Part 1: Awardee Organization Information: Filled out by FastLane

Part 2: Program Announcement Description Number (pick applicable funding opportunity)

Part 3: NSF Unit of Consideration (applicable NSF Division/Office and Program for proposal)

Part 4:
Title of the Project: International Donors and Local Armed Groups: Understanding the Subnational Effect of Aid on Conflict

Budget and Duration of Project: (suggested three to five years, with start date at least six months from August 15)
Announcement and Consideration Information: (Filled by FastLane)

Principal Investigator: Susanna Campbell (NSF ID to be entered by FastLane)
Previous NSF Award (only if this is a renewal)
Consideration by Other Federal Agencies (only if you are applying for other federal funding)
Awardee Organization Information: Organization Name, Address, NSF Organization Code, DUNS Number and Employer ID number (provided by FastLane)
Primary Place of Performance (filled out by FastLane

Other Information: List the primary countries involved in the project (max 5)
Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, and Nepal

B. **Project Summary**

Overview

What determines the relationship between international development and humanitarian aid and violent conflict? The 2011 World Development Report names violent conflict as one of the leading contributors to underdevelopment and, in turn, recurrent violence. Understanding the relationship between international aid and violent conflict is thus crucial for lifting countries out of poverty and enabling them to break free of the conflict trap (Collier et al. 2003). Existing research on the relationship between aid and conflict, however, yields contradictory findings: some studies show that aid mitigates violence by strengthening conflict-mitigating institutions, while other studies indicate that aid exacerbates violence by indirectly financing warring parties. One reason these findings are contradictory is that the effect of aid on conflict is studied at the national level rather than the subnational level; that is, the towns and regions in which violence takes place and aid is delivered. Preliminary research conducted by this project's team reveals significant variation in the donor–conflict actor relationship at the subnational level: the same donor can implement the same type of aid program in different communities and contribute to entirely different outcomes (Campbell 2010; Campbell et al. 2014; Campbell and Findley 2017). This project builds on data collected through two large research projects—one on donor behavior and one on conflict actor behavior—funded by the Swiss government and the US Department of Defense.

The objective of this project is to explain the variation in the donor-conflict actor relationship using a multilevel, mixed-method approach that combines in-depth field research and causal process tracing with robust quasi-experimental quantitative inference, focusing on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mali, and Nepal from 1990 through 2016. These case studies will capture meaningful variation along several dimensions (e.g., political conditions, government effectiveness, per capita income, and predominant religion) and allow the project team to generalize its findings to the broader populations of conflict-affected countries, donors, and conflict actors. This research design will enable the research team to investigate the specific local characteristics of international donors *and* warring parties that determine whether the donor–conflict actor relationship exacerbates or mitigates violent conflict. The project team will test the hypothesis that, all else being equal, the variation in the influence of aid on conflict dynamics is primarily determined by the degree of adaptability of donors to the local context and the degree of local receptivity of conflict actors to specific donors and aid. Ultimately, the project team aims to develop an empirically grounded, actor-centered theory of the donor–conflict actor relationship that will address a crucial gap in existing scholarship and provide clear recommendations to policymakers who aim to improve the effect of aid on conflict.

Statement of Intellectual Merit

Although a wealth of research on civil wars and international aid exists, the findings about aid and conflict are inconclusive, providing contradictory recommendations to policymakers on how they should allocate aid to conflict-affected countries. This is in part because aggregate country-level analyses of donor behavior overlook important sources of local variation in donor behavior, including their interactions with conflict actors whose behavior also varies locally. This project will redress this gap in scholarship by isolating the behavior of donors and conflict actors at the local level and explaining how variation in this relationship affects local-level violence. In so doing, the project will follow recent trends toward disaggregated analysis in the literatures on civil war (Kalyvas 2008) and peacebuilding (Autesserre 2014), and will contribute to the diverse literatures on aid, civil war, and peacebuilding.

Broader Impacts

The project will have at least two broader impacts. First, it will contribute to an improved understanding of the aid-conflict relationship, supporting better aid policy and having an important impact on US national security policy, which increasingly uses aid as one of its core tools of conflict mitigation. Second, the project is led by a woman and will provide important training to female researchers, improving the influence of female scholars in the international security domain. The project team will facilitate these broader impacts by creating initial buy-in through two stakeholder workshops and disseminating the findings directly to policymakers through three dissemination meetings and individual

discussions with key donors in the United States and Europe, building on the principal investigator's strong networks with international donors and intergovernmental organizations.

C. **Table of Contents**

D.   Project Description

Does international aid mitigate or exacerbate violent conflict? Although there is a wealth of research on international aid and peacebuilding, on the one hand, and on civil wars and political violence, on the other hand, there is no conclusive answer to this question. As is discussed in detail below, existing findings about the relationship between aid and conflict are inconclusive and fail to explain crucial variation in that relationship. Preliminary research carried out by the project team reveals a high degree of variation in the relationship between aid and conflict at the subnational level (Campbell et al. 2014; Campbell and Findley 2017). For example, in countries such as the DRC, the same donor can allocate the same type of aid to seemingly similar local communities and contribute to entirely different conflict-related outcomes. Likewise, different donors can allocate different types of aid to different communities and contribute to the same conflict-related outcomes. What explains this local heterogeneity in the effect of aid on violent conflict? This project contends that the relationship between aid and conflict at the subnational level hinges on variation in the behavior of key actors—donors and conflict actors—that existing research fails to examine.

In addition to filling a crucial gap in the existing literature, this research project also has real significance for policymakers. International donors are allocating an increasing portion of their aid to conflict-affected countries in an effort to help them break out of a violence-underdevelopment trap. But, as the World Bank's 2011 *Human Development Report* reveals, the way that aid is delivered and the priorities of donors inhibit them from engaging with the circumstances facing conflict-affected countries. By identifying the characteristics of donors and communities that enable aid to mitigate violence, this project will give donors and conflict-affected societies the information necessary to improve the effect of aid on conflict dynamics. The research team's strong connections with donors and previous research in this area give them the credibility and connections necessary to convey actionable policy recommendations to key policymakers.

The main objective of this project is to test actor-centered hypotheses about the relationship between aid donors and conflict actors. The overall hypothesis is that variation in the effect of aid on levels of violence is determined by the degree of adaptability of donors to the local context and the degree of local receptivity of certain conflict actors (e.g., armed forces, rebel groups, and militias) to specific donors and aid. The research team will test the related specific hypotheses using a multilevel, mixed-method approach and a research design that allows the team to investigate a subnational phenomenon in a way that generates results that are generalizable to the broader populations of conflict-affected countries, donors, and conflict actors. The ultimate objective of the project is to develop an empirically grounded, actor-centered theory of the donor–conflict actor relationship that will address the gap in existing scholarship and provide clear recommendations to policymakers who aim to improve the effect of aid on violent conflict.

