The Role of Development Aid in Conflict Transformation:

An Analysis of the Donor Landscape in Post-Conflict Aleppo

By

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Author's Declaration

I, the undersigned **Aline Yacoubian** hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language. This is a true copy of the thesis, including final revisions.

Date: **14th of June 2019**

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Abstract

The role of development aid in conflict transformation has been a core discourse in the field of international development. In 2012 the Syrian Conflict reached the city of Aleppo, plunging the city into a protracted armed conflict. The escalation of violence coupled with the grave humanitarian catastrophes and destruction, brought much international attention to the Conflict. The aid donor community mobilized its efforts to respond to the Conflict, through humanitarian relief and development assistance. This thesis analyzes the development assistance in Aleppo in the period during the Battle of Aleppo (2012-2016) and in the 'post-conflict' phase (2016 and beyond). It addresses the notion of aid neutrality and the targeting of aid through societal cleavages. This research finds that the changes in the framework of development assistance was highly contingent upon the timing and evolution of the Conflict, and that donor strategies were highly organization/donor specific.

Key words: development aid, conflict transformation, aid neutrality, donor intentionality

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Dedication

To the victims of Syria's war, and all wars being fought.

To every individual fleeing war to find a better life.

To every Refugee.

To faith, hope and perseverance.

To my beloved Syria, and the people of Syria.

To peace, however scarce.

May the power of love win over the love of power.

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Introduction

The role of aid in conflict has been a core discourse in the discipline of international aid policy. One of the major 'lessons learned' regarding aid in conflict is the inconsistency of aid throughout the evolution of conflicts, with high focus on aid in the initial stages of conflict and a 'dissolving' landscape of aid throughout the middle and the last stages of conflict (Collier, et al., 2003). For aid to result in its intended growth and development, the global donor landscape needs to be restructured. One crucial role of aid in conflict situations is its ability to bring forth conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Development aid in particular is viewed as a major contributor in the mitigation of conflict, resulting in long-term sustainable development. Thus, international development cooperation is a key element in the successful implementation of aid programmes in conflict settings (DAC, 1997, p. 7).

With the changing dynamics of conflict and the rise of global interstate and intrastate conflicts, the prevention of conflict has become a key objective in the world of international development (DAC, 1997, p. 9). Development aid programmes in conflict settings act as essential drivers to post-conflict reconciliation, physical rehabilitation and institutional development (DAC, 1997, p. 9). Unlike humanitarian aid and relief, development assistance in conflict settings aims to achieve long-term goals and objectives, as opposed to 'short-term' goals. However, the different types of aid interventions in conflict settings are often synchronized and exist in tandem with one another. Development aid programmes need to tackle the root causes of conflict, and address them in their missions. This means using a 'conflict-sensitive' approach, and incorporating conflict-specific aspects in aid strategies to refrain from doing more 'harm than good' (Anderson M. , 1999).

In 2011, the Arab Spring brought forth a series of intrastate conflicts that received a vast amount of international attention and international community involvement. The aid donor community responded swiftly to the eruption of conflicts driven by the Arab Spring, making some countries of the Arab world the top ten recipients of aid (OECD, 2019). The self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi1 in Tunisia, became the fueler of the Arab Spring - the series of uprisings, protests and mass demonstrations that erupted in the Arab World in late 2010 and early 2011. The Arab Spring was a major 'wake-up call' to Arab powers about growing discontent and grievances. '*The people want to topple the regime'* was the core message chanted by the People during the mass protests across the Arab states (Mason, 2014, p. 1), demanding reform, concessions and government change. For the first time, the Arab Uprisings portrayed the unity of the Arab people over the mere yearning for stability, peace, justice and freedom (Ghanem, 2016, p. 7). Syria has become one of the top recipients of Official Development Assistance (ODA) since the onset of Conflict in 2011. Though the Conflict has not yet ended, most cities across Syria have somewhat reach a 'post-conflict' period of recovery.

The donor landscape in Syria is an interesting case to analyze. Syria has witnessed a plethora of humanitarian relief organizations and development agencies expanding their missions in the country. Aleppo - Syria's second largest city and industrial hub –went through one of the most protracted battles in the country, becoming the main battlefield for the Conflict combatants from 2012 until the year 2016 (Czuperski et al., 2017). The prominent cleavages present in Aleppo's social fabric coupled with the complex political dynamics and powerplay resulted in a 'divided'

[1] A Tunisian vegetable vendor who immolated himself in Tunisia in December 2010, expressing the grave economic grievances and unemployment in the country (Mason, 2014).

development aid landscape. The fragmented landscape of aid was further aggravated with the city's 'division' into two parts: the government-controlled West and the rebel-controlled East during the Battle phase. Hence the case of Aleppo demonstrates a changing aid framework with the evolution of conflict. This research focuses on Aleppo's case study with regards to development aid actors throughout the Battle of Aleppo (2012-2016). It explores the role development aid actors played in Aleppo's conflict transformation, through the standpoint of donor landscape and intentionality.

Chapter 1 – Contextual Framework of the Syrian Conflict and the Battle of Aleppo

Syria and the 2011 wave of Arab Uprisings

Some signs of instability were beginning to surface in Syria prior to the eruption of the uprising. Encouraged and reinforced by their Arab neighbors, Syrians began to mobilize themselves and gathered on the streets calling for "dignity" (Wieland, 2012, p. 18). On the 15th of March 2011, thousands of people gathered for mass protests across cities in Syria. What initially began as peaceful protests and demands for reform and political concessions, later plunged into a "militarized confrontation" (Lucas, 2016, p. 12) between the people and the Government forces. The unrest further gained momentum in March 2011 with the outbreak of protests in the city of Daraa, following the imprisonment of teenage boys who spray-painted *regime change and reform messages* on the city walls (p. 12). The mass protest of Daraa brought forth a major turn of events with the introduction of violence in the Government's approach with regards to 'containing' the situation. Consequentially, unrest proliferated to other cities around Syria – primarily the city of Homs and Hama – and clashes with the government forces intensified.

With the escalation of violence – the sectarian "rhetoric" began to take shape. Sectarian and ethnic factors were not what primarily divided the government opponents and supporters at the early stages of Conflict. Rather, one of the major dividers amongst supporters and opposers at the initial stages of the conflict was economic, political and social cleavages (Wimmen, 2016, p. 3). Being the cradle of religious groups, "religious pluralism" in Syria was often used as a 'defense mechanism' by the Syrian government to repress sectarian notions from surfacing throughout the

conflict (p. 3). Those on the opposition end often resorted to a sectarian rhetoric that encompassed the Sunni Islam "struggle" with the Alawite ruling power (p. 3). The complexity of the Syrian conflict and the various actors involved diverted the conflict into a sectarian warfare. Syria became an "arena of regional and international struggle" with a power play under the umbrella of two "superpowers" – the United States and Russia (Zisser, 2017, p. 555). The power dichotomy was evident at the early years of the Syrian conflict. On one side, the Syrian government's alliance with Russia, Iran and Hezbollah. On the other side, United States-backed alliance of Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar. Political analysts often refer to this power dynamic as a broader Sunni – Shia regional proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia (p. 556).

The Syrian conflict: an analysis of the root causes

The Ba'ath Party[2] became a pivotal player in the Syrian political arena after the Coup of 1963, giving birth to the "Syrian Ba'athist state" (Hinnebusch et al., 2015, p. 3). When Hafez al-Assad came to power in 1971, the "Ba'athist statism" played a key role in the construction of his presidential system, which was a cooperation of the Ba'athist army and Party with strong support from Assad's "comrades, kin" and the Alawite society (p. 4). The 'minority ruling the majority' rhetoric began surfacing amongst the "Sunni majority" especially within the Muslim Brotherhood (p. 4). When Hafez's son - Bashar al-Assad – came to power in 2000, economic 'liberalization' was prioritized in his "reformist agenda" (p. 21). The presidency of Bashar al-Assad was able to navigate Syria to a "post-Ba'athist period", diminishing the influence of the Party and restoring

[2] An Arab socialist political party, established in Syria in 1947 (Hinnebusch & Zintl, 2015).

'loyalty' amongst the population base that was withered during the Syrian Ba'athist State (p. 21). The Party remained a crucial instrument in maintaining and sustaining the support of the Sunni people in Syria towards the Alawite-dominated ruling class (p. 23). Stability was certain under the Assad rule, and the "peaceful coexistence" of ethnicities was often highly-praised (though it was mainly as a result of repression as any threats to the "national sentiment" was not tolerated) (p. 71).

The persistent focus on security and stability put other pressing issues on "a back burner" (Ghanem, 2016, p. 8). One of the major causes of the Syrian uprising is the overlooked economic concerns. Under the presidency of Bashar al-Assad, economic liberalization was a priority. This approach is often described as the "Chinese model of reform" which sought to "legitimize the regime" through economic development and improved livelihood (Hinnebusch et al., p. 101). The presidency of Bashar al-Assad "modernized" the authoritarian system, and paved room for more vulnerabilities that became the "seeds" of the Syrian uprising (p. 290). One such 'seed' was the concentration of power and "patronage" in the ruling class, and withering relations with the Ba'ath Party and its Sunni-population network which resulted in a government structure comprised of "upper class" people and an Alawite majority (p. 291). The drawbacks in economic reform are another area by which the 'authoritarian upgrading' contributed to the uprising. Crony capitalism surfaced, enriching and empowering the "bourgeoisie" while disadvantaging the others (p. 292). Government support for public goods, agriculture and social security decreased significantly. Syria's economic 'liberalization' disrupted the economy on the long-run with increasing unemployment, corruption, rising prices alongside other backlashes. The government's approach separated the constituencies through "unequal treatment", favoring of the wealthy and the urban

few (p. 293). The lack of rule of law and respect to human rights, coupled with repression and the absence of freedom further added to people's discontent (p. 295).

