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Is there a relationship between wartime violence and postwar agricultural development outcomes? The case of concessions and community grants in Mozambique

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies if intensity and recentness of wartime violence is related to the trajectory of post-conflict agricultural development. We consider the case of Mozambique, where the government has made agricultural concessions to corporations, as well as land grants to communities. These uses may stand in competition with one another, and we test if violence affects the awarding of concessions or land grants. We analyze district-level, GIS-generated data on concessions, grants, and civil war events. We find wartime violence intensity is associated with more concessions and fewer grants. We conversely find recentness of violence is associated with fewer concessions and more grants. Embedding our empirical analysis in a community resilience framework, we suggest the intensity of wartime violence may erode local institutions – be they traditional governance structures, or agricultural cooperatives seeking community lands – or limit their access to government bodies and local NGOs tasked with vetting, delimiting, and monitoring proposed concessions. Paradoxically, recentness violence may mobilize those same institutions.

> Stark violence is still the sire of all the world's values.
>
> – Robinson Jeffers, "The Bloody Sire" (Jeffers, 2001 [1940], 563)

Introduction

Post-conflict development policy is increasingly seen as a chance to correct societal problems, to dismantle structural causes of violence, and redress socioeconomic and political inequalities that the conflict may have produced or exacerbated (Caruso, 2010; Caruso & Brauer, 2013; Collier & Hoeffler, 2002; Duthie, 2008; Mac Ginty & Williams, 2009, esp. chap. 4; Ohiorhenuan & Stewart, 2008; Selim & Murithi, 2011). In short, post-conflict development is supposed to represent transition away from a past in which economic welfare and societal development were determined by the capacity to deploy violence.[1] But to what extent may the dynamics of violence during a war replicate themselves in the execution of post-conflict development schemes, due to the persistent inability of war victims to stand up for themselves? Or, on the other hand, does violent conflict actually engender social cohesion and political mobilization? It is a question of community resilience: if conflict-affected communities are unable to mobilize politically in the aftermath of war, then there may be a case for their protection by a paternal state. If, on the other hand, such communities are capable of political mobilization, they might be relied upon to play a lead role in structuring and carrying-out post-conflict development agendas.

In this paper, we examine the case of Mozambique, where hundreds of agricultural tracts[2] have been transferred to corporate investors in recent years, giving rise to resistance efforts at the local level. This phenomenon occurs against a backdrop in the developing world (and sub-Saharan Africa in particular) in which local and international demand for land has been steeply on the rise[3].

We study the case of agricultural (often biofuels) concessions and examine whether the degree of community mobilization is related to previous wartime violence. Taking the absence of concessions and the presence of community land grant allotments as proxies for successful local community mobilization, we hypothesize that communities that experienced more wartime violence will be generally now have more agricultural concessions awarded and fewer community land grants. Statistically analyzing a cross-sectional, GIS-generated district-level dataset on concessions, land grants, and wartime violence, we find evidence of both creative and destructive forces at work. More recent violence is associated with

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signs of elevated local political mobilization. However, violence intensity is associated with both higher levels of corporate concessions and lower levels of community land grants, both of which outcomes may be locally undesirable. We conclude by speculating that, to the extent that local institutions vet, delimit the boundaries of, and monitor, proposed concessionary projects, the intensity of wartime violence may erode their effectiveness, while its recentness may bolster them.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The second section serves as a background discussion on three separate topics: Mozambique's post-conflict development trajectory, the biofuels debate, and the mechanisms that motivate our hypothesis formation. The third section describes the data and our methodologies. The fourth section presents the results. The fifth section summarizes and interprets the results and the implications for post-conflict development policy.

Background

Post-conflict development in Mozambique

Mozambique is widely hailed as the paragon of successful post-conflict development policy. Following 16 years of a civil war (see Lunstrum, 2009; Sidaway, 1992), the country embraced liberal market and property reforms (Lunstrum, 2010), cut military spending and debt, while boosting expenditures in education and public health. The poverty rate plunged from over 69% in 1996 to under 55% in 2008 (World Bank, 2012). However, as highlighted by Giesbert and Schindler (2012), Mozambican development appears to be significantly asymmetric. In fact, households in rural Mozambique seem to be trapped in a pattern of underdevelopment. This reinforces and enriches the results on inequality presented in Brück and Schindler (2009), which demonstrated that land abundance at the aggregate level in Mozambique does not imply greater degrees of land access at the household level.

