Foreign Aid as a Cause of War

A qualitative study investigating how a shock in foreign aid affected the intensification of armed conflict in Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to reveal a mechanism connecting a severe decrease in foreign aid (aid shock) and the intensification of armed conflict in Afghanistan. The tested mechanism is built upon already existing theories concerning how shifts in the domestic power between governments and opposing rebel groups can spur action and hence intensify intrastate armed conflicts. Through a process-tracing, this study examines if the theorised mechanism was present in Afghanistan, and through so provide us with a better understanding for the causes of conflict intensification. The findings indicate that the mechanism was present as theorised, which can incentivise policymakers to create more sustainable plans for foreign aid in order to avoid aid shocks. However, the study also finds that the withdrawal of military troops affected the intensification of armed conflict in a similar way. Hence, in order to develop the theory further and to strengthen the results generalisability, future researchers should include across-case comparisons and develop the sequences of the theorised mechanism more closely.

Keywords:
Foreign aid, aid shock, armed conflict, balance of power, conflict intensification.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Since the second world war, intrastate (civil) conflicts have been the most common form of armed conflicts. Today, the total amount of conflicts is at an all-time high in the world, however, the total number of casualties is reducing. Major threats toward this reduction are non-state as well as internationalised conflicts (Strand et al. 2019). In 2018, Afghanistan was again the deadliest armed conflict in the world, in where almost half of all casualties in state-based conflicts occurred (Ibid.). Several insurgent groups are fighting the government in Afghanistan, and the Taliban has made up the government’s main opponent since 2001. The Taliban was in control of the government from 1996 until 2001, when they were ousted by a United States-led coalition. This coalition replaced the Taliban with a new Afghan government, attempting to begin a democratisation process in the country. Since then, the Taliban has launched extensive attacks on both international and Afghan forces, as well as on the civilian population, in order to re-take power in the country. This has created one of the most deadly and extensive contemporary conflicts in the world, which is still ongoing today (2019) (UCDP 2019a). Afghanistan has been influenced by international involvement and a high presence of international military troops. Furthermore, the Afghan economy has been highly reliant on foreign aid, which has created a state of dependency for the country. The amount of foreign aid to Afghanistan peaked in 2011, however, was followed by a severe decrease of it which highly affected the country’s economy negatively (Nasery 2014: 2). In the upcoming years, the intensity of armed conflict increased in the country (UCDP 2019a), motivating research on the decrease in foreign aid as a potential cause for this. The main argument driving this thesis is that such an economic shock decreases a government’s power and capabilities in relation to opposing rebel groups, wherefore these will utilise this opportunity to increase their attacks. Accordingly, such a relative power shift leads to the intensification of intrastate armed conflicts.

1.1 Purpose and Research Question

Consequently, the purpose of this thesis is to reveal a (potential) mechanism between the severe decrease in foreign aid and the intensification of armed conflict Afghanistan, where the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban are the main actors under investigation. By conducting a qualitative process-tracing, a theorisation about the expected mechanism is
investigated in order to understand what links the cause and the outcome together. Hence, this thesis aims to find empirical evidence for the theorised mechanism, which can provide us with a more in-depth understanding of how shocks in foreign aid can affect armed conflict. Thus, the relevance and contribution of this thesis are based on revealing the mechanism connecting an aid shock with the intensification of armed conflict. Consequently, this study can potentially provide us with more comprehensive understandings for the negative consequences of foreign aid, wherefore the research question in this thesis is;

*How do aid shocks affect the intensity of armed conflicts?*

### 1.2 Disposition

First, the theoretical framework is presented, which establish the expected mechanism between aid shocks and conflict intensification. The theoretical framework is built upon previous literature, theoretical arguments and logical reasoning and attempts to provide us with an understanding of the phenomena under investigation. This is followed by a section where the chosen method and overall research design is presented, including the selected case and a critical discussion on the potential shortcomings of the thesis. Lastly, findings of the case are presented and analysed through the chosen method. The results indicate that there exists a causal mechanism between the aid shock and conflict intensification as expected by the theory, however without excluding other events as co-existing explanatory factors wherefore future researchers can develop the theoretical arguments further.
2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Previous Research

Foreign aid has been highly debated since its initiation, due to its negative impact on poor and vulnerable countries, despite a common presumption that it is meant to do good. It is argued that (primarily) the Western world’s attempts to help “the rest” have rather created a lot of damage, such as creating dependency and a modern form of imperialism (Easterly 2006). The underlying motives for donating foreign aid and conducting international interventions have been questioned, and Anderson (1999) has set a fundamental principle of not causing more harm than good when intervening in other countries. One of the main debates concerns the effects of aid on economic growth and poverty reduction, where the more positive literature indicates that aid can reduce poverty by initiating investments (Shleifer 2009; Yiew and Lau 2018). Others argue that foreign aid does not improve poverty indicators in the long-run (Alvi and Senbeta 2012; Boone 1996) and creates a barrier to the recipient countries’ development and growth (Moyo 2009: 12). Additionally, Nwaogu and Ryan (2015) argue that domestic growth is more dependent on the growth of neighbouring countries than of foreign aid.

Furthermore, foreign aid has been referred to as creating an “aid curse”, highlighting its negative effects on institutions (Djankov, Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2008), governance (Busse and Gröning 2009), and how it puts recipient governments in a state of dependency that is difficult to recover from (Niyonkuru 2016). Because of such dependency, vulnerable countries are forced to adjust to the donor’s conditions, such as taking steps towards democritisation (Wright 2009). Moreover, critics argue that foreign aid creates the opportunity for dictators to stay in power which rather impedes a democratic development (Harford and Klein 2005). What is more is that aid agencies often fail to evaluate their projects whilst finished, leaving vulnerable countries in states of dependency without the support needed to recover from it, which reflects an ineffectiveness of foreign aid (Easterly 2003).

Another debated issue concerns foreign aid’s effects on armed conflict. Considering that civil wars are rarely only internal affairs, external actors affect the dynamics and outcome of them
Foreign aid can reduce the risk of violence by creating the opportunity for recipient governments to increase their military spending in order to deter rebels (de Ree and Nillesen 2009) or by spurring economic growth and decrease the motivations for people to join rebellions (Collier and Hoeffler 2002). Others argue that foreign aid is likely to exacerbate already ongoing conflicts (Zürcher 2017) or increase the risk of armed conflicts when it is withdrawn or cut too quickly. This because the government is unable to credibly commit to future resource transfers to appease rebels (Nielsen et al. 2011). Furthermore, foreign aid can increase the risk of civil war by enlarging the resources in the government and hence encourage rebels to launch coups to capture these (Arcand and Chauvet 2001). Due to these conflicting views on the effects of foreign aid, further research is motivated in order to improve future policymaking and understandings of the subject. Consequently, this thesis focuses on the debate of foreign aid and armed conflicts, by investigating the possible mechanism(s) which arise from severe decreases in foreign aid. This is an important contribution to the field considering that intrastate armed conflicts are highly internationalised today (Strand et al. 2019), wherefore findings which indicate that aid shocks intensify armed conflicts should affect (and improve) foreign policies of international actors.