Syrian uprising and the city of Aleppo

The escalation of the Syrian conflict is often described as a consequence to the Government's inability to appropriately handle the outbreak of mass protests across the country. The infliction of violence on protestors by government forces quickly transformed the conflict into a militarized one (Abboud, 2018, p. 137). The militarization of the uprising was a major tipping point in Syria's conflict dynamic, transforming the protests into an armed conflict (Khaddour, 2015). Towards the end of 2012, the wave of Syrian protests swept through its merchant city of Aleppo.

The Aleppo conflict is a "microcosm of Syria's conflict" (Kilcullen et al., 2014, p. 8). Aleppo was home to twenty-five percent of Syria's population, and a mosaic of Syria's ethnically and religiously diverse minority groups – the "Christians, Kurds, Armenians and the Turkmen" alongside other religious and ethnic sects (p. 8). Being the second largest city in Syria, Aleppo was the industrial and commercial hub, and the economic capital (ReliefWeb , 2013, p. 5). It was the heart of Syria's agricultural production, commerce and industrial activity. Around forty percent of Syria's goods were manufactured and produced in the city, and Aleppo had around an estimated thirty-five percent of Syria's "non-oil exports" (Kilcullen et al., 2014, p. 8). With the authoritarian upgrade of President Bashar al-Assad, fragmentations began to take place between the city of Aleppo and the remote areas surrounding it. This was largely due to the decreasing government support to rural areas by 'favoring' the urban crony capitalism. The rural/urban divide and the

deepening of "rural resentments" was vivid in Aleppo prior to the instigation of conflict (p. 6). The remote areas located East of the city were densely populated and underprivileged, in comparison to the urban areas mostly located in the Western parts of the city (Courtney et al., 2014, p. 37). These parts of the city were mostly populated by the Sunni Muslim "working class" and were significantly underserved (p. 37).

When protests broke out in the Syria, Aleppo did follow the track. Organized protests took over the streets of Aleppo, but until 2012 Aleppo "resisted the violence" (Czuperski, Itani, Nimmo, Higgins, & Beals, 2017, p. 2). In May of 2012, a mass protests were organized in the city's major university – University of Aleppo. These protests quickly plunged into violence following their fierce suppression by security forces. Government airstrikes on the city neighborhoods "harboring the uprising" (p. 2) further exacerbated the Aleppo conflict as more organized protests erupted, namely by the city's rural poor and "agrarian" population. Crony capitalism prevented Aleppo's "middle and upper" classes – comprised of businessmen and industrialists – from joining protests, especially as some held very close ties with the ruling elite (p. 2).

Aleppo: the divorce of the West and East

Aleppo was rather "passive" in the initial years of the Syrian uprising until its remote East was "dragged" into the conflict in July of 2012 when rebel groups started the insurgency there (Courtney et al., 2014, p. 37). The Western and Eastern parts of the city were divided, and the battle's front line crossed through Aleppo's old city (Czuperski et al., 2017, p. 3). Opposition groups and forces grasped control over most of the eastern parts of Aleppo by the end of 2012.

They formulated a new structure of governance, giving birth to the *Council for the Aleppo Governorate*, the *City Council* and a security and military council that was responsible in managing the military groups and security over the East Aleppo. This newly established structure of governance in East Aleppo provided the needed services for the population, ranging from public goods to water and humanitarian relief (Khaddour, 2015, p. 9).

Figure 1 The West and East parts of Aleppo during the first year of the conflict. The dotted line cutting through the middle portrays the Battle's front line (Kilcullen, Rosenblatt, & Qudsi, 2014, p. 1).

The Battle of Aleppo: a conflict timeline

January – December 2012

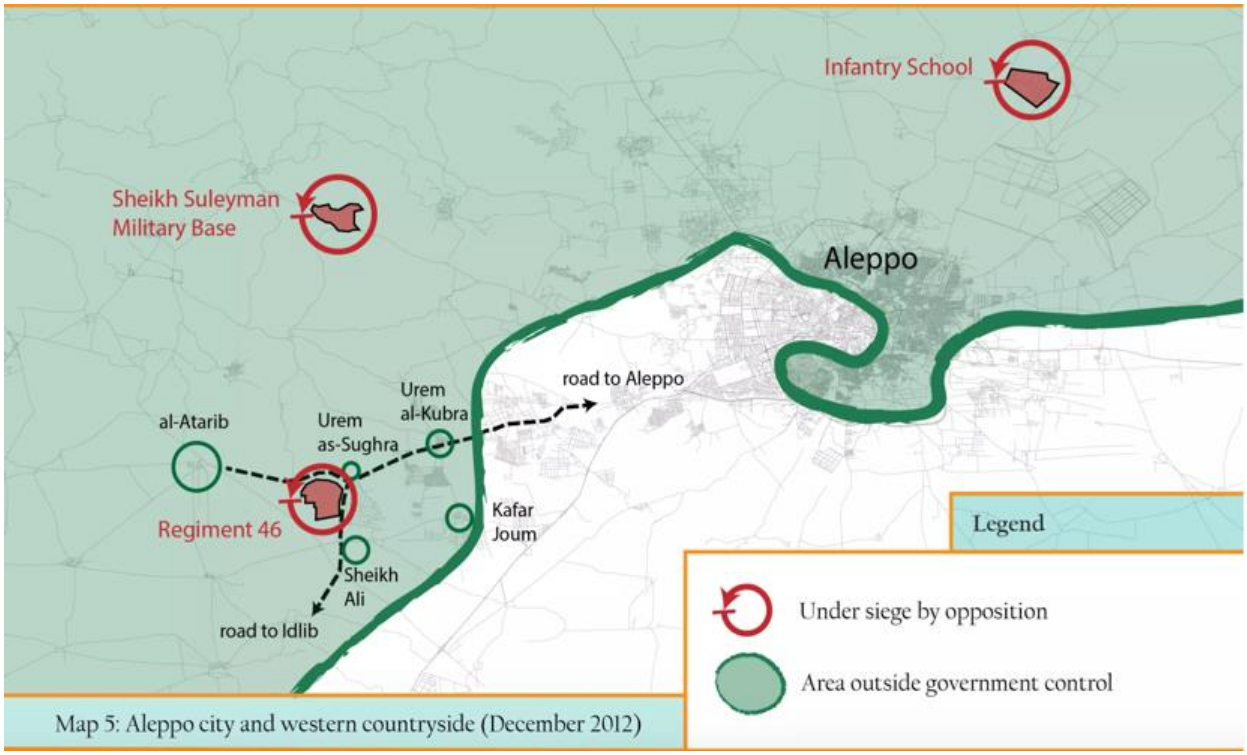

Figure 2 Areas of control by the end of 2012: the government and the opposition (Tokmajyan, 2012, p. 12)

In 2012, protests in the city of Aleppo began to emerge. The first international community response to the happenings of Aleppo came in March of 2012 with Kofi Annan's "six-point (peace) plan" drafted by the United Nations and the Arab League (Tokmajyan, 2012, p. 4). The plan was to reach a ceasefire agreement, and a political transition phase under – Geneva Communiqué[3]. The plan failed in implementation as clashes persisted in the city of Aleppo. The first major event in Aleppo took place in July 2012 when rebels attacked a district located on the southwestern part of the city.

[3] Geneva Communiqué was the Action Group for Syria, headed by UN's peace envoy to Syria – Kofi Annan. The action group aimed to establish a transitional government body that would include members of the Syrian Government and leaders of the opposition. The Communiqué was established in 2012 in Geneva (United Nations, 2012).

Clashes between government forces and opposition groups continued to take place as each group fought to maintain their areas of control. At this point, the alliance of opposition forces included the Free Syrian Army, the Syrian Liberation Front and the Liwa al-Tawhid[4] (p. 7). In the north of Aleppo, a third group emerged, the Kurdish militia (People's Protection Unit and the Women's Protection Unit – YPG and YPJ) (p. 8). The Kurdish militia aimed to protect the Kurdish majority territories amidst the conflict. Confrontations between rebel groups and the YPG/YPJ arose until the establishment of truce in November 2012. Towards the end of 2012 the opposition captured control in most of Aleppo's western countryside. In November 2012, opposition groups met in Doha and established the National Coalition, which became the main representor of the Syrian opposition in international arena (p. 8).