To accomplish these objectives, the research team will investigate the interactions between donors and conflict actors in multiple subnational locations in three countries: the DRC, Nepal, and Mali. To ensure rigorous comparison of the subnational locations, quantitative inferences will rely on quasi-experimental matching techniques to select subnational locations that are similar in all respects except for one variable: actor behavior. This project's research design, which focuses on the donor–conflict actor relationship within the selected subnational locations in each case study country, will make it possible to isolate interactions between donor and conflict actors and to examine their effects on evolving conflict dynamics. The data on which the project relies will include existing data coded by the research team in prior research projects, existing conflict and aid data, Twitter and other news sources (for a sentiment analysis), and new data gathered through this project's fieldwork. A related objective is to present the findings from this research in a way that is easily digestible for policymakers, contributing to their improved understanding of the aid-conflict relationship and, it is hoped, to an increased role of aid in conflict mitigation.

This document is organized into five parts. Section 1 discusses relevant existing literature, identifying foundations and gaps that motivate the proposed project. Section 2 details the plans for the proposed project, including the theoretical framework, multifaceted research design, and methods of data

collection and analysis. Section 3 enumerates the schedule and milestones, including envisioned products. Section 4 describes the contributions to knowledge and broader impacts that the proposed project is expected to achieve. Section 5 offers an overview of the key personnel, whose experience conducting recent related research serves as a vital foundation, positioning the team to extend prior work and to implement the proposed project effectively.

1. The Current State of Research in the Field

This section reviews important aspects of relevant literature concerning the relationship between foreign aid and armed conflict, showing that the results of empirical research on aid and conflict are inconclusive and contradictory for at least two reasons. First, most studies undertake aggregate analysis at the country level on a yearly basis, overlooking important subnational differences both in donor aid allocation and in conflict prevalence. Second, studies do not sufficiently probe how the behavior of donors and warring parties may influence the relationship between development aid and conflict outcomes. They focus on country-level aid-allocation patterns and battle death thresholds, without investigating the strategies and characteristics of individual donors and warring parties at the subnational level—the level at which these actors interact. These shortcomings generate gaps in comprehension of the conditional nature of the effectiveness of aid in mitigating conflict.

1.1 Linking Development and Conflict as Major Issues

Two of the fundamental, enduring challenges faced by the international community are promoting development and diminishing conflict. Conflict—especially civil war—remains a persistent problem (Backer & Huth 2014). The associated state aggression and rebel, terrorist, and criminal activity, as well as atrocities, displacement, and upheaval, create crises that can spill over national borders and fuel regional and international instability. Estimates are that the cost of a civil war, on average, is equivalent to wiping out thirty-plus years of GDP growth for a medium-size developing country (World Bank 2011). At the same time, the economic, social, and political underdevelopment experienced by a significant share of countries consistently exacerbates the risk of instability and violent conflict events (Backer 2013). As a result, scholars have devoted considerable attention to understanding whether and how the twin challenges of development and conflict mitigation may be addressed successfully. This project is situated at that intersection, and will apply empirical research to confront these real-world problems.

1.2 The Substantial Presence of Development Aid in Conflict-Affected Settings

A focus within the literature, and on which this project also centers, is examining the impact of foreign assistance. A sizeable segment of this assistance is intended, among other things, to foster development and—both directly and indirectly—to limit conflict. Such aid is massive in scope and scale: according to AidData, an initiative that tracks development finance, nearly one hundred donors have distributed more than US$6 trillion in assistance around the world since 1950, including over US$2 trillion just since 2000. The majority of the assistance is concentrated in fragile and conflict-affected (F/CA) countries, as well as the least developed countries; these two categories overlap considerably (Backer 2013). Those long-standing patterns reflect the explicit premise that such aid is constructive in efforts to achieve development and to constrain conflict, as mutually reinforcing objectives. In fact, most international donors claim that their aid addresses root causes of violent conflict. This claim is contested in the academic literature (Ferguson 1994; Uvin 1998). Moreover, understanding of the relationship between development aid and violent conflict during civil war is scant, which is surprising given the backdrop and stakes.

1.3 Contrasting Findings about the Relationship between Aid and Conflict

Does aid actually work? The research team's primary interest in this regard is the relationship between aid and conflict. Over the last twenty years, a growing literature has emerged that studies this relationship. The available empirical assessments exhibit contrasting findings.

Some studies suggest that *development aid can help to lower the likelihood of conflict*. This scholarship argues that the primary mechanisms through which development may reduce the likelihood of conflict are indirect economic pathways: improving conditions such as low income per capita, slow

5

economic growth, and high dependence on primary commodity exports, that are typically correlated with civil conflict onset (Collier & Hoeffler 1998, 2002; Fearon & Laitin 2003; Collier & Dollar 2002), or else reduce the duration of conflict (de Ree & Nillesen 2009). Furthermore, development aid can relax a government's budget constraints, allowing higher military spending (assuming aid is fungible), which could dissuade rebel mobilization, decreasing the rate of conflict onset (Feyzioglu et al. 1998; Collier & Hoeffler 2007). Other studies examine the impact of foreign aid in postconflict environments, using macroeconomic development indicators as outcome measures (Collier & Hoeffler 2004; Suhrke et al. 2005; Flores & Nooruddin 2009; Kang & Meernik 2004; Boyce & Forman 2010; Fearon et al. 2009; Girod, 2012).

Yet different studies find that *development aid has a harmful association with conflict*. One logic is that aid inflames conflict by injecting crucial resources that armed groups siphon off to finance their activities (Terry 2002). Aid flows increase state revenue, making it a more attractive "prize"—in effect, a lootable resource—for rebels to capture, raising the likelihood of conflict (Grossman 1992; Findley et al. 2011). Even if aid is not directly received by the government, it is still subject to capture by rebels (again, if fungible), which contributes to conflict onset and duration (Nunn & Qian 2013). How aid is distributed within a state can be politicized and exacerbate disparities and grievances along social cleavages, which increases the likelihood of conflict onset (Esman & Herring 2003). In addition, sharp reductions in aid increase the likelihood of conflict onset by shifting the domestic balance of power (Nielsen et al. 2011).

Evidence also exists that *development aid is epiphenomenal to armed conflict*. Many recipient states exhibit deep problems that prompt international assistance and simultaneously are conducive to conflict. In this respect, aid is not a cause of conflict, but rather a covariate. Cursory analysis would observe an association between assistance and conflict, without being able to detect reliably which one is exerting influence on the other. The relationship may instead be inverted: conflict stimulates inflows of development aid, for humanitarian and other purposes, or outflows, for safety reasons. Or the process may be iterative, with each operating as both cause and effect. One study shows that donors shift aid in reaction to or anticipation of conflict (de Ree & Nillesen 2009). Analysis must be sophisticated to unpack such an endogenous relationship. To complicate matters, assistance is distributed via programs and projects that can take years to implement, and the results of development aid may materialize—if at all— only over a longer time frame.

The emerging literature that assesses the relationship between development aid and conflict more directly does take a lot of these complexities into account. One common limitation, however, is that the analysis is based on the country-year model, often with aid undifferentiated (Collier & Hoeffler 2002; Lischer 2005; de Ree & Nillesen 2009). Nunn & Qian (2013) represents an exception, in that their study finds a positive relationship between US food aid and the duration of intrastate armed conflict, although their results do not hold up in a replication that fills in standard correlates from the literature (USAID 2014). The effect of aid on conflict is likely to be conditional on other variables, a logic reflected in recent research (Beath et. al, 2012, Berman et al. 2011b). This line of work remains underdeveloped, however, having been tested in only a select number of conflict environments.