2.2 Key Concepts

In this section, the key concepts of this thesis are explained and defined. The phenomenon of interest is how aid shocks affect the intensification of armed conflicts. Hence, the independent variable (the cause) is aid shock, which is defined by Nielsen et al. (2011: 220) as a “severe decrease in aid revenues”. In line with this definition, the aid shocks that are of interest for this thesis are only the negative ones. The reason for this is that the theoretical framework and proposed theory which constitute this thesis are partly based on a quantitative study made by Nielsen et al. (2011), which demonstrated a statistically significant correlation between negative shocks in foreign aid and a higher risk of armed conflicts. Increases in aid (positive shocks) did not yield the same result. Therefore, the independent variable is only negative aid shocks, which is only referred to as “aid shocks” from now on for simplification reasons.

Furthermore, aid shocks must be severe enough to destabilise the recipient government for the theoretical arguments to work. The state of the recipient government determines if the decrease
in aid is to be considered as a shock, depending on the government’s economic reliance on it. The intensity and length of the donation period are crucial factors which determine however a state becomes dependent on the aid (Clemens et al. 2012). Dependency arises since foreign aid tends to deteriorate existing economies in a country and hinder future investments and development. Since aid is usually distributed over time, it fails to positively impact local economies. This because it cannot be used for long-time investment, and hence becomes inefficient (Niyonkuru 2016: 2). Furthermore, aid shocks are relative to the recipient country’s size of economy (Nielsen et al. 2011: 224). Consequently, the proportional size of a decrease in aid determines whether it should be considered as a shock. Moreover, aid-dependent countries are those where aid funds a big part of the government’s budget or constitutes a big proportion of the gross national income (ActionAid 2011). Hence, an aid shock can be considered as a severe decrease in aid revenues, where the recipient government’s economy is dependent on it. Even though this definition opens up for some interpretation, it provides us with guidelines to identify aid shocks.

Additionally, foreign aid is conceptualised in order to understand the theoretical framework and overall design of this thesis. At a broad definition, foreign aid “consists of all resources - physical goods, skills and technical know-how, financial grants (gifts), or loans (at concessional rates) - transferred by donors to recipients” (Riddell 2007: 17). The most common way of transferring foreign aid is from one government to another. Afterwards, the recipient government channels the aid to the area of its purpose, such as to the security sector, government budget or to a specific project. The most common form of foreign aid is official development assistance, which is donated in order to combat poverty and to promote development in the recipient country, even though the motives for the donor can be of varying nature (Williams n.d.). Conclusively, foreign aid is in this thesis defined as “transfers from one or multiple governments to another for the purposes of economic, social and political development” (Nielsen et al. 2011). The primary reason for this is that the power and capabilities of a government in relation to opposing groups are of highest importance for the theoretical arguments in this thesis to be applicable, which is further explained in the next section.
The dependent variable (the outcome) is the *intensification of armed conflicts*. First, it is here clarified what is meant by armed conflicts, in order to understand what their dynamics are and how they can increase or decrease in intensity. The definition of an armed conflict that is used in this thesis is according to the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (UCDP):

“A state-based armed conflict is a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year.” (Department of Peace and Conflict Research 2019).

The reasoning behind the theoretical arguments assumes from this definition, which affects the case selection, scope conditions and conceptualisation of the intensification of armed conflicts. First, the intensity of an armed conflict is in this thesis defined by the amount of battle-related deaths, meaning that an increase of these equals more intensity and vice versa. Secondly, the intensification of armed conflicts can be demonstrated in several ways, such as through rebel mobilisation. Such indicators will likely lead to an increase in attacks and therefore also increase the number of casualties, intensifying the conflict. Thirdly, an increase in civilian casualties is also an indicator of an intensification of armed conflict. This because civilian targeting is often used as a strategy by (primarily) insurgent groups since they are usually the weaker actor and therefore turn to more unconventional methods, as Hultman (2008) explains. Conclusively, the intensity of an armed conflict is determined by the total amount of fatalities, where an increase or decrease of these determines if the conflict is intensified or not.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that shocks in foreign aid are not the only possible causes for the expected mechanism and outcome. Rather, there exist a lot of previous research pointing out other causes for the changes in conflict dynamics and intensity, such as international interventions (Regan 1998). However, this study aims to investigate the causal mechanism arising from foreign aid shocks, since the field lacks more comprehensive and a deeper understanding of this. Hence, it is not excluded that other causes than the one under study can yield similar or the same effects, but rather implies that they can co-exist, depending on the results of the study. However, this study only aims to give one and not all explanations
for conflict intensification. Nevertheless, other explanatory factors are discussed in the analysis, both for transparency reasons and to highlight the complexity of this phenomenon.

### 2.3 Proposed Theory for Mechanism

This thesis is built upon a proposed theory that aims to explain a causal relationship between the independent- (cause) and dependent variable (outcome). The theory driving this thesis is that severe decreases in foreign aid create the opportunity for rebel groups to gain relative power and mobilise their attacks, intensifying armed conflicts. This expectation is built on existing literature examining the effects of foreign aid and theories on how changes in the balance of power between governments and rebel groups can spur action (and hence affect the intensity of conflict), as well as upon logical reasoning.

For the aim of this thesis, it is rather irrelevant for what reasons severe decreases in foreign aid occur, wherefore the theory is focused on the (expected) effects and mechanisms arising from them. Foreign aid can create an economic dependency for the recipient state (Niyonkuru 2016), even though this is not always the case. The intensity and length of the donation period are crucial factors which determine however a government becomes dependent on the foreign aid (Clemens et al. 2012). When foreign aid is withdrawn or severely decreased in a dependent country, this creates an economic shock for the recipient government. Economic shocks can be defined as “unexpected, unpredictable events which result in drastic economic changes” (Business Dictionary n.d.), and hence decrease the capabilities and power for the government. Therefore, aid shocks will weaken the central government and create incentives for (potential) rebels to challenge this government due to a disruption of the status quo (Nielsen et al. 2011).