January – December 2013

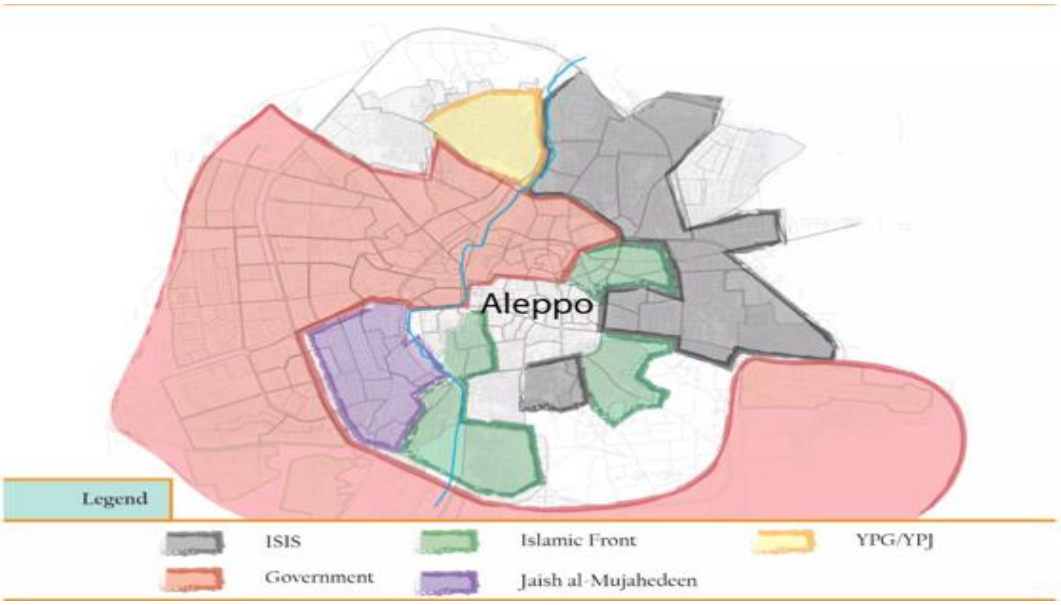

Figure 3 Areas of control by the end of 2013: the government and the opposition and the YPG/YPJ (Tokmajyan, 2013, p. 21)

[4] Also referred to as the Revolution's Military Council (Tokmajyan, 2012, p. 6).

In 2013, the opposition's strategy shifted towards grasping government "artillery and military" bases and airports as Jabhet al-Nusra (JN) (an offshoot of al-Qaeda) and the Syrian Islamic Front joined the opposition group in the fighting (Tokmajyan, 2013, p. 2). The opposition began making advancements and capturing control over major government strongholds, and routes around and within the city of Aleppo. In April 2013, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) came into the scene, under the leadership of Abou Baker al-Baghdadi. The three major actors of the on-ground opposition groups now comprised of: ISIS, JN or other "radical groups" (p. 9). Year 2013 was a continuous 'see-saw' of government-controlled areas gained and lost. Towards the end of 2013, the balance tipped in favor of the government. Government forces – with the support of Hezbollah[5] – took control over the city's urban and rural west, alongside other opposition-controlled areas.

January – December 2014

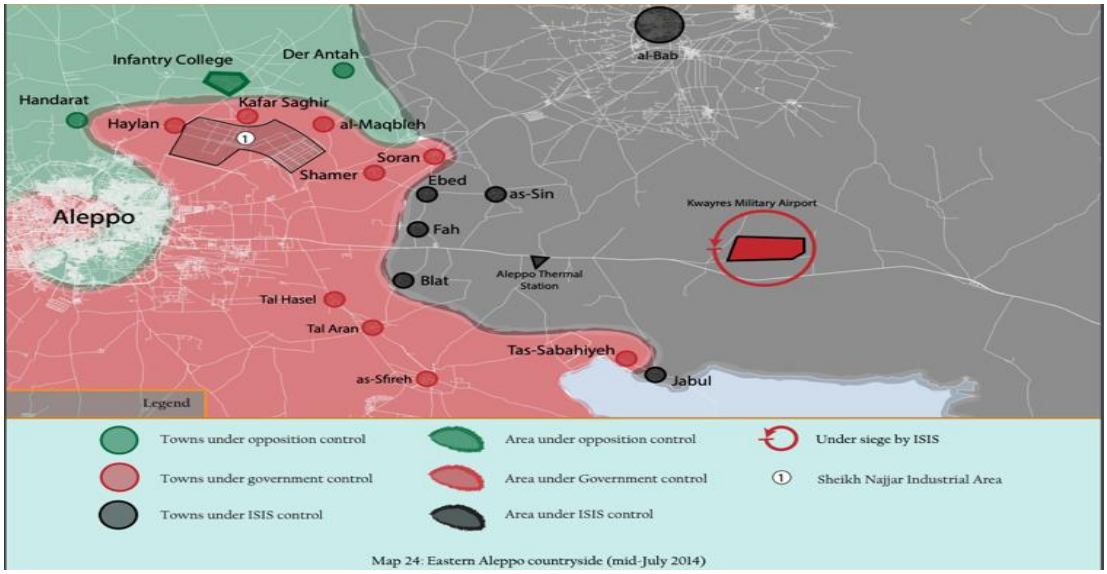

Figure 4 Areas under control in July 2014: ISIS, government and opposition (Tokmajyan, 2014, p. 11).z

[5] A Lebanon-based Shia'a Islam political group, a significant ally to the Syrian government during the Conflict (Tokmajyan, 2014).

ISIS made strong advancements into east Aleppo, controlling ten districts in the first quarter of 2014 and declaring its Caliphate[6] (Tokmajyan, 2014, p. 3). In September 2014, a United States-led international military coalition[7] attacked some ISIS strongholds in the city, resulting in some losses in ISIS-controlled areas (p. 13)

January – December 2015 and beyond

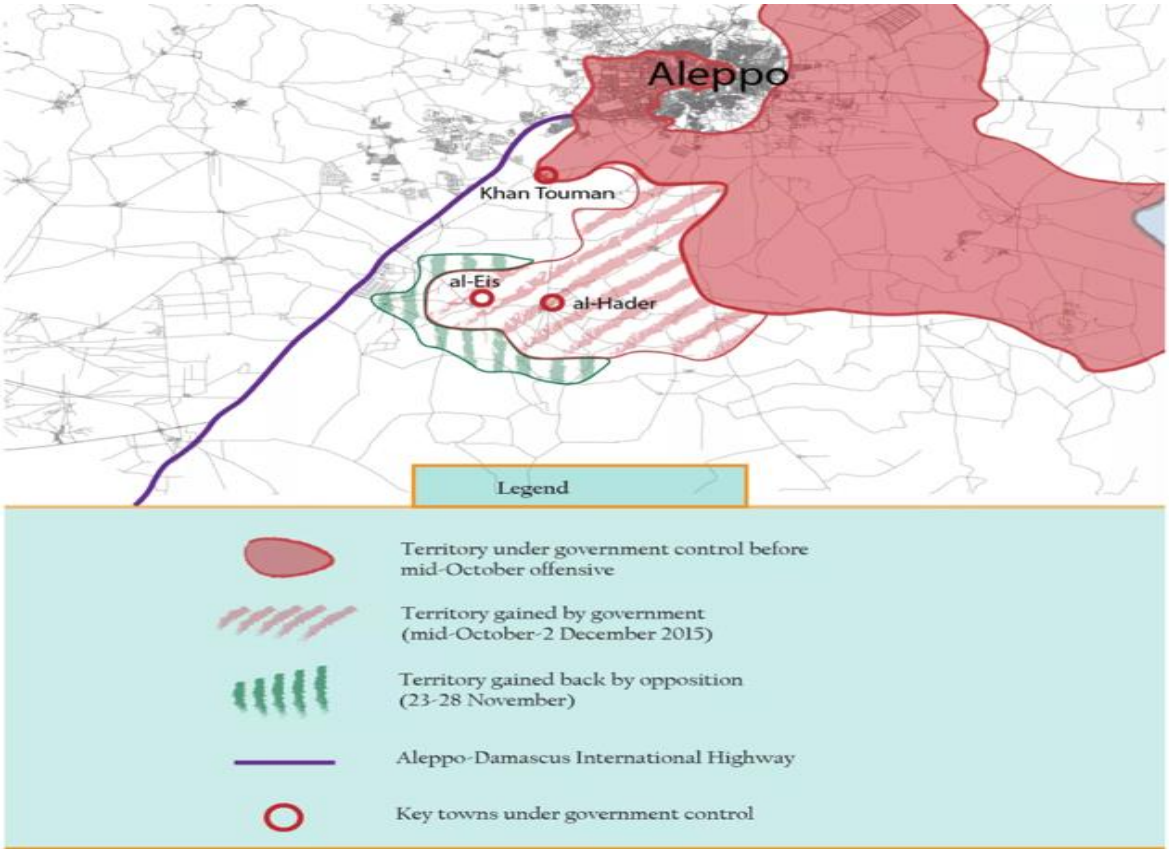

Figure 5 Areas under control mid-October-December 2015 after government's offensive (Tokmajyan, 2015, p. 18).

[6] The Caliphate covered the Northern part of Syria, and expanded through the Western part of Iraq (Tokmajyan, 2014, p. 10).
[7] A U.S-led military coalition including Bahrain, Jordan, the UAE and Saudi Arabia (Tokmajyan, 2014, p. 10).

In April 2015, government forces conducted a military campaign of "barrel bombing" in the city of Aleppo while the opposition forces continued their attacks – under *Fatah Halab* (Conquest of Aleppo) operation (Tokmajyan, 2015 , p. 7). ISIS continued its bombardment on government and opposition forces after losing to the Kurdish forces in the North. In September 2015, Russia was brought to the battlefield with its launching of airstrikes. For the government, the balance changed towards the end of 2015, as Russia became a major 'air' support, and Hezbollah alongside "Iranian proxies" became an "on-ground" support for Syrian military and forces (p. 15).

Figure 6 Areas of control by December 2016 (Tokmajyan, 2016, p. 4).