1.4 *The Need for Analysis of Aid-Conflict Dynamics at a Subnational Level*
While country-level data can be helpful to identify broader patterns, spatially and temporally disaggregated analysis is essential to understanding the complex dynamics of conflict in association with infusions of aid. Thus, the research team believes that the critical question to ask is: *What determines the effect of international aid on subnational violent conflict?* For an answer, localized analysis is vital for multiple reasons.

To start, strong theoretical and empirical justification encourages the belief that only some types of development aid will affect the dynamics of conflict and only under certain circumstances. A vital step is to appreciate that aid is not distributed in a small number of large, homogenous packages, involving only a few actors. Instead, aid is distributed in the form of many distinctive programs and projects—well over a million over the last seventy years—via transactions among a large array of actors. Another way of saying this is that aid provision is highly heterogeneous: different types of aid, from different sources, are

distributed to different locations with different characteristics in different contexts. Given this extensive variation, and other salient factors, the impact of aid on the onset, escalation, severity, duration, and recurrence of conflict could potentially be positive, negative, or ambiguous. In other words, the relationship is expected to be conditional. Moreover, the nature of the conditionality is expected to have meaningful local aspects. Aid projects, especially, are regularly devised to reach specific locations, down to individual communities, with the ambition of affecting specific processes, institutions, organizations, groups, and sets of people.

Such targeting is a reflection of evolution in the literatures on development, livelihoods, and peacebuilding, which have come to emphasize the need for local-level interventions (Campbell, Chandler, and Sabaratnam 2011; Autesserre 2014). One reason is a desire to train resources where problems are rooted and manifest in vulnerabilities and harms. Evidence also exists that well-targeted aid can empower local actors to resist violent conflict and build inclusive political, economic, and social institutions (Lederach 1997; DFID 2009). Another reason is concern for the capacity and reach of weak states, as well as for state-society relations (DFID 2009). Routing resources in bulk through the central government may not be compelling if this partner is ineffectual, predatory, and/or antagonistic. To the extent that aid is targeted, following these resource flows to their intended destinations, then asking questions about impact in those places, makes natural sense.

The literature on conflict exhibits a growing appreciation of the necessity and value of adopting a disaggregated approach to analysis. The prevalence of conflict varies at a subnational level, as do the dynamics, the participating actors, and other characteristics (Kalyvas 2008; Cederman & Gleditsch 2009; Donnay, Gadjanova & Bhavnani 2014; Campbell, Findley, and Kikuta 2017). The shift toward the micro level permits a more nuanced analysis of conflicts, with explanations that account for changes over time and across spatial units—spanning the range of villages, neighborhoods, cities, subnational administrative units, states, and regions—in the incidence, intensity, and duration of events. Meanwhile, these characteristics of conflict are among an assortment of critical considerations that conceivably shape aid allocation decisions, again in ways that vary locally. Thus, the relationship between aid and conflict does not necessarily flow simply in a single causal direction, expressed at a country level.

All of these observed variations reinforce the rationale for studying the local dimensions of aid and conflict. It is reasonable to anticipate that the results of analysis conducted at the local level will be more precise and reliable. Subnational analysis captures variation at the geographical level of aggregation where the actual causal relationships between local context, aid, and conflict operate. Because civil wars are an aggregation of conflict events, investigating the relationship between aid and conflict at a local level still allows inferences about broader relationships. The results will also be actionable, inasmuch as the findings improve the ability to project the prospects of conflict and aid, facilitating beneficial targeting. At the same time, shifting attention to the local level raises the bar for both research and policy intervention. What happens at a local level must be observable and measurable in order to be studied. Absent sufficient disaggregated data, such analysis is infeasible. Meanwhile, donors are faced with the complexities of needing to tailor aid to appropriately match disparate local conditions. Such a situation is hardly novel; tailoring already occurs. The challenge is to tailor well, which requires an adequate comprehension of local disparities and their implications for aid-conflict dynamics. At the heart, these hurdles are a function of knowledge, which urges new, better research involving new, better data.

1.5   *Recent Advances in Subnational Analysis of the Relationship between Aid and Conflict*
Until recently, subnational analysis of the impact of aid, particularly in conflict-affected countries, was rare. One of the primary reasons was the lack of available data. Thanks to recent advances in subnational data, however, scholars have begun to focus on the micro-level mechanisms of how aid relates to conflict, including in the two research projects on which this project builds (Campbell and Findley 2017). Among the findings of this latest research is that aid programs that are small, more precisely targeted, and employ locals reduce rebel violence, while other types of aid have no effect or even increase violence. Aid that shifts civilian preferences can reduce subsequent rebel-initiated violence (Berman et al. 2011b). When aid is captured, however, rebel-initiated violence increases (Crost, Felter & Johnston 2010; Berman et al.

2013). Labor-intensive projects that reduce the unemployment rate serve to shrink the pool of labor available to rebel groups, which theoretically should reduce rebel-initiated violence (Iyengar et al. 2011), though findings of empirical research on that count are inconclusive (Berman et al. 2011a).

Nonetheless, even this new research on aid and conflict examines aid as a financial flow in relation to aggregate phenomena, such as conflict outcomes or intermediate economic outcomes that are believed to have repercussions for conflict outcomes. The behavior of donor or conflict actors is typically assumed or inferred, and rarely included as a factor in the analysis. In fact, systematic data on the behavior of donors and conflict actors is rarely collected (for an exception, see Campbell and Findley 2017). Instead, most researchers use limited anecdotal evidence to support claims about plausible mechanisms at the actor level that underlie observed findings.

Separate literatures on the behavior of donors and conflict actors have grown in parallel, without informing one another or being integrated into a single study, let alone delving into local variation. Cross-national studies of development aid have examined donor behavior in the aggregate, drawing conclusions about the general motivations for aid allocation (Alesina and Dollar 1998) while failing to capture the variation observed at the subnational level. The aid literature argues that there is a relationship between donor behavior and civil war conflict dynamics, but does not reveal the nature of that relationship (Findley et al. 2011). Numerous studies of conflict actors examine their multiple potential motivations for engaging in armed violence (for an overview, see Donnay, Gadjanova & Bhavnani 2014). Yet this research largely overlooks how the behavior of donors might interact with and conceivably influence the behavior of conflict actors—particularly their willingness to engage in violence. In practice, donors and conflict actors operate in the same locales and are affected by one another, but the literature on aid and conflict has largely ignored these actor-level interactions or their effect on levels of violence.

2   The Theoretical Framework and Research Design

The proposed research is grounded in the overall hypothesis that observed variation in aid-conflict dynamics within countries hinges jointly on the adaptability of donors and the receptivity of conflict actors at a subnational level. The unit of analysis is the first-order administrative divisions (ADM1) within each country. The dependent variable and key independent variables are therefore measured at that level.