This creates a shift in the domestic balance of power between the government and the opposing rebel groups, in favour of the latter. Even if the balance of power remains asymmetric in favour of the government, such a shift still creates an opportunity for the rebels to alter their tactics due to a relative increase of power (Powell 1999). When an economic shock hits a state, the government will have fewer capabilities to deter rebels. This since the government no longer can raise the probability of government victory through investments in the military or through
bribing rebels from fighting, at least not to the same extent as before the shock. The shock in foreign aid affects the government’s overall resource base, wherefore the government no longer is able to invest in measures to deter rebels or afford to credibly commit future transfers to them (Nielsen et al. 2011). This can spur conflict due to a bargaining failure where:

“Large, rapid changes in the bargainers’ relative power cause inefficiency because the government cannot credibly commit to providing a flow of resources sufficient to make rebels indifferent between conflict and peace” (Powell 2004: 232).

Hence, an economic shock for the government will affect the opposing actors’ willingness to bargain. When rebels gain relative strength in relation to the government, their resolve to fight will increase due to their newfound power, creating a window of opportunity for rebels or coup plotters (Fearon 2003: 22). The strategic environment shifts in a way that (at least temporarily) make the usually weaker actors, the rebel groups, relatively stronger. Such rapid shifts in the distribution of power may lead to a bargaining breakdown due to commitment problems where negotiated outcomes between the actors are less likely to occur. This because added benefits of war or armed conflict induce rebels to take up arms instead of negotiating, which is a possible situation created when the dynamics of relative power shifts and hence affects the intensity of a conflict (Powell 2012). Furthermore, Collier and Hoeffler argue that opportunity costs and economic factors have the most explanatory power for rebellion. When the cost of rebellion is low, the risk of intrastate conflicts increases (2004: 563-565), wherefore aid shocks can increase the risk of coups and attacks due to the government’s relative loss of power.

Hence, when war or fighting no longer seem too risky, rebels are incentivised to utilize this window of opportunity to mobilise and increase their attacks. This because rebel groups often prefer a change of the status quo, which make them more willing to engage in violence (Lake and Powell 1999: 9-10), while governments are more willing to negotiate rather than go to war (Fearon 1995: 380). Considering this, a severe aid shock should create a relative power change and increase the risk of rebel mobilisation as well as more intense violence and attacks from them. Additionally, Buhaug (2006) explains that poor and resource-dependent regimes are usually unstable, increasing the risk of attracting revolutions or coups from opponents. Thus,
the risk of rebel mobilisation should be even higher in aid-dependent countries due to their vulnerability.

The figure below shows the expected mechanism connecting aid shocks with the intensification of armed conflict, as proposed by the theory. The purpose is to clarify the different steps of the theorised causal mechanism which connect the cause with the expected outcome. An aid shock is expected to create an economic shock for the government. This economic shock is in turn expected to create a window for opportunity for the rebels to increase their attacks which intensifies the armed conflict.

**Figure 1: Theorised (causal) mechanism**

### 2.4 The Use of the Theoretical Framework

The theorised mechanism relating aid shocks with the intensification of armed conflicts is used as the operationalisation of the proposed theory. This means that this thesis investigates whether this predicted mechanism can be found in the case study at hand, and consequently provide us with reasons to confirm, develop or reject this theory.

### 2.5 Scope Conditions and Assumptions

In order to make the theory able to operate, certain limits are set by scope conditions and assumptions for the study which are presented in this section of the thesis. One of the scope conditions is that the theory only applies to intrastate armed conflicts, where at least one of the parties is a government (as clarified previously in the theory section). This also affects the population from where the studied case is selected. Furthermore, due to limitations of time, only one dyad makes up the main case under investigation. This in order to make the most
elaborated and qualitative analysis possible. Nevertheless, other actors are taken into consideration in order to provide for a fairer understanding of the intensification of armed conflict. Moreover, Arreguín-Toft (2001) explains that there usually is an asymmetric power relation between the central government and the opposing rebel groups, in favour of the first. Rebels tend to adopt their tactics to this by using unconventional warfare, such as targeting civilians. When there is a relative shift in power, rebels can alter their tactics and use more conventional methods, such as fighting government forces (Ibid.). Furthermore, the theory assumes that the rebels are aware of the domestic power distribution in order to know when there occurs a shift in the balance of power. Nielsen et al. (2011: 222) explain that rebels have strong incentives to keep track of the governmental strength and will therefore closely see over the changes in its budget continuously. Through so, the rebels can discover potential shocks in it, at least to some extent. However, if the rebels are unable to observe such shocks directly, they are probably able to discover them indirectly. This by observing obvious decreases in the state’s side-payments or other services, which indicate a decrease in their economic capabilities (Ibid.).

3. METHOD AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Choice of Method

The purpose of this thesis is to explore a (potential) causal mechanism between aid shocks and the intensification of armed conflicts, as proposed in the theoretical framework. In order to test the mechanism-centred theory, a process-tracing is conducted as this is a method suitable for that purpose, as well as for conducting qualitative analyses (Beach 2018). Another motivation for choosing this method is that there already exists comprehensive quantitative research concerning aid shocks and armed conflicts (Nielsen et al. 2011). However, statistical studies cannot provide us with the deeper understandings of causal mechanisms which this study aims to do. One of the advantages of process-tracing is that the study provides us with a chronology over the traced events which can be of crucial significance for the process and outcome under investigation, which is commonly overlooked in more shallow studies (Försvarshögskolan n.d.). Hence, this study can hopefully provide us with deeper understandings for the consequences of (unreliable) foreign aid and its effects on armed conflicts.
3.1.1 Process-Tracing

This study is based on a qualitative process-tracing on a single case. Process-tracing is a method where the causal mechanism between the independent variable (cause) and the dependent variable (outcome) is mapped out (George and Bennett 2005). The causal mechanism is “a complex system, which produces an outcome by the interaction of a number of parts” and tests the validity of the proposed theoretical framework (Beach and Pedersen 2013: 1-3). Accordingly, the theorised mechanism in this thesis consists of different events which are expected to follow an aid shock, where one event leads to the next. Empirical evidence is collected concerning the theorised mechanism, in order to test whether it appears to relate the cause to the outcome in the way expected. Process-tracing is a single-case method which means that it can only provide us with inferences about the mechanism in the studied case since the empirical evidence may be very case-specific. However, this is valuable for gaining a better understanding for how causal processes work. Furthermore, the findings can be generalised to some extent, however one must be careful not to draw too hasty conclusions. Additionally, the findings can be better generalised by adding comparative across-case methods (Beach 2017: 1-2), which can incentivise future researchers to improve the findings of this study further. Moreover, contextual factors determine whether the same mechanisms can be expected from different cases, meaning that this study is generalisable to some extent, also without across-case comparisons (Falleti and Lynch 2009: 1160).