In December 2015, United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2254 that planned the "road map for peace process in Syria" (Tokmajyan, 2016, p. 1). Resolution 2254 aimed to endorse the Geneva Communiqué. The year 2016 was a better year for Aleppo as humanitarian access to Aleppo was facilitated, and aid convoys began entering the sieged areas of the city (p. 2). However, the end of bloodshed remained far in sight. The Syrian army with the support of its allies made some advancements north of the city as ISIS bombings continued to take place in the city. In September 2016, the Kerry-Lavrov agreement endorsed the cessation of bombings by government

forces on civilian-inhabited areas (p. 4). This deal was soon called off after the U.S.-led military coalition attacked Syrian government bases near Deir al-Zor airport, and later when Russian and Syrian airstrikes attacked a United Nations aid convoy East of the city. The period between October 2016 and December 2016 witnessed a continuous bombardment from all sides, mainly on east and north-east Aleppo. On the 13th of December 2016, the government gained control over all opposition areas in the city of Aleppo, marking the end of the East and West divorce.

Aleppo's Battle: humanitarian, economic and social consequences

The Syrian conflict imposed grave humanitarian consequences on the country. While some discrepancies around the number of conflict-related casualties exist, the estimated number is believed to be 470,000 casualties since the onset of the conflict in 2011 (World Bank Group, 2017, p. 48). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there were around five million registered Syrian refugees by the end of 2016. The conflict in Syria has brought forth the "largest forced displacement" crisis since the second World War, with over fifty percent of its population "forcibly displaced" (p. 47). The highest number of displaced people fleeing their homes was recorded in Aleppo. According to the World Bank's (2017) report, the primary 'push' factors for people fleeing Aleppo were: safety, forced relocation and loss of shelter/living space (p. 52). Destruction of infrastructure, service accessibility and food shortages were listed as secondary 'push' factors. Whereas, the tertiary 'push' factors were economic opportunities, "kinship ties" and political positions (p. 52).

The decade prior to the Conflict, Syria was fostering with an annual growth of "4.3 percent" of its Gross domestic product (GDP) (World Bank Group, 2017, p. 4). However post-2011, the overall growth of the country stagnated drastically. The country's infrastructure was gravely damaged, leading to the destruction of its "urban systems and public service" (p. 4). The destruction of medical facilities, public institutions, educational institutions, physical infrastructure have resulted in dire economic and social consequences.

With the extensive armed conflict in Aleppo, the city has become one of Syria's most damaged cities. According to a World Bank report (2017), Aleppo witnessed the "highest level of conflict incidence" (p. 18). Aleppo's housing sector was amongst the most impacted, with sixty-four percent of its "urban housing" categorized as affected (either partially damaged or destroyed) (p. 22). An assessment of the water and sanitation infrastructure in Aleppo and across the other seven governorates analyzed in the World Bank's report, illustrate the vast extent of damages to water supply and sanitation systems that have resulted in the shortage of water in the cities (p. 30). The power and electricity infrastructure in Aleppo were also amongst the highest damaged sectors. The destruction of Aleppo's Thermal Power Station due to conflict, further aggravated the electricity shortages in the city (p. 31). This drove most households in the city (around sixty percent) to resort to car batteries for their electricity supply. Additionally, Aleppo's transport sector was severely impacted during the fighting. Around forty-four percent of the city's primary roads were damaged, resulting in their inaccessibility (p. 36). Attacks on health facilities were a common aspect during

the hostilities. Thus; the health sector of Aleppo was impacted due to attacks on major hospital and health facilities.

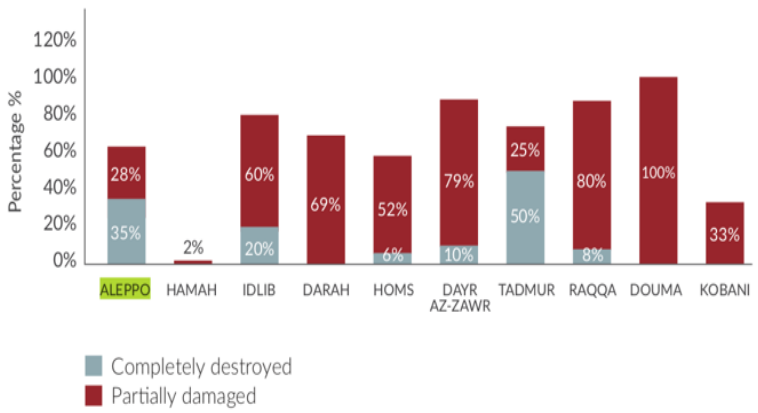

Figure 7 Damages to health facilities in Aleppo (World Bank Group, 2017, p. 39).

Chapter 2 - Literature Review: Development Aid and Conflict Transformation

Aid in Conflict: humanitarian aid versus development aid

In the context of conflict, there often exists a constant integration of humanitarian and development aid. Both types of aid organizations often arrive to the setting with "mixed mandates" (Philips et al., 2015, p. 2). Humanitarian aid means the type of aid delivered during "emergency" situations, whether they are natural disasters or armed conflict (Brown et al., 2017, p. 16). The types of humanitarian aid include the provision of water, food items, clothes and other survival necessities (p. 16). Such assistance is often the immediate response to a crisis, and is prepared to alleviate the impact of crisis on individuals. Whereas, development aid is the type of aid that is classified under "long-term growth" (p. 16).

Development assistance is often planned to assist individuals, states and communities in overcoming conflict-imposed situations. Development aid activities usually comprise of alleviation of poverty, provision of economic opportunities, the enhancement socioeconomic wellbeing of communities alongside other aspects of 'growth'. Unlike humanitarian aid/assistance, development aid is not an immediate response to a crisis, but rather emanates during the conflict recovery phase, dealing with issues that extend past humanitarian relief missions (Brown et al., p. 16). However, the literature of aid in conflict situations suggests that in modern-day conflicts – it is difficult to distinguish between both types of aid. The definition of 'types of aid' are donor and beneficiary-specific. Humanitarian aid organizations and development agencies are constantly realizing that the 'clash' between both types of aid is inevitable. The figure below demonstrates

the different "stages of response" to crisis (p. 17). Humanitarian aid organizations often pursue the early recovery and resilience phases, whereas development activities pursue the stabilization and growth (p. 17). Assessing humanitarian and development aid programmes in crisis, suggests that the different stages overlap and coexist with one another, making the separation of the stages highly unlikely.

Figure 8 Stages of response to crisis (Brown, Dadu, & Zaid, 2017, p. 17).

Conflict transformation: the role of development assistance

The scope of conflict has evolved through time, and today most conflicts around the world are taking place within states. Such "intra-state conflicts", as in the case of Syria usually occur in developing nations. Apart from the grave violence, bloodshed, death and destruction – conflicts "reverse" a country's growth and development, and become strong impediments to future efforts of development (DAC, 1997, p. 9). Countries in conflict and post-conflict countries have always been at the center of international development initiatives and missions. In such countries, development programmes help in capacity building and establishing of resilience among the communities. Such "peacebuilding" approach to development works towards attaining sustainable socio-economic development and growth (p. 9). In the long term, development programmes and cooperation could help in addressing the core issues leading to conflict - such as economic, structural and institutional weaknesses (p. 9). The root causes of conflict vary, but one way to view the causes of conflict is through structural factors and triggers. Structural factors include the

"structural conditions" within a State, such as: resources, wealth distribution, societal cleavages or other political, economic and social causes. Whereas "triggers" could be specific "events, actions and decisions" that results in the eruption of Conflict (p. 11). For example: one of the 'structural factors' that brought forth the Syrian Conflict is the dire economic conditions of the society. A trigger event leading to the Syrian Conflict could be the wave of Arab uprisings that proliferated through the Arab world.

The stages of conflict also vary. The Development Assistance Committee at the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (1997) identifies four different stages of conflict: the stage of "submerged" tensions, the stage of escalating tensions, the stage of "open confrontation" and violence, and the stage of transition/post-conflict period (p. 11). Throughout these stages of conflict, development cooperation plays a crucial role. Development assistance in periods of conflict and post-conflict aims to enhance the country's economic, political and social "climate" (p. 17). It aims to empower the society and increase the State's "legitimacy and effectiveness" most essentially peacebuilding efforts and the restoration of the country's rule of law. Donors of aid are crucial stakeholders in conflict mediation and reconciliation efforts, though local objections for foreign assistance and intervention remain significant barriers to such efforts due to matters of national sovereignty (p. 17). The peacebuilding aspect of development assistance is often amplified with the escalating of violence. A major issue with regards to violence in intra-state conflicts – such as the conflict in Syria – is the difficulty to determine the end of hostilities and violence and mark the beginning of the post-conflict and recovery phase (p. 17).

Development agencies working in conflict areas have different aspects to consider with regards to their role in the countries they operate. First, development agencies should consider their organization's "internal" strategies and processes, and how to best adapt them to the needs of the countries they operate in (OECD, 2001, p. 59). Also, development agencies must consider the broader global framework vis-à-vis the countries they operate in. Meaning, sustainable development strategies discussed on the international level and efforts of the international community with regards to the country in question (p. 59). Another major point to consider is the cooperation on the domestic level with national governments' policy landscape. Domestic governments are major partners and actors in the implementation of development programmes, especially in conflict areas. Development agencies also consider the "operational level" of their programmes, such as: logistics, operational feasibility, partnerships alongside other considerations (p. 59).