2.1   Variables and Measurement

The outcome of interest is the **level of local violent conflict**. For purposes of the analysis, the proposed research will employ a continuous variable that captures the extent to which conflict has increased or decreased for a given spatial unit (e.g., an administrative division) over a given time period (e.g., year to year). To measure this variable, the project team will draw on several established sources of information armed conflict, violence, and nonviolent conflict: the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP),[1] the Armed Conflict Location and Events Data (ACLED) Program,[2] the Global Terrorism Database (GTD),[3] the Integrated Conflict Early Warning System (ICEWS),[4] and the Social Conflict Analysis Database (SCAD).[5] Datasets available from these sources systematically geocode conflict events at the subnational level, attaching them to specific administrative boundaries and geographic points. These data can be used individually or in tandem—depending on their coverage of individual country cases—to capture multiple dimensions of conflict, including counts of conflict events, the average or cumulative severity of these conflict events, and the progression in the scale and seriousness of the events.

The theoretical framework and analysis highlight two key factors. Both factors gauge the behavior of actors involved directly in aid-conflict dynamics at the local level, that is, within countries that receive aid and experience conflict. This project examines the overall hypothesis that how these two

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[1] UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED), Uppsala University, www.ucdp.uu.se.
[2] Africa Data, Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, http://www.acleddata.com/.
[3] Terrorism Data, Global Terrorism Database, http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/.
[4] Integrated Crisis Early Warning System for Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, ICEWS Dataverse, https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/icews.
[5] Social Conflict Analysis Database, Robert S. Strauss Center for International Security and Law, University of Texas at Austin, https://www.strausscenter.org/scad.html.

factors interact is integral to determining whether the impact of aid on aid is favorable (less conflict) or unfavorable (greater conflict).

The first key factor is the **degree of local adaptability of donors**. The intuition of this variable is that donors that have more decentralized decision making are better able to adapt to the specific local conflict circumstances that may affect or be affected by their aid projects. The importance of local adaptability is well-recognized in the scholarship on organizational learning, international peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and increasingly in international development (Levitt and March 1988; Argyris 1992; Campbell 2008; Howard 2008; USAID 2017; Campbell 2018). Measuring this factor empirically involves multiple steps. The research team will code a continuous variable, gauging the degree to which the procedures and practices of each donor active in each study country in each year of the analysis allow alterations in the subnational location, time frame, and thematic focus of aid. Coding efforts will draw on a novel dataset about donor adaptability (Campbell and Findley 2017). This dataset relies on previous field research conducted by Prof. Campbell and on AidData, which has compiled extensive project-level information on subnational allocations of aid in dozens of countries around the world. The average degree of adaptability across all donors active in a given spatial unit for a given time period will be calculated, yielding localized measures that can exhibit spatiotemporal variability both within and across countries. Of course, donor adaptability may also vary with the type and volume of aid, and the research team will control for this context-sensitivity in the empirical analysis.

The second key factor is the **degree of receptivity of local conflict actors to international donors**. The intuition of this factor is that conflict actors do not perceive and respond to all donors in the same way. Some conflict actors have a history of being antagonistic to international donors, whereas others have a history of closer cooperation with international donors. Adverse reactions to development programs have, for example, been found in situations where (successful) interventions weaken insurgent support within the civilian population (Crost, Felter & Johnston 2014). To measure local actor receptivity, the project will rely on several types of data. One type is public statements made by conflict actors. Available sources for these statements include traditional and social media. Another type of information is data on attacks on aid workers. Multiple sources of data on such attacks are available. The most extensive is the Security in Numbers (SiND) Database, for which geocoding of locations is being completed.[6] An alternative is the Aid Worker Security Database.[7] These two types of information will be used to classify all actors active in each conflict in each study country according to broad categories of receptivity. These classifications will be specific to each spatial unit for a given time period. Variants of the receptivity variable are possible. The research team will compute the average of the classifications across all conflict actors active in a given spatial unit for a given time period. The team can also use the classifications directly, as separate variables for different conflict actors, to test whether specific actors drive local aid-conflict dynamics. Basing the measurement of local receptivity on public statements and data on a narrow class of events that involve attacks on aid workers avoids possible issues of endogeneity with the project's dependent variable. Two other sources of information are the interviews that will be conducted to capture key informants' perspectives on donors and conflict actors and sentiment analyses using Twitter and other news sources. This information will be used to code an independent measure of local receptivity, as well as to triangulate with and thereby refine the measure devised from the other sources.

2.2   *Relationships and Hypotheses*

According to the logic of this project's theoretical framework, the interactions between the two key independent variables (donor adaptability and conflict actor receptivity) regulate whether aid-conflict dynamics at the local level are vicious or virtuous (see figure 1). The vicious dynamics involve scenarios in which conflict actors are unreceptive to aid, preventing implementation and/or diverting the resources to support their own interests, and donors are unable or fail to adapt their allocations. As a result, aid fails to achieve intended progress (e.g., providing alternative livelihoods for armed actors or protecting

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[6] Aid in Danger, Insecurity Insight, http://www.insecurityinsight.org/aidindanger/[Accessed 31 July 2017].
[7] Aid Worker Security Database, Humanitarian Outcomes, https://aidworkersecurity.org/ [Accessed 31 July 2017].

civilians) and may even have unintended consequences (e.g., undermining local governance structures). Under these scenarios, one would expect to observe that aid corresponds with an increase in violent conflict over time in the relevant locations. The virtuous dynamics involve scenarios in which donors are able to adjust allocations of aid to target specific needs (e.g., resolving intergroup disputes) at relevant locations in a timely manner, and the projects are received favorably by conflict actors (e.g., they agree to participate). Under these scenarios, one would expect to observe that aid corresponds with a decrease in violent conflict over time in the relevant locations.

Figure 1. Vicious and Virtuous Aid-Conflict Dynamics
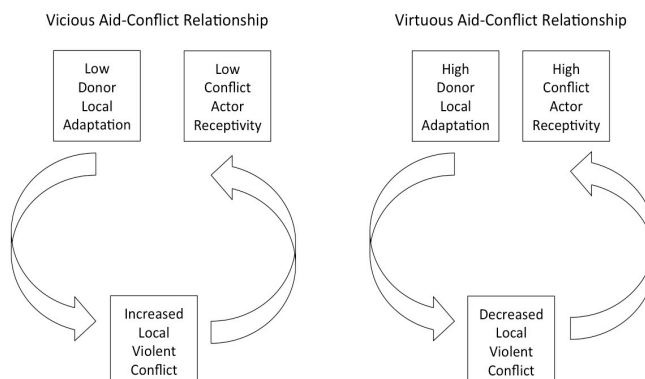
As figure 2 shows, four general outcomes could be expected. The outcomes encompass the conditional effects of aid on conflict given different characteristics of donors (degree of adaptability) and conflict actors (degree of receptivity). The implicit assumption is that no clear relationship between aid and violent conflict exists at the subnational level. Instead, variation in aid-conflict dynamics at the subnational level is conditioned by the adaptability of donors and the receptivity of conflict actors (independent variables), subject to contextual factors that may influence each of these conditions (covariates).