Process-tracing can be performed through a minimalist understanding or a systems understanding of the mechanism under study. Through the minimalist understanding, the causal mechanism between the cause and outcome is not unpacked in any detail but only contributes with diagnostic evidence, which is useful when we have little knowledge of what kind of mechanism(s) that connects the cause and outcome. On the other hand, the systems understanding is better when we have a good understanding of a plausible causal mechanism (Beach 2017: 4-5), as theorised in this thesis. Hence, this is the method that is used in this study in order to strive for a more precise understanding of the mechanism, as well as to make stronger causal inferences about the causal process under investigation. By unpacking each constituent part of the causal mechanism, it is easier to find shortcomings in the theoretical reasoning (Ibid.:
5). Hence, the key contribution of such causal process observations is the description of causal sequences connecting the cause and outcome (Collier 2011). Accordingly, the proposed theory in this thesis consists of causal sequences that are based on prior understandings and knowledge of domestic power shifts.

3.1.2 Theory-Testing Process-Tracing

In this study, a theory-testing process-tracing is conducted, which means that a theorised causal mechanism is tested in a typical case. By tracing the mechanism between the cause and outcome, a greater understanding of how these are linked can be gained. This type of process-tracing assesses the plausibility of the theory on empirics collected about the case under study (Trampusch and Palier 2016: 445). First, a theoretical causal mechanism has been developed, based on already existing literature and logical reasoning. From this theory, the expected observables constitute mechanistic evidence for the potential causality between the cause and outcome under investigation. If these expected empirics can be observed in the studied case, it is possible to infer that the theorised causal mechanism was present (Beach 2017: 17). Thus, in order to test the theory for this thesis, empirical evidence connecting aid shocks and the intensification of armed conflict is collected and later valued and discussed. Furthermore, Beach (2017: 18) highlights the importance to take competing theories into consideration when drawing conclusions from the observed material. If the predicted mechanism cannot be substantiated, it is possible to use the research to build new theories about the mechanism instead.

For this thesis, an appendix is used in order to structure the findings according to the theorised mechanism. Hence, indicators for the mechanism found in the material are collected and structured chronologically from the cause (aid shock) to the outcome (intensification of armed conflict) in the appendix on page 36. By doing so, it is easier to interpret the findings and draw conclusions about their ability to confirm or reject the theorised mechanism. When structuring the empirical evidence in this way, several sources are triangulated in order to strengthen their value as evidence (triangulation is further discussed in section 3.3). Furthermore, the appendix provides us with a good overview of the findings and which sources that are used in this thesis, which is helpful for transparency reasons.
3.2 Choice of Case

This thesis aims to reveal a causal mechanism connecting aid shocks and the intensification of armed conflicts. These variables have already been set in the theory section, whereas the purpose is to explore their expected relationship. In order to conduct a proper process-tracing, the case of study must be chosen strategically. By selecting a typical case, where the independent and dependent variables are present, this enables an opportunity to investigate if the theorised mechanism between was present as well. A typical case is a case where the cause (or causes), the outcome as well as relevant conditions for an already given causal mechanism are all present. What is important is that there is no point in tracing a mechanism which we beforehand know that we will not find (Beach 2017: 15). By this logic, indicators for the theorised mechanism in the chosen case are expected to be found wherefore the case is not chosen blindly. Hence, the case selection is based on the presence of an aid shock followed by the intensification of armed conflict, which make it possible to study a mechanism which relates these events. Accordingly, the population of interest is countries affected by armed conflicts which have experienced an aid shock.

Based on these criteria for case selection presented above, the chosen case is Afghanistan between 2012 and 2018. Afghanistan has been affected by intrastate armed conflict concerning the government since the 1970s, from when several insurgent groups have attempted to take over it (UCDP 2019a). In this thesis, the focus is on the dyad between the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban. The reasoning behind this is that the intrastate conflict in Afghanistan is highly complex and involves a lot of actors, wherefore in order to make a more in-depth analysis (which is the purpose of this thesis), only one dyad is the primary focus. However, other actors are also taken into consideration in order to draw proper conclusions about the theorised mechanism and the main dyad. Furthermore, the conflict between the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban has been highly affected by secondary parties, both with military involvement (UCDP 2019b) and from economic involvement in the form of aid, which at its peak was almost equivalent to Afghanistan’s entire GDP (Nasery 2014: 2). In the years 2010 and 2011, the government in Afghanistan received 11$ and 13$ billion respectively, which decreased severely between the years 2012 and 2016 to 8$ billion annually. This means
that the aid decreased with around 33 per cent (Ibid.), which together with the government’s aid dependency is considered as an aid shock according to the conceptualisation of this thesis. Furthermore, an intensification of this armed conflict can be observed, primarily in 2017-2018 (UCDP 2019a), motivating a study of the (potential) causal relationship between the aid shock and this development, as proposed by the theory.

3.3 Data Selection

In order to conduct this theory-centred study, data is selected as well as discussed in this section of the thesis. One of the most challenging parts when collecting material for a process-tracing concerns its value as evidence for the theorised mechanism. Mechanistic evidence is “any observable manifestation of our theorised causal mechanism(s) that has probative value in relation to determining whether it was present or not in the case” (Beach 2016: 469). Hence, it is important to be careful when drawing conclusions from the gathered material, as well as to critically evaluate them. In this thesis, the primary sources are secondary sources which consist of reports, news and scientific articles. The reasons for this are that these are available and extensive, unlike the possibility to gather first-hand information considering the time frame and subject of study.

Furthermore, there exists a lot of material on the armed conflict in Afghanistan, increasing the feasibility to triangulate the sources. Triangulation is used in order to increase the validity of the used sources, meaning that they are validated through cross-verification to test their consistency (Better Evaluation n.d.), which can be observed in the appendix at the end of this thesis. Furthermore, process-tracing is dependent on understanding how and why actors act in a specific way, wherefore news reports are specifically useful since they often provide us with such angles. However, the use of secondary sources increases the risk of bias as well as wrongful information, and the sources must therefore be carefully valued (Drucker, Fleming and Chan 2016). Furthermore, not only the sources must be critically evaluated, wherefore the next section of the thesis points out a couple of shortcomings of the research design to decrease their impact on the results.

