidnappings from Damasak’); or merged attacks together (i.e. ‘May/June ‘14’). Both fatalities and non-fatalities are approximate numbers. Fatalities are limited to civilian victims and have been compared with UCDP data.

22 GW refers to Genocide Watch (2016); START refers to Simonelli et al. (2014); CEP refers to Counter Extremism Project (Boko).
23 The process was slightly different than the one followed for Boko Haram. Because initially I could not find lists of attacks by Al-Shabaab I decided to use UCDP data. I looked for attacks with more than 10 fatalities in the given time period, and ended up with thirteen of such events. After, I confirmed some attacks found on the list by Counter Extremism (website) and compared them with UCDP data. Moreover, I scoured NGO reports for other violence against civilians, and therefore included forcible recruitment of children as well as kidnappings/killings of aid workers. To complete the list, I decided to include attacks with seven or more fatalities. Hence, ‘twenty attacks’ here means twenty (series of) attacks from 2006-2014 which directly targeted civilians, were not alongside attacks against or battles with security forces, and which I argue offer a good representation of the use of one-sided violence against civilians by Al-Shabaab.

24 UCDP refers to a disaggregated map of one-sided violence against civilians by Al-Shabaab. CEP refers to Counter Extremism Project (Al-Shabab). HRW refers to Bader et al. (2012).
Appendix 2

Graph 2: more extensive visual presentation of the argument. Note that the relationship is conditional upon the armed group deciding to pursue their goal in a violent conflict.