Figure 2: Expected Implications of Local Variation in Behaviors of Donors and Conflict Actors

		Conflict Actors	
		Low receptivity	*High receptivity*
Donors	*Low adaptability*	A Strong increase in conflict	C Moderate decrease in conflict
	High adaptability	B Moderate increase in conflict	D Strong decrease in conflict

The set of outcomes presented in figure 2 translate to four specific hypotheses:

H1: In cases where donors have less local adaptability, relationships between donors and less receptive local actors lead to a significant increase in violent conflict (cell A).

H2: In cases where donors have more local adaptability, relationships between donors and less receptive local actors lead to a moderate increase in violent conflict (cell B).

H3: In cases where donors have less local adaptability, relationships between donors and more receptive local actors lead to moderate decrease in violent conflict (cell C).

H4: In cases where donors have more local adaptability, relationships between donors and more receptive local actors lead to a strong decrease in violent conflict (cell D).

The project's research design, described below, is devised to enable sophisticated, robust causal inference and causal process identification to test these four hypotheses and identify the related causal pathways.

2.3   *Research Design*

The research design has three components: the selection of the three case study countries, the subnational hypothesis test, and the causal process test. The project will examine the behavior of donors and conflict

actors at the ADM1 level in three different countries—the DRC, Mali, and Nepal—using geocoded data on aid and conflict from 1990 to 2016.

The quantitative analysis of the relationship of aid, donor and conflict actor behavior, and conflict will rely on a quasi-experimental matching design to control for prior violent conflict, as well as subnational (e.g., ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic conditions, infrastructure, terrain) and national contextual covariates. Between the matched pairs, a difference-in-difference statistical test will be used to estimate the average subnational association between levels of aid and violent conflict, expected to be conditioned by local variation in donor adaptability and armed group receptivity.

Based on the results of the statistical analysis, the research team will then select eight diverse sites in each of the case study countries to conduct field research, including original data collection (semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and survey experiments designed to elicit truthful answers to sensitive questions), that will enable the team to investigate the empirical validity of its hypothesized causal mechanisms using deductive process tracing.

The mixed-method, multilevel research design proposed here thus combines complementary quantitative and qualitative techniques in an innovative way and will produce findings that are both grounded in robust causal inference and a nuanced causal process, with validity that can be generalized beyond the three case study countries.

2.3.1   *Case Study Countries*

The research team will carry out subnational analysis in the DRC, Mali, and Nepal. To select these three countries, the team started with the populations of least developed countries (LDCs),[8] which are ranked by the United Nations as having the lowest indicators in socioeconomic and human development globally. LDCs are highly dependent on international aid, ensuring the necessary exposure of interest, though the prevalence and other characteristics of aid vary considerably across and within these countries as well as over time. Next, those LDCs that have high levels of political instability and violence were selected and grouped into three categories (high, medium, and low) of government effectiveness, as measured by the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators.[9] Government effectiveness has the potential to affect the behavior of both donors and conflict actors. To ensure variation on this dimension, one country from each category of government was chosen.

By selecting the DRC, Mali, and Nepal, the research team can also capture variation in other factors in the country environment that may influence the behavior of donors and conflict actors: the degree of political stability and violence (as well as the nature of instability and violence); gross national income (GNI) per capita; the continent and sub-region (which may influence both donor policies and cross-border conflict dynamics); and the predominant culture and religion (which may influence the degree of local receptivity to particular donors). These details are presented in table 1.

The research team must also consider the feasibility of data collection, including undertaking fieldwork. The three countries selected are reasonably straightforward in terms of researcher access, notwithstanding their conflict-affected status. In addition, the key personnel have prior experience and good contacts in all three countries. The DRC and Nepal were the case study countries in the Swiss Network for International Studies (SNIS) project directed by Professor Campbell. She has conducted field research in both countries, accumulating extensive data upon which the proposed project will build. Professor Bhavnani, who will advise the project team, has conducted research in Mali, which is well known for being open to researchers. When conducting research in all three countries, the research team will ensure that their research complies with the highest ethical standards, including insuring the security of all researchers and respondents and the anonymity of all data collected. The proposed project's PI has

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[8] See http://unctad.org/en/Pages/ALDC/Least%20Developed%20Countries/UN-list-of-Least-Developed-Countries.aspx [Accessed 28 September 2015].

[9] Government effectiveness "captures perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service, and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies." See Worldwide Governance Indicators, http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#doc-methodology [Accessed 28 September 2015].

recently published a review article on the ethics of research in conflict environments and will ensure compliance with these standards (Campbell 2017).

Table 1. Other Characteristics of Study Countries

Country	Pol. Stability & Violence[10]	Government Effectiveness[11]	GNI Per Capita (Current 2014 US$)[12]	Subregion	Predominant Religion
DRC	-2.27	-1.59	380	Central Africa	Christianity
Mali	-1.74	-1.12	660	West Africa	Islam
Nepal	-0.70	-0.83	730	South Asia	Hinduism

2.3.2   Subnational Hypothesis Test

The next step is testing the theoretical hypotheses at the level of subnational geographical units across the three country cases. This approach ensures that hypotheses are tested at the subnational geographical resolution at which variation is observed in the characteristics of aid and conflict, as well as in donor adaptability and conflict actor receptivity. The approach also ensures an effective basis for inferences, because subnational geographical units vary not only with respect to these main factors of interest but also with respect to a range of possible confounding factors, which will be controlled for in the statistical estimations. Specifically, the research team chose ADM1s as spatial units of analysis. Observations for each of these units will ultimately be pooled such that key hypothesis can be tested across all subnational units in the three-country sample. This large, diverse population of spatial units is essential in generating robust estimates of the overall average effect of donor adaptability and conflict actor receptivity on aid-conflict dynamics. In sum, the project proposes to test the causal relationships arising from the theoretical framework on as broad and diverse an empirical basis as is realistically possible, spanning the three countries.

Consistent with figure 2, the subnational hypothesis test implies systematically testing the relationship between aid and conflict **conditional** on all possible combinations of low/high donor adaptability and low/high receptivity. In practice, the testing procedure begins by first splitting the sample of spatial units according to their observed combinations of donor adaptability and conflict actor receptivity, thus generating four distinct subsets of cases. Within each of these four subsets, a causal inference design can be used to test the relationship between aid allocations and conflict outcomes. Specifically, the team will compare the change in the level of conflict in those spatial units that have experienced significant aid (treatment) as compared to units that have not received significant aid (control). Significant aid is defined here as the spatial unit having received more than a specific cutoff amount of aid per year. The research team will ensure that its results are robust to the exact definition of what constitutes significant aid by repeating the analysis for a range of cutoffs.