3.4 Limitations of Thesis
For transparency reasons and in order to highlight some limitations of this study, a discussion and some critical reflections of this thesis’ overall design is conducted in this section. One of the main limitations of the research design occurs due to the time frame, creating certain limits which affect the extent of the study. Because of this, only one dyad in the conflict is more deeply investigated, and the process-tracing is not followed by any across-case comparisons. However, these demarcations have been strategically decided as measures to hinder that the study becomes superficial, leaving out the more in-depth analyses. Moreover, process-tracing can only provide us with inferences about the chosen case, meaning that the results can be difficult to generalise. Furthermore, the case selection was strategic, however, did not derive from a set number of conflicts in a clearly defined population which could have made the decisions behind it more transparent. Nevertheless, for conducting a proper theory-testing process-tracing, the case was selected by the premises that the causal event and expected outcome were present, since there is no point is searching for something that is not expected to be find (Beach and Pedersen 2013: 13). Hence, the case was selected accordingly to the purpose of this study which is to provide us with understandings for a causal mechanism connecting an aid shock and the intensification of armed conflict.

Another shortcoming of the thesis is that the material possibly provides us with more information from an international perspective than a local. Most of the sources used may be affected by certain views, and probably leave out other. For example, some of the news articles that are used try to explain the behaviour of rebels, however without first-hand interviews or equivalent. Just like in this thesis, the used sources also had to interpret situations, affecting their content. Furthermore, considering the involvement of international actors in Afghanistan, it is likely that international media monitoring on the case has been affected by outside parties’ agendas. Additionally, considering that this study is conducted on a single case, the internal validity becomes high whereas the external validity becomes lower. This means that the tested theory does not hold in all cases, however, contributes by shedding light on a mechanism which connects aid shocks and the intensification of armed conflict. Considering that the theory can be tested in other cases than the one under study, and that it is built upon already existing literature and arguments, it is possible to generalise it to some extent.

4. ARMED CONFLICT IN AFGHANISTAN
Afghanistan has been characterised by armed conflicts and coups since the 1970s, leading to the country’s declaration as a republic in 1973. This was followed by a Soviet invasion and a military coup in 1978, leading to a Soviet-backed socialist government in the country. Armed oppositions grew and fought this government and the Soviet troops, which were withdrawn in 1988. Nevertheless, this did not end the conflict as several insurgent groups continued their attempts to take over the government. The Taliban emerged in the 1990s and managed to take control of the government between 1996 and 2001 with a totalitarian Islamic rule. In 2001, an international coalition led by the United States invaded Afghanistan and has been present in the country since. Together with an Afghan opposition alliance, this coalition managed to remove the Taliban from the government and attempted to install a democratisation process in the country (UCDP 2019a). The presence of international forces as well as motives for invading Afghanistan have been debated, and reports indicate that the Afghan population has been exposed to violence by both rebels, government- and international forces (UNAMA 2018).

After the international invasion, the Taliban regrouped and have continued to fight an armed conflict towards the post-Taliban government and their multinational coalition, which is still ongoing today (2019) (BBC 2019a).

The Taliban emerged as a reaction to the collapse of the Soviet-backed communist regime in the 1990s (Encyclopaedia Britannica n.d.), and their outspoken goal is to establish a Shariah-governed state. This is one of the main insurgent groups in Afghanistan, which uses both conventional and unconventional tactics. The primary reasons why people choose to join the Taliban is due to the lack of protection and provision of basic services from the central government. Furthermore, corruption together with the breakdown of law also push people toward insurgency (Jones and Fair 2010: 88-89). The central targets for the Taliban are both Afghan government forces and international coalition troops. The Taliban have had several settlement talks with the United States as well as officials from the Afghan government. However, none of these have led to a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Other important actors that affect the conflict between the government of Afghanistan and the Taliban are other insurgent groups in the country as well as in neighbouring countries. The Taliban both coordinates and is supported by several militant groups, such as the Al-Qaeda, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and thousands of Pakistani Islamic militants. This cooperation between groups has strengthened the Taliban since the group has been provided with militants to fight for them (Center for International Security and Cooperation 2018).
Furthermore, the conflict in Afghanistan is highly internationalised, affected by secondary support and is used as an arena for international disputes. The United States has deployed the most troops to support the Afghan government since the international intervention in 2001, which peaked in 2011 (Griffiths 2017). Furthermore, NATO-led troops and peacekeepers have been present in Afghanistan since 2002, deployed to fight the Taliban (BBC 2019a). At the end of 2014, the mission of foreign troops was supposed to end, whereas most troops were withdrawn. Instead, a non-combat mission was installed which focused on training Afghan forces. However, a bilateral agreement between the Afghan government and the United States established their continuation as a secondary warring party (UCDP 2019b). Furthermore, many different insurgent groups have affected the conflict, fighting both the government and the Taliban. Many of them keep their bases in Pakistan from where they mobilise (UCDP 2019a; UCDP 2019b).

5. FINDINGS

For the purpose of this thesis, in order to properly test the theorised mechanism, a process-tracing of the case is conducted whereas selective findings are presented in this section. These findings are framed as (possible) indicators of the theorised mechanism, which is further analysed and discussed in the next section concerning their validity and which conclusions that can be drawn from them. Furthermore, the findings are presented chronologically, from the cause of the theorised mechanism to the outcome, in order to investigate however the mechanism worked as expected in the selected case. According to this thesis’ theory, an aid shock is expected to lead to an economic shock for the government which in turn provides a window of opportunity for rebels. This window of opportunity is expected to increase rebel attacks and hence intensify the conflict. The findings of interest for this mechanism are those that can either work as mechanistic evidence for the theorised mechanism or for alternative ones if the empirics indicate that. The findings for the theorised mechanism in the selected case are summarised in an appendix at the end of the thesis (see page 36), however elaborated more extensively in the upcoming sections.