Conflict transformation is a major discussion in the discipline of conflict interventions through aid assistance. Conflict transformation denotes to the sustainable peacebuilding measures that result in major structural reform (Bigdon et al., 2004, p. 3). The role of development agencies therefore is pivotal in the discourse of conflict transformation. At the core of their programmes in conflict and post-conflict environments, development agencies focus on a broad range of sustainable development goals and peacebuilding measures (p. 3). These include programmes aimed for training, capacity building and empowering, the restoration of rule of law and respect to human rights, development activities and humanitarian aid in addition to other activities aimed to result in long-term development changes (p. 3). Stages of conflict often occur simultaneous to one another, and therefore are often dynamic. Conflict interventions – relief programmes, development

programmes and humanitarian relief – therefore must acclimate to the existing situations. Thus, the synchronized nature of conflict interventions resulted in the establishment of "development-oriented emergency aid" that combines humanitarian relief programmes with sustainable development activities (p. 4).

Development vis-à-vis conflict transformation has had considerable impact on the nature of development works in conflict and post-conflict environments. International organizations and development agencies have accordingly adjusted their missions, providing a more "holistic approach" to conflict interventions (Bigdon et al., 2004, p. 4). Hence, such approach has resulted in the creation of a strong link between humanitarian aid and development objectives such as poverty reduction (p. 4). As previously discussed, development activities in conflict areas often intend to enhance the general environment, whether in terms of improving the political landscape, economic state or social-level conditions. Therefore, aiming to establish a "democratic structural" reform is key to achieving development objectives (p. 5). Another major area of focus for development agencies in conflict areas is to improve existing institutions, and allow for "integration" of vulnerable groups in the conflict resolution dialogue and decision-making process (p. 5).

Do No Harm approach: aid in conflict

In *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace – Or War,* Anderson (1999) argues how aid and assistance in conflict environments become a major part of the conflict. The neutrality of aid is a notion most aid agencies and organizations 'strive' to maintain. In conflict and post-conflict

environments, aid neutrality and independence are often compromised (p. 1). It is therefore not possible to 'detach' the impact of aid from the context of conflict. The premise of Anderson's argument is that aid often contributes to conflict prolongation and reinforcement, rather than its mere 'aim' of providing humanitarian relief and development (p. 37).

In times of conflict, aid is regarded as sacrosanct resource having strong economic power. Thus. aid impacts conflict in various ways. First, armed groups in times of conflict may use *aid* as a support to their army and purchase arms. Second, aid has a considerable impact on markets, strengthening "war economy" (Anderson, 1999, p. 39). Third, the distribution of aid may influence relations within groups – either working towards the division of groups or their connection. Fourth, aid often provides a good replacement to civilians' needed resources and therefore may result in galvanizing people's "support" to conflict (p. 39). Last but not least, aid works towards the legitimization of some a group's "actions or agendas" (p. 39). For instance, when aid agencies partner with local groups for the delivery of aid programmes – they legitimize the existence of some groups in the conflict areas.

The *Do No Harm* approach of aid in conflict suggests that aid can negatively impact conflict if it contributes to "intergroup tensions" or deteriorates "intergroup connections" (Anderson, 1999, p. 69). Thus, to analyze the interaction between aid in conflict, Anderson develops an analytical framework comprised of three steps. This framework assists in making better decisions and designing more effective aid programmes, with decreasing amount of 'harm'. This Approach to the role of aid aims to reduce negative outcomes of aid in conflict environments, through better

understanding and analyzing individual conflicts and developing conflict-specific aid programmes.

This analytical framework requires the identification of conflict dividers and tensions and "war capacities" as a primary step (Anderson, 1999, p. 69). The second step of this framework identifies the conflict connectors and capacities for peace. Whereas the last step of this framework assesses the specific features of aid agencies and their programmes as well as the influence they exert on the conflict's dividers, connectors and the capacities of war and peace (p. 69). Thus, the contextual analysis of conflicts is a pivotal task in designing aid programmes and ensuring their 'harmless' effectiveness. What is also crucial in this analytical framework is the ongoing "dynamic feedback" mechanism it has of continuous aid agency level decisions vis-à-vis conflict dividers and connectors (p. 73).

Development aid: the Battle of Aleppo and beyond

Since the onset of the Syrian Conflict, the coordination of aid mainly took place through the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (Meininghaus, 2016, p. 8). The "official" humanitarian response plans for Syria were initiated and planned under the Syrian Humanitarian Assistance Response Plans (SHARPs) (p. 8). This framework for the coordination of aid was amended in 2015, under the Syria Strategic Response Plan (SRP), that connected "internal and external" relief plans (p. 8). Under SHARP, the Syrian government was major 'partner' with UN agencies and other international organizations in matters regarding the coordination and implementation of aid programmes. By 2016, over sixteen international non-

governmental organizations (INGOs) worked with around 137 local NGOs in aid coordination and delivery (p. 8). Prior to 2014, Damascus was the single network for the delivery of aid to all of Syria. A "hub system" was later created through other major cities including Aleppo, to facilitate aid delivery (p. 8).

The inaccessibility of channels for aid delivery was a major impediment in the delivery of aid across Syria. Another dynamic to this issue was the discourse of opposition-controlled areas versus government-controlled areas. Often times, the government denied the delivery of aid to the opposition-held areas, and this was specifically visible in the case of Aleppo (the West versus the East). A major factor that affected the lack of access to opposition-held areas was the absence of insight on such areas. Needs-assessment reports alongside "aid delivery data" (Meininghaus, 2016, p. 10) was unavailable. Prior to 2015, the government alongside UN agencies were responsible for the creation of such data. However, with the government's increased control over information made such information unattainable. This aid information vacuum, coupled with the lack of access to areas 'in need', introduced a new dynamic of aid delivery into the context. Alternative channels of aid were created, whether through military actors, unofficial organizations, "religious and philanthropic networks", or aid delivered by the Syrian diaspora. Hence, this new 'alternative' dynamic further strengthened the lack of aid neutrality (p. 10). While some aid actors preferred to 'geographically target' their aid (opposition-held vs. government-held areas), others targeted aid based on different 'specifications' such as sectarian, ethnic or religious ties and social connections (p. 10).

The discrepancy in the delivery of aid during the Battle of Aleppo followed a similar approach. The West of Aleppo and the East of Aleppo witnessed a different aid dynamic during the years of the battle. While some aid agencies worked in the government-controlled parts of the West, other aid actors worked in the East. The changes of power dynamics during the Battle of Aleppo reflected the changes of the internal flow of aid. When sieges and ceasefires took place throughout the Battle of Aleppo, the frameowork of aid was heavily impacted. The lack of accessibility and aid delivery to East Aleppo is what further exacerbated the humanitarian consequences of the Battle (Czuperski et al., 2017, p. 13). The United Nations played a major role in negotiating the access of aid into inaccessible areas, however; in most cases the government has denied access. The aid that was reaching East Aleppo was being transported through unofficial channels or through "cross-border deliveries" from neighboring States such as Turkey and Jordan (Meininghaus, 2016, p. 11).

Chapter 3 - Methodology, Findings and Analysis

Methodology

This thesis utilizes a qualitative method of research through a case study analysis of Aleppo. It addresses how the evolution of conflict and donor intentionality and landscape, impact development aid programmes in conflict and post-conflict environments. This thesis focuses on the city of Aleppo, particularly due to the diverse landscape of aid during the Conflict and throughout the post-conflict phase. Also, given Aleppo's significance in Syria's conflict and the role of the international community. With the escalation of violence in the Syrian conflict, foreign aid (humanitarian and development) has play a significant role in alleviating the impact of conflict and assisting in the conflict transformation stage. As the Conflict in Aleppo 'ended' in December of 2016, this case study analysis will assist in assessing development aid and assistance during the conflict (2012-2016) and post-conflict (2016-2019), proving the changes in the aid landscape with the evolution of conflict. Additionally, a case study of Aleppo is further interesting because of the diverse social fabric present in the city prior to the onset of the Conflict. Aleppo was regarded as one of the most ethnically diverse cities in Syria (Hokayem, 2013) and therefore, analyzing donor intentionality and landscape in an ethnically diverse community would tackle the discourse around the neutrality of aid.

This thesis limits the scope of research to development aid rather than humanitarian aid. Studies and literature on humanitarian aid in conflict are vast, however; minimal research is done about

development aid in contexts of conflict, and the contribution of development aid in post-conflict conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Furthermore, a specific factor in analyzing development aid is the medium-term and long-term development aid programmes/objectives that result in sustainable development, rather than short-term humanitarian aid and relief.

Case selection

The case selection of this research was pursued through the selection of a number of development aid organizations (international, regional and local), aid donors (bilateral aid donors) and aid actors that implemented development programmes in Aleppo during the conflict and post-conflict stages. The selected development aid actors in this research are the following:

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
United Kingdom Department of International Development (DFID)
Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI)
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
Caritas Aleppo
Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC)
International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
Oxfam
Mercy Corps
Syria Trust for Development
Russian Federation
US AID
Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD)
Syrian Armenian Relief Fund (SARF)
Islamic Relief

Though there are more organizations who have worked and are working in Aleppo, this thesis limited the case selection to organizations that were primarily involved in pursuing development

objectives and goals that contributed to conflict transformation. Additionally, humanitarian relief organization pursuing some development goals were not included in this research, due to the core organizational goal and objective. Other development organizations working in Aleppo were excluded from this analysis mainly due to the low scope of their programmes, minimal budget and resources or the inaccessibility of information. The above organizations were selected for the following purposes: (1) the availability and access to information (2) frequency and scope of work (3) the existence of 'Aleppo-specific' development programmes rather than nationwide development programmes (4) the duration and timeframe of the programmes (5) aid programme strategies adopted by the organizations (organization as a unit of analysis). The number of UN agencies working in Aleppo since the start of the Conflict are numerous, however; this thesis chose three UN agencies assuming that the 'donor intentionality' across UN agencies are similar (similar donors, mission and mandate). The three selected UN agencies: UNDP, FAO and WFP were chosen mainly due to the diverse development activities pursued.