To ensure robust inference and counter selection bias, statistical matching on a range of standard conflict covariates will be employed. Statistical matching generates quasi-experimental conditions in observational data by ensuring that for each treatment unit, a comparable control unit is part of the sample, and vice versa. Units are considered comparable if they are sufficiently similar with respect to the local empirical context. For this project, the relevant context includes economic conditions, as reflected in GDP per capita and other socioeconomic measures, but also structural conditions such as local population size, government infrastructure, or geographical confounding factors including elevation or the distance to the capital. The choice of confounding dimensions and their specific operationalization follows the standards of the literature on subnational variation in conflict (see, for example, Schutte and Donnay 2014). The analysis also matches on prior trends in conflict intensity and aid allocation, to rule out that the effects observed are merely due to broad circumstances such as an overall slow escalation of conflict

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[10] Worldwide Governance Indicators, World Bank. The measure of political stability and absence of violence ranges from a low of -2.5 to a high of 2.5. A full description of the methodology used to code this measure can be found at http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#doc-methodology.

[11] Worldwide Governance Indicators, World Bank. The measure of government effectiveness ranges from a low of -2.5 to a high of 2.5. A full description of the methodology used to code this measure can be found at http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#doc-methodology.

[12] World Development Indicators, World Bank. Access to these data and details about the methodology are at http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators.

or an overall slow decrease of aid allocation. Performing the matching step is intended to ensure that treatment and control units are substantially similar, with one exception: current allocations of aid. The comparability of treatment and control units then allows to exclude alternative causal explanations for changes in conflict not caused by variation in aid.

Causal effects in the matched sample are estimated using a standard difference-in-difference regression that compares characteristics of conflict events in each spatial unit before (n_{pre}) and after (n_{post}) treatment/control:

$$n_{post} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 n_{pre} + \beta_2 treatment + u$$

In this model, β_2 is the estimated average treatment effect on the quantity of interest, which expresses the increase (or decrease) in conflict due to aid allocation relative to the prior level of conflict. Note that this analysis further follows Linke et al. (2015) in accounting for possible spillover (or spatial autocorrelation) effects between adjacent spatial units, a common problem in spatially disaggregate causal inference designs.

Recall that the relationship between aid and conflict may be highly endogenous, because aid allocations may affect conflict and vice versa. In fact, the theoretical argumentation is built around these virtuous or vicious cycles of aid and conflict. The causal inference methodology employed here, by design, robust to the highly endogenous nature of the relationship of aid and conflict. By controlling for prior trends in aid and conflict, the methodology ensures that only cases that are indeed on a comparable empirical trajectory are compared. The causal effects observed are then, in fact, the effects beyond those that can be solely explained by endogenous cycles. In other words, the analysis for each of the four combinations of donor adaptability and conflict actor receptivity will yield estimates for the average effect of aid on conflict across all possible phases or cycles. These results are exactly the kind of overall, robust effects the research team aims to obtain for each of the four combinations (boxes A, B, C, and D) pictured in figure 2.

2.3.3   Causal Process Test

To complement the quantitative analysis, the team will trace the mechanisms that relate the two key independent variables (donor adaptability and conflict actor receptivity) to the dependent variable (change in conflict outcomes) at a local level. This "process tracing" will make it possible to empirically examine the assumed causal pathways in the stated hypotheses (Bennett and Checkel 2015). The research team will use the findings from the subnational hypothesis testing, described above, to select a diverse group of sites for the causal process test. In each case study country, a minimum of eight locations will be selected that represent maximum variation in the dependent and independent variables (Gerring 2007) because a dichotomous measure on each of the variables provides eight possible combinations of variables. By attempting to select cases that present each of these potential combinations, the project team will examine the causal processes that underlie the hypotheses both in cases that support the hypotheses and in outlier cases that may present crucial alternative explanations (Lieberman 2005).

In the eight sites that will be selected in each of the case study countries (for a total of twenty-four sites across the countries), the team will conduct field research to more precisely capture each of the variables of interest and test the hypothesized causal pathways. The team will conduct key informant interviews and focus groups with community members to investigate their perception of the adaptability of donors, the receptivity of the actual/potential conflict actors, and the relationship of these factors to escalating or deescalating conflict. The team will also conduct interviews with local representatives of donors, conflict actors (where possible), and government institutions to investigate specific instances when conflict escalated or deescalated and the possible relationship to interactions between donors and conflict actors. In these interviews, the team will employ list and endorsement experiments to attempt to elicit truthful answers to sensitive questions (Rosenfeld, Imai, and Shapiro 2015). These local-level interviews will be complemented with additional interviews in the country's capital and with officials at donor headquarters to better understand the donor priorities and the national and local conditions that could affect aid-conflict dynamics in the case study countries, and to explore the potential generalizability of these dimensions to other country contexts.

2.4   Data

For this project, the research team can rely significantly on existing data. In addition, the team intends to gather new micro-level data on aid, conflict, and the behavior of both donors and conflict actors. Any new datasets gathered as part of this project will be made publicly available together with codebooks and detailed documentation.

2.4.1   Conflict

Standard conflict datasets (e.g., UCDP, ACLED, GTD, ICEWS, and SCAD) supply data for analysis at an ADM1 level with yearly resolution, as well as more fine-grained temporal and spatial resolution for individual conflict events. The event-level data provides not only the exact date of each conflict event but also its precise geographical location and detailed information on type, perpetrator(s), and victim(s). For this analysis, individual event counts will be aggregated to the ADM1 level, obtaining a detailed and nuanced rendering of local conflict dynamics. Where necessary, the high temporal resolution of the underlying event data can be leveraged to robustly estimate changes or trends in the intensity of local conflict.

2.4.2   Conflict Actor Characteristics

The literature on subnational conflict dynamics has produced a substantial number of well-established datasets that provide detailed information on local conflict actors,[13] as well as geocoded data on politically relevant ethnic groups and their level of access to state power.[14] A significant effort has been expended to ensure consistency across existing datasets (Donnay and Bhavnani 2016), including efforts to explicitly dock multiple datasets. This project will code conflict actor characteristics using these existing data sources, media sources, think tank analyses (such as the International Crisis Group or Small Arms Survey), academic research on specific conflict actors, public statements, data on attacks against aid workers, and Twitter feeds.[15] These data will enable the research team to render actor characteristics, including the extent and duration of actors' involvement in local conflict and their receptivity to aid. Through field research, the team will validate and, where necessary, refine their coding of receptivity.

2.4.3   Donor Behavior

Data on project-level aid allocation behavior for OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) and non-OECD donors is available at the subnational level from AidData and the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.[16] These data are necessary to determine the geographic location of donors for the donor adaptability variable. The data for two of the case study countries—the DRC and Nepal—have already been coded for Professor Campbell's *Aiding Peace?* project. The proposed project will have access to these geocoded data. Similar data will also be coded for Mali. The adaptability of all donors operating in the DRC and Nepal have also been coded as part of *Aiding Peace?* project. Information on donors present in Mali will be coded. Through field research, the project team members will further deepen their knowledge of donor adaptability and the relationship to other variables of interest.