5.1 Aid Shock
The Afghan government has been highly dependent on outside assistance in the form of both economic aid and military support. The national budget in Afghanistan is split into a development budget, financing development projects and reconstruction, and an operating budget, financing salaries for example. International donors have contributed to both of these budgets (Cooper 2018: 12). Since 2001, when the United States-led coalition ousted the Taliban from the government, the new government has been highly dependent on outside help for budgetary requirements (Noorzoy 2014). It must be noted that the primary reason why the Afghan economy has been so reliant on outside assistance is due to the enormous costs of the major and long-time war in the country, hindering its development. This contextual factor has created a high vulnerability of the state and its population (Barrett 2018; Aslam et al. 2014). Moreover, a total absence of foreign aid in Afghanistan would lead to the state being unable to perform its core functions, reflecting the country’s aid dependence. These functions include financial management, infrastructure and effectiveness of the state system (Bizhan 2018: 20). Because of this, the main problem with the Afghan economy has for long been its reliance on aid flows from outside actors (Mallet 2013), which has been almost equivalent to the country’s entire GDP at its peak (Nasery 2014: 2). Furthermore, Afghanistan has been a receiver of foreign aid since the 1950s’ and the amount of aid peaked in 2011, making the country one of the most aid-dependent in the world (World Bank Group 2018: 11). In the upcoming years after this peak in aid, primarily between 2012 and 2014, the number of aid revenues decreased severely, and the total amount was reduced with around 33 per cent. This aid decrease occurred due to the withdrawal of international military troops from the country, which was as a result of political decisions to withdraw most of the international presence in Afghanistan between 2011 and 2014 (Nasery 2014: 2, 20).

5.2 Economic Shock (for Government)

The withdrawal of troops also affected the economy negatively since these had created job opportunities for the local population (Ferrie 2016). This highly affected the economy of Afghan households negatively, and the Afghan population identified unemployment as one of their biggest issues (Sida 2017: 2, 9). Hence, the presence of the United States, as well as other international actors, was decreased both in the form of military and economic support which was something that neither the Afghan government nor international actors were prepared for. One of the main reasons why the Afghan government was highly vulnerable to this shock was
due to its high levels of corruption and lack of state capacity (Aslam et al. 2014: 168). Consequently, this aid shock led to an economic shock for the Afghan government (Ferrie 2016). Indicators for this is that the unemployment and poverty level have increased since 2012 in the country (World Bank Group 2018: 14). Furthermore, the shock in aid revenues created an economic shock for the government because it created uncertainty surrounding the future of international donor assistance. This made it difficult for the country to invest for future profits, which strained the economy in Afghanistan further (Council of Foreign Relations 2019). Moreover, uncertainty and fragility have characterised the living conditions in Afghanistan for a long time, and these stem from the inability of the government to provide its population with basic resources (Sida 2017: 33). This vulnerability created a situation in the country where both the government and its population were highly exposed to and affected by economic shocks (Ibid.: 4, 10).

5.3 Window of Opportunity (for Rebels)

This vulnerability of the government created opportunities for opposition groups in the country to mobilise and increase their attacks in the country. One of the primary reasons why the Taliban has been able to do so is due to people’s willingness to join the group. The failing economy in the country and the state’s inability to provide its population with jobs have made it more profitable for people to join rebel groups. Due to the high unemployment levels and bad salaries, people have joined the Taliban in order to have a proper income (or an income at all) (Robertson 2015). This mobilisation of rebel recruitment has led to strategic takeovers by the Taliban. Additionally, the group managed to increase their attacks in the country in both amount and strength. In 2015, the Taliban captured the city of Kunduz which was their most substantial advance since 2001 (BBC 2019a; CNN 2019). This was followed by another takeover of the city Sangin, which also was a strategically strong advance. Furthermore, the Taliban increased the group’s amount of attacks both directed at Afghan government forces, government officials and the civilian population. The attacks were launched in the form of car bombings, attacks on villages and by targeting ambulances and government officials. Moreover, CNN reported in 2017 that the Taliban received weaponry from the Russian government (however denied by it), which would have strengthened them further. The deadliest attack on foreign civilians was launched in 2014, which hit a restaurant in Kabul’s diplomatic quarter where 13 people died (BBC 2019a). In 2015, the group also managed to free over 500 inmates from prisons,
strengthening them even further. Most importantly, the Taliban managed to launch attacks on strategic bases for the Afghan government which has led to an increase in power for the Taliban vis-à-vis the government (CNN 2019).

5.4 The Intensification of Armed Conflict

Since 2014, both the civilian casualties (World Bank Group 2018: 11), and battle-related deaths increased rapidly in Afghanistan and the Taliban has remained the main insurgent group in the country (Fox 2018). Even though there have occurred attempted peace talks between the two actors, the conflict has remained highly active. Since 2014, the Taliban has managed to strengthen their territorial control in the country (Sharifi and Adamou 2018) and did in 2018 control the most territory since the international intervention in 2001 (UCDP 2019a). Reports in 2018 indicated that the Taliban were in control of around four per cent of Afghanistan’s territory, as well as active in 66 per cent of it (Center for International Security and Cooperation 2019). Due to the group’s increase of attacks, the number of fatalities increased by around 30 per cent between 2017 and 2018. In 2018, Afghanistan was the deadliest region in the world and the conflict made up almost half of all casualties. The fighting in the country has primarily been between the government and its opposition, and not so much between the opposition groups (Strand et al. 2019). Because of this, the Afghan government has made attempts to reach a potential ceasefire agreement with the Taliban. The president announced that he was willing to recognise the group as a legitimate political party in order to reach a ceasefire (Popalzai and Berlinger 2018). Furthermore, the government has proposed a start of formal negotiations, in order to reach a settlement to end the war between the two parties (Center for International Security and Cooperation 2019).

5.5 Other Findings

Additionally, the severe decrease in both military and economic support coincided with a presidential election in the country in 2014. This was a first attempt to transfer power democratically in Afghanistan, however, did not go through without controversy (Giustozzi and Mangal 2014: 5-6). In countries that are affected by conflicts, electoral processes and their aftermaths often become targets for armed opposition groups (United States Institute of Peace
n.d.). Considering that most of the international troops were supposed to be withdrawn from the country at the end of the same year, this increased the worries about the outcome of the election. Furthermore, the Taliban said that they were going to target voters, which increased these concerns. The Taliban launched low level-attacks and managed to kill around 50 people across the country in conjunction with the election (BBC 2014). The electoral process required two rounds of voting, which ended through internationally mediated bargaining whereas the second round of voting was never announced (Byrd 2015: 2). Conclusively, it is likely that the elections also affected the level of violence in the country by creating opportunities for insurgent groups to strategically attack voters, as the Taliban did.