The chosen development aid programmes were grouped into three major categories: (1) resilience, livelihood and economic empowerment (2) health and psychosocial assistance (3) infrastructure rehabilitation and WASH programmes (water, sanitation and hygiene) that tackled the rehabilitation and reconstruction of water and sanitation infrastructure and systems. Though there are more programmes and activities that organizations pursue, and that can be regarded as 'development activities' - these three categories were selected because of their frequency and intended development objectives that would lead to sustainable development and growth. The timeframe of the chosen programmes is from 2012 up until 2019 (when this research was written). The years 2012 until 2016 mark the 'conflict' phase in Aleppo, and the years 2016 and onwards

mark the 'post-conflict' phase. These selected years are crucial for the analysis as they cover a period of seven years and offer a comparative framework for aid during conflict and post-conflict.

Data collection: primary and secondary research

Interviews were conducted with some of the above-mentioned organizations' staff (Caritas Aleppo, Syria Trust for Development and Syrian Armenian Relief Fund). The interviews provided insight into development programmes, and the targeted beneficiaries and geographic location. The names of interviewees are not mentioned due to purposes of anonymity. The main data collection method used was a combination of primary and secondary research. Since *organization/donor* is the core unit of analysis in this research, the gathered information on the different organizations/donors were obtained from their websites and databases through annual reports, factsheets, needs-assessment reports, media archives, monitoring and evaluation reports, website content and news releases. The following are the indicators used to assess donor intentionality and landscape: (1) programme aim and objective (2) targeted location and beneficiaries (3) programme resources and budget (4) organization's coordination (5) organization's mandate, mission and intention (7) organization's 'relationship' with the Syrian government.

Research question

Referring to the theory of development aid in conflict and conflict transformation, the central research question this thesis aims to address is:

How does development aid contribute to post-conflict transformation?

Research hypotheses

Based on the theory of aid in conflict and the discourse on aid neutrality, this thesis aims to validate one of the below hypotheses through the qualitative assessment of development programmes and organizations (using the above-mentioned indicators).

Hypothesis A: Societal cleavages were a major factor in the donor landscape and intentionality of development aid in Aleppo.

Hypothesis B: Societal cleavages did not play an integral role in the donor intentionality and landscape of development aid in Aleppo.

Hypothesis C: Whether or not societal cleavages were an important factor in the donor intentionality and landscape of development aid in Aleppo was contingent upon the timing and the evolution of the Conflict.

Hypothesis C (1): Strategies adopted by development aid actors, with regards to societal cleavages and targeted beneficiaries of aid, is organization/donor specific.

Findings

Development programmes in Aleppo (2012-2019)

Category #1: Resilience, livelihood and economic empowerment

The concept of *resilience* has been key in development initiatives, especially with regards to working in conflict and post-conflict environments. Development initiatives targeting resilience – community resilience – deal with a variety of aspects ranging from capacity building to "resistance to shocks" (Twigg et al., 2019, p. 6). In areas of violent or prolonged conflict, development organizations face strong challenges in building resilience amongst the community. Debates about aid have widely referred to the building of resilience as a key priority in "development assistance" (Pain et al., 2012, p. 3). The donors of aid, within the international framework, often set their development and humanitarian aid objectives by referring to the "language of resilience" (p. 3). For example, the European Union, United Nations agencies, alongside other organizations have the 'creation of resilience' as an integral aim in their mandates as aid donors. Another factor that pushes development agencies in the direction of building resilience is the belief that building resilience is a sustainable development goal that aims to equip and prepare nations to withstand future conflicts or shocks. This argument stems from the costly nature of humanitarian assistance in emergency responses. The main issue with humanitarian assistance during emergency situations is that there is often a significant shortage in funds, and therefore humanitarian response to conflicts could not help in achieving long-term development goals. Thus; resilience-building activities would therefore lead to a longer-term advantage for the communities (p. 3), one that

'temporary' humanitarian aid could not accomplish. The livelihood approach of development agencies, is closely related to resilience, especially in reference to the withstanding and coping of shocks. In "fragile contexts" – conflict environments – livelihood activities aim are "programmatic interventions" that aim to improve individuals' "income-generating capacities" (Twigg et al., 2019, p. 8) and eventual economic empowerment. Such activities are often ones that aim to alleviate the socio-economic disadvantages conflict inflicts on communities. Livelihood approaches aim to target areas such as skills training and capacity building, monetary support, agricultural enhancement and assistance, alongside other activities. One crucial approach addressing livelihood in conflict environments is through the direct monetary support or job and task-related monetary gains (payments) (p. 8).

Table 1: The resilience, livelihood and economic empowerment programmes in Aleppo (sorted according to programme objective, donor, organization's mission statement, geographical targeting and timeframe).

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVE	ORGANIZATION	ORGANIZATION'S MISSION STATEMENT	GEOGRAPHICAL TARGETING	TIMEFRAME
Provision of relief assistance, and strengthening community resilience.	Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI)	Poverty eradication and growth (COOPI , 2018).	East Aleppo	2019-2021
Capacity-building of communities, and public service delivery.	United Kingdom Department of International Development (DFID)	Ending "extreme" poverty and addressing "global challenges" (DFID, 2016).	East Aleppo	2018-2019
Provision of technical assistance, capacity building programmes and social cohesion activities.	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Fighting poverty and inequalities (UNDP, 2019).	Old City of Aleppo (Battle frontline)	2014-2017
Socio-economic recovery of affected communities.	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Fighting poverty and inequalities (UNDP, 2019).	Old City of Aleppo (Battle frontline)	2016-2019

Programmes for the stabilization and restoration of livelihood for affected communities.	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Fighting poverty and inequalities (UNDP, 2019).	Aleppo city	2018-2019
Livelihood activities and food assistance.	World Food Programme (WFP)	Fighting global food insecurity (WFP, 2017).	West Aleppo	2013-2019
Education provision, food security and livelihood initiatives.	Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	Protection of "displaced and vulnerable" people during conflict (NRC, 2019).	West Aleppo	2013-2019
Provision of food aid, rent support and skills training workshops.	Caritas Aleppo	Promoting the Catholic Church's mission of assisting the poor and promoting justice (Caritas, 2019).	West Aleppo	2013-2019
Provision of relief assistance, helping elderly, monetary grants, skills training and capacity building activities.	Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC)	Commitment to the Geneva Conventions and International Movement of Red Cross and Red Crescent's mandates (SARC, 2019).	West Aleppo	2013-2019
Provision of food security and livelihood programmes, shelter and protection, NFI (non-food items) and rent support.	Islamic Relief	Empower Islamic Relief "family" and communities, reduce the impact of conflicts and disasters (Islamic Relief, 2019).	East Aleppo	2012-2019
Provision of monthly food basket, neighborhood security, livelihood and nutrition support, monetary and cash support for affected and vulnerable families. (Beneficiaries: Armenian families of Aleppo city).	Syrian Armenian Relief Fund (SARF)	Help and support (mostly financial assistance) to Syrian Armenian families and refugees (SARF, 2019).	Aleppo city (Armenian neighborhoods, such as: Sulaymaniyah and Midan) (Battle frontline)	2012-2019
Provision of nutrition support	Russian Federation	-	Aleppo city	2017

and livelihood programmes.				
Natural resource management for agriculture, enhancement of food security.	FAO	"Defeat" and fight against hunger (WFP, 2019).	Aleppo city	2017
Evacuation plan from East Aleppo	US AID	-	East Aleppo	2016
Skills training and economic support (project financing and micro crediting), provision of non-food items (NFI).	Syria Trust for Development	Achieve sustainable change in /Syria and empower individuals and communities (Syria Trust for Development, 2019).	West Aleppo, Aleppo city	2012-2019
Provision of hygiene kits, non-food items and generators.	Oxfam	Eradicate global poverty (Oxfam International , 2019).	East Aleppo	2016
Socioeconomic recovery of affected communities.	Mercy Corps	Fight poverty and sufferings, and empower communities (Oxfam International , 2019).	Rural Aleppo	2019
Provision of non-food items (NFI) and shelter.	Danish Refugee Council (DRC)	Assist and protect refugees and displaced persons (Danish Refugee Council, 2019).	West Aleppo	2013
Provision of household essentials and food assistance.	International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	"Humanitarian protection and assistance" for victims of violence and conflict (ICRC, 2019).	East Aleppo	2012-2013
Material provision for income-generating activities.	International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	,,	Aleppo City	2016

Category #2: Health and psychosocial assistance

In conflict environments and emergency situations, it is often challenging to draw a line between humanitarian and development aid, especially within the framework of health. Health policies have

always been the core of development goals. The belief that lessening illnesses is a "precondition for human and economic development" is central in health policies around the globe (Philips et al., 2015, p. 2). Current practices with regards to aid and health have shifted from the direct aiming of specific health issues, to strengthening and empowering the health infrastructure on national and global scales. "Health interventions" in countries of conflict have received great attention, placing 'health aid' at the forefront of peacebuilding and conflict transformation efforts (p. 2). Health aid as part of development activities is a common feature of development agencies' initiatives in conflict and post-conflict settings. Referring back to the 'do no harm' approach of aid, the "co-existence" amongst both types of aid – humanitarian and development – is problematic mainly due to the supremacy of 'attached' political objectives (of aid donors) over "humanitarian principles" (p. 2). The health infrastructure systems in conflict settings is amongst the first sectors to collapse with the increasing health needs as a result of violence and outbreaks, as well as placing "health structures" as attack targets by the fighting sides (p. 3). Health assistance as a development objective in conflict settings is henceforth viewed as an essential agent in peace building as well as "stabilization" efforts (p. 3). Psychosocial assistance is another major feature of development programmes in conflict and post-conflict environments. Of all the damages violent conflicts inflict, the harm they impose on the "mental and social wellbeing" (GIZ, 2018, p. 9) of people is grave. The lack of psychosocial support is damaging, and may negatively impact conflict transformation, peacebuilding and social cohesion efforts. The loss of lives in armed conflicts, displacement, deterioration of livelihood and standard of living alongside other consequence of conflict lead to a great "psychological distress" (p. 9). Psychosocial assistance is often offered in the form of "psychosocial support" which comprises of different empowerment activities ranging from

increasing the overall mental health of individuals, and assisting in the overcoming of individuals' "traumatic" war experiences (p. 16).