2.4.5   Covariates

These data will be complemented with a wide array of standard covariate data coded both at a country level and with subnational resolution, to identify pairs of subnationally matched ADM1 units and the sites for fieldwork in each country. The ADM1 level is sufficiently detailed to be representative for the relevant spatial dimensions at which aid allocation and conflict intersect, or at which donor adaptability and the receptivity of conflict actors vary significantly. At this level, one also observes variation in the contextual subnational covariates (e.g., socioeconomic conditions, infrastructure, terrain, ethnicity, and religion) that might affect the relationship of aid on conflict. For data on subnational covariates, the project can rely on standard spatially resolved variables such as geocoded data on approximate population

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[13] UCDP Actor Dataset v.2.2-2014, https://snd.gu.se/en/catalogue/study/ext0022.

[14] Ethnic Power Relations (GeoEPR, Update 2, 2014), http://www.icr.ethz.ch/data/geoepr.

[15] ACLED, for example, specifically codes violence against aid workers.

[16] See *AidData: Open Data for International Development*, http://aiddata.org [Accessed 28 September 2015]; and *Financial Tracking Service: Tracking Global Humanitarian Aid Flows*, https://fts.unocha.org [Accessed 28 September 2015].

figures for the year 2000 (CIESIN 2005), nightlight satellite measurements as an approximation for local wealth (Linke et al. 2015), ethnic groups (Vogt et al. 2015), and elevation.

3   Schedule and Milestones

This project will take place in four phases. The research activities to be undertaken during these phases are summarized in table 2 and described in detail below.

Table 2: Schedule, Tasks, and Milestones

Phase/Task	Project Year 1				Project Year 2			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Phase 1: Variable Coding and Initial Data Analysis								
1.1 – Code independent variables	■							
1.2 – Conduct data analysis		■	■	■	■			
1.3 – Present preliminary analysis at conference			■					
Phase 2: Field Research and Coding								
2.1 – Field Research in DRC		■						
2.2 – Field Research in Mali			■					
2.3 – Field Research in Nepal			■	■				
2.4 – Conduct sentiment analysis			■	■				
2.6 – Code data from fieldwork, conduct hypothesis tests, and integrate sentiment analysis and causal process tracing into analysis.			■	■	■			
2.6 – Present revised analysis at conference					■			
Phase 3: Writing and Workshops								
3.1 – Continue data analysis and write up findings in synthesis and causal process papers					■			
3.2 – Conduct HQ-level interviews in Paris, Washington DC, and Brussels						■		
3.3 – Organize two Stakeholder Workshops to obtain feedback on findings from policymakers						■	■	
3.4 – Present findings at conference						■		
Phase 4: Final Dissemination								
4.1 – Submit article synthesizing overall findings							■	
4.2 – Submit article on causal process using case study data								■
4.3 – Finalize policy-focused synthesis document								■
4.4 – Hold dissemination events for policymakers in Geneva, Washington, DC, and Paris								■

Phase 1: Variable Coding and Initial Data Analysis (1st Quarter 2018–2nd Quarter 2018)
The first phase of the project will focus on coding the key independent variables of interest (donor adaptability and conflict actor receptivity) for the three study countries. Based on this initial coding, the research team will conduct an initial analysis of the data, the results of which will be written up and presented at a top academic conference, most likely the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (APSA). The data analysis will continue throughout the project, as new data are coded and integrated into the initial dataset. During Phase 1, the research team will also do broader desk research on each of the case study countries to prepare for the fieldwork.

Phase 2: Field Research and Coding (2nd Quarter 2018–1st Quarter 2019)
The second phase of this project will focus on conducting field research in the selected ADM1s in the case study countries. In tandem with the field research, the team will conduct analyses of the hypothesized causal relationship between donors and conflict actors in each of the selected ADM1s. For each country, four round-trip plane tickets have been budgeted, enabling the research team to initiate and supervise the fieldwork and observe hypothesized causal mechanisms at several points in time over the six months set aside for fieldwork in each country. Analysis and coding will begin as soon as the research team has gathered the data for one study country. As new data are collected from the fieldwork, the team will code these data. This approach will enable the team to complete the data coding process soon after

the fieldwork is complete. During Phase 2, the research team will also conduct a preliminary analysis of the data, conduct the sentiment analysis, integrate the three types of analysis (hypothesis tests, sentiment analysis, and causal process tests), write up the results, and give another presentation at a top academic conference.

Phase 3: Writing and Stakeholder Workshops (1st Quarter 2019–3rd Quarter 2019)
During the third phase of the project, the research team will focus on writing two main publications: an overall synthesis paper and a paper focusing on the causal process observed in the fieldwork. During Phase 3, the research team will also conduct headquarters-level interviews with donors in Paris (the home of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee), Brussels, and Washington, DC These interviews will employ list experiments and semi-structured interview methods to examine the perceived prevalence of the findings from the field research throughout the donor community. The research team will also organize two stakeholder workshops with international aid policymakers and practitioners to solicit their feedback on the preliminary findings, test the perceived validity of these findings, and create the initial buy-in necessary to ensure the broader impact of the project's final results. The research team will also present the revised findings at a top academic conference during this phase to continue to diffuse and improve the research products from this project.

Phase 4: Writing and Final Dissemination (3rd Quarter 2019–4th Quarter 2019)
During the final phase, the research team will finalize the two journal article manuscripts from this research project and submit them to top-tier peer-reviewed journals. The team will also write a policy-focused synthesis of the research, which will be widely disseminated on venues such as the *Washington Post*'s *Monkey Cage* blog, to help ensure their transfer to policymakers. The team will then present the final results directly to donors and policymakers at dissemination events in Geneva, Paris, and Washington, DC.

4   Broader Impact and Intellectual Merit

4.1   Broader Impact

This project has important potential broader impacts. First, the findings are important for national security. International aid is increasingly used as a tool of national security, aiming to improve governance and win hearts and minds in seemingly ungoverned territories. The inconclusiveness of research on the relationship between aid and violent conflict has significant implications for policies that aim to use aid as a tool of conflict mitigation: policymakers lack evidence-based guidance about the conditions under which aid is, and is not, likely to have a conflict-mitigating effect. By providing evidence about these conditions, this research project should have a broader impact on US policymakers' understanding of the ways in which international aid can support or undermine national security. Second, the project is led by a female scholar and will provide highly valuable training for two PhD students, at least one of whom will be female, helping to increase the broader impact of women in the field of international security scholarship.

The research team will ensure that these findings are relevant to policymakers through two stakeholder workshops in which the preliminary findings will be presented to a group of development policymakers and practitioners, creating initial buy-in for the project. Toward the end of the project, the team will also produce a policy brief and hold two dissemination events with policymakers to ensure that the research findings are easily accessible to them. Finally, the team will publish at least one blog post, most likely on the *Monkey Cage* blog of the *Washington Post*, to synthesize the project's main findings for a wider audience.

The PI of the project has strong connections with key donors, including USAID, and the United Nations because of her previous research on this topic and direct experience as a staff member and external evaluator for these organizations. She has also received grants from the United States Institute of Peace and has strong connections with USAID, the State Department, and the Department of Defense. American University's School of International Service, located in Washington, DC, has a Manager for Research Promotion and Outreach, who will arrange meetings between the project team and key

stakeholders in the US government, think tanks, and INGOs to facilitate the wide dissemination of the research findings and, thus, their broader impact.