6. ANALYSIS

In this section, the empirical findings presented previously are analysed through the theorised mechanism between the aid shock and the intensification of armed conflict. The proposed theory for the mechanism argues that foreign aid shocks create the opportunity for rebel groups to gain relative power in relation to the government, consequently increasing their attacks and intensifying the armed conflict. The theory is based on existing literature and logical reasoning, and the evidence collected and presented is here used to test the theorised causal mechanism. The purpose is to make inferences about the mechanism if found in the studied case (Beach and Pedersen 2011: 6). This method contributes to leverage in causal inferences by providing insights about the mechanism under study. Hence, the process-tracing in this thesis focuses on testing the potential presence of the theorised mechanism, rather than uncovering an unknown such (Trampusch and Palier 2016: 450-451). Therefore, the analysis is based on the already set premises about the mechanism and what to expect from it. This can be problematic since other important causes and mechanisms than the one under study may be overlooked, and empirics can be over-evaluated as evidence. Because of this, a discussion on the strength of the evidence as well as potentially conflicting factors is conducted later in the analysis.

To begin with, the process-tracing of the case showed signs that the aid shock in Afghanistan affected the intensification of armed conflict in the theorised way. Furthermore, the findings indicate that there was at least one co-existing event with explanatory power for the intensification of armed conflict as well. This does not necessarily affect the theorised
mechanism under study, but rather provides us with a broader understanding of the phenomena under investigation. First, I argue that the government of Afghanistan lost relative power within the country due to the aid shock. The findings presented indicate that the shock in foreign aid affected the already failing and weak economy further, by limiting the capacities of the state and the opportunities for the population to survive without turning to rebellion. Considering that Afghanistan already had been highly vulnerable and fragile for a long time, the shock seems to have aggravated the situation even further. This considering that the unemployment and poverty levels increased afterwards (World Bank Group 2018: 14). This reflected that the government of Afghanistan was highly dependent on the foreign aid, wherefore the shock in it strained the government’s ability to invest for future profits, as well as worsened the overall capacities of the state functions including financial management (Bizhan 2018: 20). The fundamental shock occurred between 2012 and 2014 (Nasery 2014), however did not only affect the government directly due to the loss of financial capital. The shock also created a situation where uncertainty about future donations limited the government’s capabilities to invest for future profits and development.

Moreover, the findings indicate that the economic shock created a shift in the domestic power which can be observed in the opportunities it created for the Taliban. The economic shock increased the resolve for the Taliban to fight, as well as their ability to mobilise. The economic shock incentivised more of the Afghan population to join rebel groups in order to have an income. If the government was more capable of providing for the basic needs of its citizens, this would most probably not have occurred to the same extent (BBC 2019b). Furthermore, I argue that the Afghan government’s willingness to recognise the Taliban as a legitimate political party (Popalzai and Berlinger 2018), can be viewed as a sign of weakness which indicates a decrease in their domestic power. As theorised, the government prefers to keep the status quo if possible, whereas the opposing parties are more willing to fight in order to change the domestic power distribution. The economic difficulties for the government arguably set up for the post-economic shock mobilisation of the Taliban, by contributing to the state’s inability to deter the group. However, it is also important to highlight that the government’s willingness to recognise the Taliban as a political party can of course have occurred primarily as an attempt to end the war. Even though this is a possibility, my argument that this rather reflects government weakness is not unreasonable but relies on the theoretical arguments which have composed the theory of this thesis.
The armed conflict in Afghanistan both became more intense as well as more complicated in the upcoming years after the aid shock. Attacks from both sides became more deadly and widespread, and the main reason for this is that both parties want to gain the upper hand in the conflict (BBC 2018). Consequently, I argue that this mobilisation of the Taliban became feasible because of the reduction of government power and its ability to deter opponents. As theorised, the aid shock decreased the economic capabilities of the government, however, the findings indicate that more factors affected the intensification of armed conflict. These factors are the withdrawal of military troops as well as the election in 2014. However, for the purpose of this thesis as well as for the use of process-tracing, co-existing causes are not excluded, meaning that I in no way argue that the aid shock was the only cause for the intensification of armed conflict. Another important factor that appears to have influenced the intensification of armed conflict was the elections in 2014. As theorised, the government became even more vulnerable to oppositional forces due to these elections, considering that the Taliban used this opportunity to launch attacks. Considering that the Afghan government together with their international coalition attempted to perform elections in a more democratic manner, the attacks from Taliban as well as outcome of the elections reflect otherwise. Hence, I argue that this can be considered as a defeat for the government and their allies, wherefore it also contributed to the shift in the domestic balance of power in favour of opposition groups in the country, including the Taliban.

In Afghanistan, the withdrawal of military support to the Afghan government most probably also affected the intensification of armed conflict in the country. This withdrawal occurred in line with the foreign aid withdrawal, wherefore I argue that they co-existed and affected the theorised mechanism in similar ways as the aid shock. This because both contributed to the government’s decrease of power and capabilities both economically and militarily. It appears that the withdrawal of military troops also affected the domestic balance of power in Afghanistan, and hence contributed to the intensification of armed conflict in the same way as the aid shock. As presented in the findings, international military troops had earlier provided the Afghan population with job opportunities. When the troops were withdrawn, the willingness for people to join rebel groups increased due to the lack of jobs in the country (Robertson 2015). Furthermore, this withdrawal highly reduced the government’ ability to deter rebels to the same extent as earlier due to the obvious decrease of military strength. Additionally, a higher
presence of international military troops allows the government to spend less of their resources on fighting rebel groups, considering that other actors provide them with troops.

In summary, I argue that the predicted observables theorised have been found in the case of Afghanistan, meaning that it is possible to infer that the theorised causal mechanism was present. This is based upon Bayesian logic which means that evidence can be used to update the confidence in the tested causal theory. However, it is not possible to be fully confident because of the uncertainty which arises when evidence is collected from the real-world (Beach 2017: 10). Furthermore, the value of the empirics must be rigorously weighed as evidence for confirming the theorised mechanism (Ricks and Liu 2018: 845), and I argue that one strength is that it appears to work as proposed by the theory. Considering that the theory is dependent on already existing assumptions and knowledge, it is strengthened by the findings that confirm it. However, the evidence found cannot exclude other explanatory factors affecting the outcome, nevertheless does not necessarily disrupt the value of the mechanism under study.

The main evidence found suggests that the withdrawal of international troops coincided with the aid shock and hence also affected the outcome. As explained, this withdrawal also affected the economy of the country and the Afghan government’s ability to deter the Taliban. Hence, it seems to have affected a similar mechanism as the one tested. This event may even have contributed to the same mechanism as the aid shock. This conclusion relies on the fact that the withdrawal of foreign aid and the withdrawal of international troops both occurred at the same time and as parts of the withdrawal of international presence in Afghanistan. As discussed previously, both the aid shock and military withdrawal affected the domestic balance of power, wherefore the armed conflict was intensified. However, it is also important to highlight that this study did not attempt to study other possible mechanisms arising from aid shocks than the one tested. This does not mean that aid shocks have no other effects than intensifying armed conflicts in the theorised way.