Since around 2006, the Government of Mozambique (hereafter, GoM) has increasingly pinned its hopes for continued economic growth on the possibility of becoming a biofuels powerhouse. The Mozambican Council of Ministers approved a national biofuels directive in 2009 outlining a "pilot phase" lasting until 2015, an operational phase lasting through 2020, and a dramatic expansion thereafter. In the meantime, the GoM has made concessions of hundreds of tracts of land to both foreign and domestic investors in the biofuels industry (including the state-owned oil company, Petroléos de Mocambique, or Petromoc) to grow sugarcane, copra and jatropha for biofuel production, thereby increasing agriculture's relative contribution to the national GDP (Fairbairn, 2013; Schut, Slingerland, & Locke, 2010). The importation of biofuels and related products was banned in 2006 (World Trade Organization Secretariat, 2008, p. 62). An estimated 2.7 million hectares transferred in Mozambique in the period 2004–2009, compared with 4.0 million in Sudan, 1.6 million in Liberia, and 1.2 million in Ethiopia over that same period (Deininger et al., 2011, p. xxxii). As Deininger et al. (2011) explain, "[v]irtually everywhere, local investors, rather than foreign ones, were dominant players. Moreover, in most cases, the expected job creation and net investment were very low" (pp. xxxii). Indeed, 53% of the total concessions area in Mozambique between 2004 and 2009 was granted to domestic investors (Deininger & Byerlee, 2011, p. 705), though many concessions represent joint ventures between domestic and international partners (Wise, 2015).

"Plantation"-style concessions for biofuels mark a break with previous agricultural concessions policy, which promoted the "outgrower" model[4]. Such land use competes with preexisting local claims on arable land and water resources, and may heighten food insecurity among rural populations (Deininger et al., 2011; Estabrook, 2011; Oxfam International, 2007). Fig. 1 depicts the locations and extents of current agricultural concessions and community land grant claims; overlaps (contested land) are highlighted in dark gray. Since the end of the war, many local communities have sought (and often received) formal recognition of their traditional land claims, which aids them in warding off unwanted concessions, and attracting, delimiting, and monitoring wanted ones (Deininger et al., 2011). The establishment of community land claims has been motivated by different and overlapping challenges to local land control since the early 1990s. At first, it served as insurance against rampant speculation in the post-war period. Starting in the late 1990s, community land grants were established by Community Based Natural Resources Management initiatives as a means to protect forest and wildlife in the absence of meaningful devolution of forest rights to local communities. Since the mid-2000s, such community grants have been established under the country's Iniciativa Terras Comunitarias (ITC) with the purpose of *attracting* investment with the promise of less contested land rights, but also of guaranteeing local communities a more equal bargaining position in the process of striking and monitoring deals (De Wit & Norfolk, 2010, p. 3).

Encroachment on traditional users' rights by corporate agricultural concerns has caused intense conflicts in many countries across sub-Saharan Africa, Mozambique included (Deininger & Byerlee, 2011, p. 704). These conflicts focus both on the official terms of concessions authorizations, as well as the 15% of Mozambican concessions for which a 2009 land audit found that investors did not comply with investment plans (Deininger & Byerlee, 2011, p. 705). Such non-compliance often involves encroachment on adjacent community lands, as in the case of the ProCana sugar can biofuel project (Borras, Fig, & Suarez, 2011, p. 226) and the Chikweti forestry project in Niassa province (Arbourne, 2013; Seufert, 2012). Other documented adverse local impacts of agricultural concessions include loss of community water access, poor labor conditions and insecure contracts, loss of access to forest lands for subsistence livelihoods (which often require firewood gathering, among other resources), loss of local crops and trees due to poorly contained fires used for land clearance, and general soil degradation and biodiversity loss associated with large monoculture plantations (Seufert, 2012).

In fact, despite the potential benefits to the national economy, there is some evidence that awarding a biofuels concession might be a net negative for nearby residents, even potentially entailing the development of local resistance campaigns and domestic controversy over concessions. In particular for Mozambique, Deininger et al. (2011, pp. 64–68) report that the expected benefits in terms of job generation and technology transfer did not occur. Charles (2012) has reported that some Mozambican communities cautiously welcome foreign land investors at first, only to begin protesting after being disappointed by the lack of jobs created and outstanding land compensation payments.

Evidence that local communities are willing and able to threaten corporate private interests can be found in the case of ProSavana, a Japanese-Brazilian-Mozambican project that aspired to convert 35 million hectares of savannah into soybean farms. ProSavana was derailed by a national campaign led by União Nacional de Camponeses (UNAC), Mozambique's national farmers union, and perhaps to an even greater extent by resistance from local farming communities asserting their traditional land rights (Wise, 2015). Such considerations may underpin the observations of Deininger and Byerlee (2011, p. 705) that, despite the possibility for significant economies of scale in biofuels, the median size of Mozambican concessions from 2004 to 2009 is (at 2225 hectares) relatively low compared with more recently conflict-affected countries like Liberia and Sudan.

This domestic tension resonates with generalized fears regarding a "global land grab," a catch-all term describing a significant