Table 2: The health and psychosocial assistance programmes in Aleppo (sorted according to programme objective, donor, organization's mission statement, geographical targeting and timeframe).

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVE	ORGANIZATION	ORGANIZATION'S MISSION STATEMENT	GEOGRAPHICAL TARGETING	TIMEFRAME
Provision first aid items, medication and psychological assistance.	Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI)	,,	East Aleppo	2019-2021
Provision of nutrition support to pregnant women and nursing mothers, and school meal programmes.	World Food Programme (WFP)	,,	West Aleppo, Aleppo City	2013-2019
Provision of psychological support.	Caritas Aleppo	,,	West Aleppo, Aleppo City	2013-2019
Psychosocial assistance and support programmes, physical rehabilitation activities for injured individuals, and provision of dehydration envelopes.	Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC)	,,	West Aleppo, Aleppo City	2013-2019
Provision of psychosocial support and assistance.	Syrian Society for Social Development	Assist, support and empower Syrian youth (SSSD, 2019b).	East Aleppo	2012-2019
Provision of medical and health aid (monetary support for surgeries, ambulance) (Beneficiaries: Armenian families of Aleppo city).	Syrian Armenian Relief Fund (SARF)	,,	Aleppo City (Armenian neighborhoods, such as: Sulaymaniyah and Midan).	2012-2019
Provision of health training, and medical assistance.	US AID	-	East Aleppo & Kobani (Kurdish-controlled areas)	2016

Provision of surgical and medical kits to hospitals and physical rehabilitation centers. Provision of medical and surgical aid to East Aleppo evacuees.	International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	,,	East and West Aleppo	2015-2016

Category #3: Infrastructure rehabilitation and WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene)

Infrastructure rehabilitation programmes in conflict and post-conflict environments play an integral role in the post-conflict transitioning and reconstruction phases. Overlooking infrastructure rehabilitation during conflicts may exacerbate the extent of conflict further due to the loss of basic public services and the failure to access resources (Anand, 2005, p. 3). Infrastructure ranges from 'pure' public goods such as transportation infrastructure to vital necessities such as water or resource related infrastructure (p. 3). Infrastructure rehabilitation programmes are often within a multisectoral framework as it covers various sectors such as communication, health, education, resources and transportation.

A major activity in infrastructure rehabilitation in conflict and post-conflict environments is the *Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)* programmes. WASH programmes are common development objectives of most development agencies, and research has proven the impact of WASH programmes on both long-term and short-term economic development and resilience (Jones et al., 2012, p. 20). WASH programmes include water treatment plans, sanitation and hygiene-related activities, water supply projects (p. 12).

Table 3: The infrastructure rehabilitation and WASH programmes in Aleppo (sorted according to programme objective, donor, organization's mission statement, geographical targeting and timeframe).

PROGRAMME OBJECTIVE	ORGANIZATION	ORGANIZATION'S MISSION STATEMENT	GEOGRAPHICAL TARGETING	TIMEFRAME
Diyari, an infrastructure development programme.	Syria Trust for Development	,,	Aleppo city	2012-2019
Reconstruction of damaged homes (Beneficiaries: Armenian families of Aleppo city).	Syrian Armenian Relief Fund (SARF)	,,	Aleppo city (Armenian neighborhoods, such as: Sulaymaniyah and Midan).	2017
Provision of shelter and infrastructure rehabilitation support, and WASH programmes (water trucking).	Danish Refugee Council (DRC)	,,	Aleppo City	2018
Provision of water, hygiene and sanitation services as well as access to potable, clean water.	Islamic Relief	,,	East Aleppo	2012-2019
Solid waste management programmes and rehabilitation of damaged homes.	Syrian Society for Social Development	,,	East Aleppo	2012-2019
Provision of wooden shelter and shelter kits, and provision of clean, potable water.	Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC)	,,	West Aleppo	2013-2019
Reconstruction and	Caritas Aleppo	,,	West Aleppo, Aleppo city	2013-2019

rehabilitation of damaged homes.				
Provision of shelter and settlements, and WASH promotion programmes.	Norwegian Refugee Council	,,	West Aleppo, Aleppo city	2013-2019
Infrastructure and social services rehabilitation.	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	,,	Old City of Aleppo (Battle frontline)	2014-2017
Provision of water tanks.	Oxfam	,,	East Aleppo	2016
Rehabilitation of water supply infrastructure and waste management projects.	International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)	,,	West Aleppo, Aleppo city	2012-2013

Development aid and conflict evolution

Conflict phase: West Aleppo (2012-2016)

From the selected eighteen development aid actors, seven agencies were pursuing development programmes in West Aleppo – government-controlled areas – starting the year 2013. The agencies working in West Aleppo were: the World Food Programme (WFP), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Caritas Aleppo, Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC). Syria Trust for Development, Danish Refugee Council and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Apart from SARC (a nonprofit, independent organization based in Syria) and Syria Trust for Development (a Syrian nonprofit organization) – the other organization working in West Aleppo during the conflict phase are all international organizations. As mentioned in the organization's documents, mandates and programme descriptions – most development activities implemented by these organizations were

targeted to areas within West Aleppo. As previously mentioned – up until 2015 most international organizations coordinated with the Syrian government and government institutions for the delivery of development aid and programmes. United Nations agencies working in Syria at the time were also major aid coordination agencies for most international organizations working in West Aleppo during the time of conflict (UN OCHA, 2019).

Conflict phase: East Aleppo (2012-2016)

The framework of development aid during the time of conflict in East Aleppo was different. Most aid organizations working in "besieged" East Aleppo were humanitarian relief organizations (US AID, 2017). Development activities and programmes were minimal in East Aleppo at the time of conflict. From the selected list of organizations, the following development aid actors were working in East Aleppo during conflict: US AID, Oxfam (a UK-based charity organization), ICRC, Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD) (a Syrian non-governmental organization) and Islamic Relief (an international humanitarian and development aid organization). These organizations did report some coordination with UN agencies - WFP, UNICEF, UN OCHA and UNFPA – as well as project partnerships or funding (Islamic Relief , 2019).

Conflict phase: At the Battle's Frontlines (2012-2016)

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was among the few organizations to work at the Battle frontline - at the point of division between the West and East (as illustrated by the dotted line in Figure 1). UNDP's programme was launched in 2014, and was targeting the Aleppo's

Old City district. The Old City district of Aleppo was amongst the highly damaged areas of Aleppo city, and witnessed a prolonged 'tug of war' between the government and the opposition groups (World Bank Group, 2017). The Syrian Armenian Relief Fund (SARF) was another major played in development activities from the onset of Conflict in the city. SARF's targeted location and beneficiaries served to aid the large Armenian community in the city. Most programmes were implemented in the neighborhoods of Midan and Suleimaniyeh, where there is high concentration of Armenians living there (Kilcullen, Rosenblatt, & Qudsi, 2014).

Post-conflict phase: 2016 and onwards (Aleppo city)

The months after the government took control over opposition-held areas, witnessed a unity between the West and the East. Accessibility of aid was made possible, and organizations working in Aleppo expanded their mandates to serve the entire Aleppo city. Most development programmes focused on the 'Eastern' part of Aleppo, mainly due to the extremely dire situation it was in. With the cessation of hostilities, Aleppo witnessed a rise of development activities and programmes as more development actors entered the scene. The post-conflict phase in Aleppo witnessed the rise of resilience, livelihood and economic empowerment programmes to combat conflict-inflicted issues within communities and institutions. From the selected organizations, most post-conflict development aid actors diverted strong attention to the Eastern regions through their programmes extended towards the entire city of Aleppo (the blue shaded zone in Figure 1). Furthermore, some organizations such as: Mercy Corps and Islamic Relief targeted Aleppo's countryside and rural areas further addressing the rural/urban dynamics of Aleppo (Tokmajyan, 2019). The countryside

and rural areas of Aleppo became more damaged and 'disadvantaged' as they were major zones for the combatants during the conflict (Czuperski et al., 2017).