However, there exist some shortcomings with the findings which challenge the analysis. First, as can be observed in the appendix on page 36, the evidence for the different steps to confirm the theorised mechanism varies in amount. This means that it was easier to find indicators for
the aid shock, economic shock and intensification of armed conflict, than for the window of opportunity for rebels. A reason for this is that a window of opportunity is more abstract than the other events and therefore demands more interpretations of the material, decreasing the generalisability of the theory. Another shortcoming is that the evidence presented is investigated through the theorised mechanism, wherefore it may have been benevolently interpreted.

Furthermore, this can limit the possibilities to discover other mechanisms arising from aid shocks. The events which constitute the theorised mechanism are also rather broad, making it easier to interpret the findings as indicators to confirm it. Hence, a possible way to improve the theorised mechanism could be to develop its constituent parts more closely. Despite of this, this thesis provides us with a more in-depth understanding of one mechanism that connects the cause (aid shock) with the outcome (intensification of armed conflict), in a way that goes beyond the general patterns of regularity that are inferred in large-N studies (Beach and Pedersen 2011: 15). However, this also limits the possibility to draw too dared conclusions about the broader population even though it is possible to some extent. Considering that causal mechanisms are highly sensitive to the context of cases, wherefore cross-case claims should only be made when it is possible to prove that the population of typical cases are contextually and causally homogenous. Hence, it is profitable to conduct process-tracing in several cases in order to draw more precise conclusions concerning the theory’s generalisability (Beach and Pedersen 2016: 23).
7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The purpose of this thesis has been to provide us with a deeper understanding of a causal mechanism connecting aid shocks and the intensification of armed conflicts by answering; “How do aid shocks affect the intensity of an armed conflict?” The findings presented indicate that there exists a causal mechanism between the aid shock in Afghanistan and the intensification of armed conflict, as suggested by the theory. However, it must be noted that the evidence presented does not provide us with causal inferences about the overall effects of the given cause, but only the one under study (Illari 2011: pp 150). Furthermore, parallel events such as the withdrawal of military troops in Afghanistan also seem to have explanatory power for the intensification of armed conflict. By the logic of process-tracing, this is not a problem neither was the purpose of the study, since it only aims to give one and not all explanations for the intensification of armed conflicts.

Additionally, the findings indicate that the withdrawal of military troops contributed to the theorised mechanism under study. Both the aid shock and the reduction of military support seem to have decreased the government’s domestic power and incentivised the Taliban to increase their attacks. Nevertheless, the theorised causal mechanism between the aid shock and the intensification of armed conflict can only be confirmed in this specific case. Even though the empirics presented indicate that there exists a causal relationship as theorised, it is important not to draw hasty conclusions about its generalisability. Thus, the findings of the mechanism in Afghanistan (which is a typical case), do not prove that the same mechanism is also present in all other typical cases where an aid shock has occurred (Beach and Pedersen 2016: 14).

In summary, the aid shock in Afghanistan appears to have intensified the armed conflict between the government and the Taliban by creating a shift in the domestic balance of power. Hence, this study has provided us with a deeper understanding of a mechanism connecting the aid shock with the intensification of armed conflict. Conclusively, the findings incentivise further problematisation of international economic involvement in other countries, as well as highlight the importance of creating long-time plans for aid-programmes. This in order to avoid the uncertainty and shocks which foreign aid can create otherwise. Furthermore, in order to improve the theorised mechanism for this study, future researchers can develop the theory’s
generalisability by making across case comparisons. It could also be profitable to develop the theorised sequences of the mechanism on a closer level in order to draw more precise conclusions about the results and better understand which events that are expected to follow an aid shock.
8. BIBLIOGRAPHY


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# APPENDIX: Process-tracing

## Theorised Mechanism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Aid Shock</th>
<th>Economic Shock</th>
<th>Window of Opportunity</th>
<th>Intensification of Armed Conflict</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Nasery 2014</em></td>
<td>-2012-2014: Aid decreased by 33 per cent.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Uncertainty about future aid flows.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>World Bank Group 2018</em></td>
<td>-Aid peak in 2011. Afghanistan one of the most aid-dependent countries.</td>
<td>-Poverty and unemployment increased since 2012.</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Increase of civilian casualties since 2014.</td>
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<td><em>Mallet 2013</em></td>
<td>-Main problem with Afghan economy: Sustained by aid flows.</td>
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<td><em>Noorzoy 2014</em></td>
<td>-Afghan government heavily dependent on outside assistance.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Council of Foreign Relations 2019</em></td>
<td>-Uncertainty surrounding future of international donor assistance strained the Afghan economy.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>UCDP 2019a</em></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Increase of battle-related deaths.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Most Taliban control over territory since 2001.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>UCDP 2019b</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Bilateral agreement between the US and Afghan government.</td>
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<td>Material</td>
<td>Aid Shock</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ferrie 2016</td>
<td>-The US has alone provided $113 billion to Afghan government. -International withdrawal of troops and aid.</td>
<td>-Disappearing jobs. No future economic plan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strand et al. 2019</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-The number of fatalities increased by 30 per cent between 2017-2018.</td>
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<td>Cooper 2018</td>
<td>-Afghan national budget split into operating- and development.</td>
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<td>Aslam et al. 2014</td>
<td>-Vulnerability of state due to long-time war.</td>
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<td>Sida 2017</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Biggest issue: Unemployment -Inability of government because of the economy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bizhan 2018</td>
<td>-Aid-dependence is shown by the inability of core functions of the state.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robertson 2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>-People join rebellion because of unemployment and poverty.</td>
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<td>CNN 2019</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Increased attacks by the Taliban. -Russian support to the Taliban. -Taliban free 500 inmates from prison.</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Important strategic wins for the Taliban.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBC 2019a</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Taliban capture strategic cities.</td>
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<td>Fox 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td>-Conflict intensification with Taliban advances.</td>
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<td>Material</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center for International Security and Cooperation 2019</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-Government proposes negotiations.</td>
<td>-In 2018, Taliban control 4% of Afghanistan, and active in 66%.</td>
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<td>Popalzai and Berlinger 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>-The government is willing to recognise the Taliban as political party.</td>
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<td>BBC 2014</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-Low level attacks of Taliban to disturb elections in 2014.</td>
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