4.2   *Intellectual Merit*

This project will make significant contributions to the literatures on international aid, civil wars, international peacebuilding, and counterinsurgency. By focusing on the subnational behavior of aid actors and conflict actors, this project will provide an unprecedented analysis of these actors at the level at which they interact. By examining how the behaviors of both conflict and aid actors influence the escalation or de-escalation of violent conflict, this project will connect two broad and largely unconnected, literatures: one that focuses on donor motivations for allocating aid, and one that focuses on conflict actor behavior. The project team will ensure the project's impact on the existing literature by systematically presenting the results at top academic conferences in Europe and North America and by submitting the publications to top-tier, peer-reviewed journals. The data from this project and any open source publications will be made publicly available through the official websites of the teams at both American University and the University of Konstanz, as well as the project team's personal websites.

5   The Current State of Key Personnel's Research

The proposed project brings together a highly-experienced team of scholars. Both the PI, Professor Campbell, and her collaborator, Professor Donnay, have extensive experience researching the relationship between development aid and conflict processes and will guide the work of the two PhD students who will contribute to key components of the envisioned research and receive excellent PhD training in the process.

The prior work done by members of the team includes studies that examine relevant connections between aid and conflict dynamics. One of Professor Campbell's previous research projects, *Aiding Peace? Donor Behavior in Conflict-Affected Countries*, funded by SNIS, focused on the subnational behavior of donors in response to conflict and peace events, yet did not evaluate the effect of donor behavior on violent conflict or peaceful cooperation. As part of the *Aiding Peace?* project, Professor Campbell has also already conducted extensive research in the DRC and Nepal, collecting and coding original data on donor behavior at a subnational level. Professor Donnay was also a core member of a research project on aid and conflict, *Aiding Resilience? The Impact of Development Assistance on the Dynamics of Intrastate Armed Conflict,* funded by the US Department of Defense's Minerva Initiative. *Aiding Resilience* focused on the subnational behavior of conflict actors (armed actors, militants, rebel groups, and others) and their relationship to aid allocation patterns, but did not examine the behavior of donors themselves.

The proposed project is effectively designed to connect two ongoing research streams of the PI and her collaborator, building on a wealth of data already gathered and coded, and augmenting the aspects that are missing from each project to assemble a more complete, complex picture of aid-conflict dynamics. The central objective is to simultaneously capture the behavior of both donors and conflict actors and systematically study the variation in their interactions at a local level. The project will thus benefit from not only the highly relevant experience of its key personnel but also the trove of data that has already been compiled about aid projects, conflict actors, and donors, integrating and adding significantly to these resources and making them available to the broader research and policy communities.

5.1   *Key Personnel*

Prof. Susanna Campbell will serve as the PI on the project. She is an assistant professor at the School of International Service (SIS), American University, Washington, DC Her research specialization is the micro-dynamics of war-to-peace transitions, using mixed-methods designs that include qualitative comparative analysis, process tracing, and quantitative methods to examine data from elite interviews, surveys, participant observation, survey experiments, and archival sources. She has extensive experience conducting fieldwork in conflict-affected countries and undertaking original data collection to examine the behavior of bilateral and multilateral donors in conflict-affected countries across Africa (including the DRC) and Asia (including Nepal). Professor Campbell was the PI of a large research project funded by the SNIS, *Aiding Peace? Donor Behavior in Conflict-Affected Countries*, which ended in June 2016. This

project investigated motivations for subnational donor behavior in the DRC, Nepal, and Sudan. She is currently completing a book manuscript and several articles based on that research. From November 2013 to October 2015, she was also the Post-Doctoral Researcher on the SNSF-funded project Bad Behavior? Explaining Performance in International Peacebuilding Organizations, which is based on her dissertation. Her related book manuscript, entitled *Global Governance and Local Peace: Accountability and Performance in International Peacebuilding*, is forthcoming in 2018 with Cambridge University Press. In addition, she has also been the PI of a quasi-experimental evaluation of a $44 million contribution of the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) to Burundi and an evaluator for the World Bank Post-Conflict Fund. Professor Campbell's publications on international peacebuilding and donor behavior have been cited a total of 273 times (Google Scholar: h index 9, i10-index 9), including in award-winning university press books, top-tier peer-reviewed articles, and UN policy documents.

Professor Karsten Donnay will serve as collaborator on the project. He is an assistant professor of computational social science in the Department of Politics and Public Administration of the University of Konstanz. He is a founding member of the Konstanz Center for Data and Methods, a research unit that specializes in advanced methodologies of social science research. Professor Donnay's research specialization is quantitative and geospatial analysis and computational modeling of conflict processes. He has extensive experience working with disaggregated georeferenced data on aid and conflict, including integrating data from different sources and with different geographical resolutions, as well as addressing issues of data bias. He has developed new techniques for robust causal inference in these kinds of settings, a core expertise on which a quantitative subnational analysis will be built. He has also led the development of automated data integration tools for geospatial data that are regularly used by other researchers in the field. Professor Donnay's primary substantive research interest is asymmetric intrastate conflict, reflected in his work on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—Jerusalem in particular—and the conflict in Iraq. He has extensive experience working in diverse and interdisciplinary research teams, including his past position as a postdoctoral researcher in the US Department of Defense's Minerva Initiative–funded project, *Aiding Resilience? The Impact of Development Assistance on the Dynamics of Intrastate Armed Conflict*. The project, set to conclude in 2017, involves a partnership with the University of Maryland, the AidData Initiative through the College of William & Mary, and Development Gateway, all in the United States; the Institute of Development Studies, in the United Kingdom; and the Graduate Institute Geneva, in Switzerland. The aim of this project is to examine the subnational relationship between development aid projects and the onset, escalation, severity, and termination of violence, spanning the periods before, during, and after episodes of active armed conflict. The empirical research focuses on conflict-affected countries in Africa from 2002 through 2013, in addition to examining cases in other regions of the world (Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, Nepal, and Timor-Leste). For this purpose, extensive original, georeferenced data are being compiled about aid projects and conflict actors that are highly relevant to the research proposed here. Professor Donnay's growing list of publications, all within the last four years, have been cited a total of 154 times (Google Scholar: h index 5, i10-index 4).

The PI and her collaborator will receive limited but essential support from two consultants, Dr. David Backer and Professor Ravi Bhavnani—both of whom have extensive prior experience working on questions related to aid and armed conflict. Dr. Backer is the assistant director and research associate professor with the Center for International Development and Conflict Management at the University of Maryland. His research specialization is post-conflict processes. In this project, his primary responsibility will be to advise on the implementation of fieldwork and the qualitative case studies. Professor Bhavnani is a professor and chair of the Department of International Relations and Political Science at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies Geneva. He specializes in analyzing micro-dynamics of conflict and he will support the team in the statistical analysis of the subnational relationship of development aid and conflict. Professor Bhavnani also has significant experience conducting fieldwork in Africa, especially Mali, and will advise on the team's work in the DRC and Mali.

Two PhD students, one at American University and one at the University of Konstanz will be hired to provide essential research capacity on the project while also contributing to the mission of training the next generation of scholars.

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