Analysis of findings

The programme aim and objectives of donors were clearly stated in the analyzed documents. Most programmes approaching *resilience, livelihood and economic empowerment* aimed to alleviate the livelihood of individuals and communities during conflict and in the post-conflict stages. As illustrated in Table 1, the programme objectives of development actors in this category were to mitigate the negative impacts of war. Many programmes included the provision of food assistance and relief. Though these specific targets are often regarded as humanitarian assistance – the long-term provision of such assistance is viewed as a development activity aiming to enhance livelihood and resilience of communities. Skills training and capacity building objectives were present in almost all development programmes analyzed in this category, as a means to alleviate poverty and provide economic opportunities. Furthermore, another crucial aspect to assess is that the development aims and objectives targeted the 'sources of conflict'. As stated in the Development Assistance Committee guidelines (1997) development assistance in conflict settings should aim to address some of the root causes or sources of conflict. The rural/urban divide, coupled with the vast socioeconomic disparities present in Aleppo and excaerbated during the conflict were one of the core causes of conflict (Hinnebusch et al., 2015). Socioeconomic grievances were one of the major root causes for the instigation of conflict, and therefore programmes in *Category 1* would also work to the long-term achievement of reducing such socioeconomic disparities and providing economic opportunities. Programmes in *Category 2* targeting long-term health assistance and

psychosocial support have clear objectives on enhancing the overall community health and addressing post-conflict psychological issues which are prevalent in all post-conflict or post-crisis settings. Programmes in *Category 3* were infrastructure development programmes and WASH programmes that aimed to rehabilitate and reconstruct damaged homes, and the water and sanitation infrastructure. The housing sector was amongst the most damaged in Aleppo, and the water resource was severely impacted paving way for serious water crisis (World Bank Group, 2017). SARC and its official partner ICRC, had the rehabilitation of water infrastructure listed as a high priority in their response plans (ICRC, 2019).

The geographical targeting of development aid in Aleppo is an integral finding in this research. As previously mentioned, the Syrian government was able to fully control the access to the city of Aleppo, and the delivery of aid through various channels (Meininghaus, 2016). Thus, the above reported findings illustrate the geographic targeting of aid by development aid agencies and aid actors in Aleppo. Most international organizations working on-ground in Aleppo, prior to 2016, targeted the Western part of Aleppo, controlled by the government forces. The major reasons behind this is the coordination of aid agencies with the national government in conflict areas, and the mere fact that the Syrian government and various governmental institutions often were implementing partners to most development programmes. As the situation in East Aleppo was dire, development agencies during the period between 2012 and 2016, rarely focused on the area. Humanitarian and relief organizations were pursuing most of the work in East Aleppo, with as much aid they could flow into the country, through unofficial channels or bordering countries (p. 11). The geographical location and beneficiary targeting provide a deep insight to the donor intentionality. The targeting of Armenian community and neighborhoods with Armenian

majorities (Midan and Suleimaniyeh) has been the core mission of SARF. Thus, the targeting of aid on "grounds of ethnicity" was an essential feature of Aleppo's case study (p. 10). Development aid actors also have other reasons for specified geographical location and beneficiary targeting. This is especially common among bilateral aid donors who pursue certain aid programmes due to political, social, economic or other sorts of interests (p. 11). This could be seen through US AID's involvement in Kobane, a Kurdish-majority city in Aleppo (US AID, 2017). Though US AID was implementing humanitarian relief assistance in other parts of Aleppo, its strategy to target Kobane could be explained by the United States' own underlying political factors in support of the Kurdish cause. Development aid actors in working during conflict in West Aleppo had a different approach. Most organizations working in the government-controlled West during the time of conflict were international organizations and UN agencies.

The local coordination of aid is essential in understanding the strategies of international organizations in West Aleppo. As a matter of "principle" the local coordination of aid falls into the "mandate" of the local government (Forman et al., 2000, p. 49). Thus, most international development actors such as the UN agencies and others viewed the Syrian government as a partner in the delivery and implementation of development assistance (Meininghaus, 2016, p. 8). Hence, apart from the organization-specific orientations regarding the geographical and beneficiary targeting – the coordination of aid was a contributing factor determining the scope of programmes for development actors. While this holds true for international organizations, bilateral aid donors followed a different approach. Bilateral aid donors have "autonomy" over their own mandates, and therefore independently strategize and maneuver their aid programmes based on their own interests

and incentives, such as the case of US AID explained earlier or the selective involvement of the Russian federation in the landscape of Aleppo's development aid (Forman et al., 2000, p. 50).

As listed in the tables of the findings section the mission statements of the selected organizations – with the exception of SARC and ICRC – all hold development goals as a core objective. Whether it is the eradication of poverty, fighting against food insecurity and inequalities – all organizations have common overall missions, visions and outlook. While it is difficult to pinpoint the specific 'interests' and 'intentions' the donors had – the recurrent stated objective was the need for a collective and global action to mitigate and reduce the impact of war on the Syrian population. In the post-conflict phase, most selected organizations expanded their missions to the entire city of Aleppo. The main coordination agency for most organizations in post-conflict Aleppo, was the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ((UN OCHA, 2019). As the Eastern part of Aleppo became accessible, more development aid actors entered the arena. Local NGOs, international organizations, non-profit organizations alongside other actors initiated post-conflict recovery plans for Aleppo, coordinating on-ground with UN agencies and the local government institutions.

As previously mentioned, the role of development aid in conflict is an important element of analysis vis-à-vis conflict transformation, post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding. The "donor community" faces many challenges when operating in conflict and post-conflict environments. One of the major challenges illustrated in this thesis is the lack of a "strategic framework" within the donor community (Forman et al., 2000, p. 36). A look at the development aid flows and foreign assistance in countries of conflict or crisis, suggests the immense amount of capital being pledged

as development or humanitarian assistance. As illustrated in Aleppo's case study, what the donor community faced is the "fragmentation" and the "under-institutionalized" (p. 36) element of aid in post-conflict recovery efforts.

Though the findings of this research show how 'uniform' the mission statements of the aid actors are, the mere fact that fragmentation of aid occurs illustrates the lack of an agreed upon strategy amongst the donor world, mainly due to the organization/donor-specific goals, intentions and incentives (p. 36). The *Do No Harm* approach of aid suggests the conflict-specific approach to designing and implementing aid programmes (Anderson, 1999). For aid to lead to effective post-conflict recovery, it must be designed in a way to respond to "local needs" (Forman & Patrick, 2000, p. 37). Another challenge the donor community faces is the conflicting interests and mandates of the diverse development actors in a specified context, which hinder the process of attaining peace. As post-conflict recovery is both a political and an economic process, aid donors' conflicting objectives and intentions hinder the peace-building and conflict transformation efforts or fail to address the core root causes of conflict in their development agendas (p. 47). One of the most common issues facing the delivery of aid in conflict settings is ensuring the accountability of the aid interventions. Apart from aiming to achieve a transparent process for the delivery and implementation of aid programmes, evaluation and assessing the impact of aid needs to be a crucial priority of development actors (Forman et al., 2000, p. 47). Additionally, as illustrated in this case study, development actors rarely addressed the strengthening of "local capacities" (p. 53) in their programme objectives. For development aid to result in long-term sustainable development and growth, it needs to also address the problems and weaknesses in institutions and governance. Development aid programmes in conflict and post-conflict Aleppo failed to tackle such crucial

challenges. Another challenge in the assessment of the effectiveness of development aid in Aleppo's context was the lack of accessible impact assessment or evaluation reports for the development aid programmes and interventions. There are many underlying reasons that impact the absence of evaluation reports, such as the lack of needed resources, the costliness of the process and the "self-preservation" of organizations (p. 60). Evaluating the impact of aid interventions is therefore essential to better design and implement aid programmes, and to identify necessary programme interventions when and if needed. Hence, understanding the aforementioned challenges of the donor landscape in Aleppo leads to the formulation of more sustainable development programmes that facilitate post-conflict recovery and result in more 'good than harm'.

Policy implications and concluding remarks

The policy implications of this research should aim to integrate the above-mentioned gaps in the strategies and approaches of development aid actors in Aleppo's landscape. Formulating a "strategic framework" for aid interventions in post-conflict environments, "harmonizing" the intentions of different aid actors, addressing "local capacities" and ensuring accountability in aid intervention operations are all core elements of successful development policies in conflict and post-conflict environments (Forman et al., 2000, p. 61).

Thus, based on the analysis of findings, this thesis concludes that *Hypothesis C* and *Hypothesis C (1)* are the applicable hypotheses for Aleppo's case study. The findings pinpointed on the importance of conflict evolution vis-à-vis development actors and the donor landscape. This thesis also finds that the aspect of donor intentionality in development aid in Aleppo was rather organization/donor specific and could not be generalized to include all selected organizations. While some of the organizations based their strategies and programmes on targeted beneficiaries and geographic locations, other organizations followed a different approach of an overall organizational mission statement. Therefore, it is not viable to say that development actors and donor intentionality is solely reliant on existing societal cleavages in Aleppo, and that societal cleavages were not a contributing factor in the decisions of development actors and their intentions. Hence, this thesis disproves *Hypothesis A* and *Hypothesis B.*

To conclude, the case study of Aleppo provides an important understanding of the donor landscape and intentionality in post-conflict settings, and how it impacts the role of development aid in

conflict transformation. As Collier et al. state, "war reverses development" (2003, p. 84) and therefore a central aim of development policies in conflict and post-conflict environments, should be addressing and mitigating the root causes of conflict. As the post-conflict phase in Aleppo began in 2017, it is important to note that a successful assessment of these development programmes and initiatives vis-à-vis post-conflict recovery and conflict transformation is yet to be determined since sustainable development and change is a time-consuming undertaking, and the long-term sustainable development goals need to be determined through time.

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