

Abstract

This thesis wants to make clear the theoretical concept in the form of a testable hypothesis on the relationship between the political control of the territory by a Violent Non-State Actor (VNSA) and the effectiveness of realization of its political objective (policies). Since in the literature there is no explicit theory or theorization that would reflect the varying degree of effectiveness with regard to the varying degree of territorial penetration, and there are no explicit parametric indicators and values that may be necessary for effective achievement of the political objective in relation to the territory, the purpose of the research will be to answer the question whether, how and to what extent the intensity of the physical penetration of the territory is related to the ability to more easily and efficiently achieve the goals for which the VNSA has been established and has strived. A general definition of threshold values of the penetration can also provide partial piece of knowledge for practical policies and approaches to territorial VNSA on the part of states (counterinsurgency actors).

Although there is no explicit use of any of the theories of international relations in the research, the used theoretical framework is inspired by a) approaches to political geography and outlines of territorial relevance postulated by authors dealing with the settlement of territorial disputes, and b) to the state-centric concept of neoclassical realism. In this perspective land-holding profits are an essential prerequisite for creating a strong social and political position for an actor without which no successful execution of preferred policies can be pursued within the purview of international relations.

So, if territory is important for states, it can be just as important for VNSAs who penetrate and control it. If some VNSAs have similar characteristics to states when they have a monopoly on violence in a defined territory and are able to provide/organize public goods/services fan (i.e. to govern – they guarantee security, welfare and representation) through a system of institutions, they represent a functionally comparable entity practically behaving and acting as states. In such a case, such VNSAs can be approached as geopolitical formations in the protostate stage of existence.

The hypothesis, based on the starting point of the research, therefore operates with the assertion that even in the case of VNSAs exists, through the ability to govern, a mediated (nonlinear) causal relationship between the effectiveness of realization of objectives and territorial penetration: the more intense the territorial presence of VNSAs (the input phenomenon), the higher the probability of profits from the VNSAs governance in this territory (mediating phenomena of sovereignty, statehood, mobilization and extraction, and

social epistemology), and hence the higher assumption for achieving higher effectiveness of realization of VNSAs goals (output phenomenon).

The four case studies are presented in the research and through them the four VNSAs who (have) penetrated the territory at the expense of a state actor (from the international legal point of view to the detriment of the legitimate power holder) and strive in this territory to establish their own norms and rules and to execute practices associated with some form of government. These VNSAs are concerned: Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb, Hezbollah, Daesh, and Al-Shabaab. Each of these VNSAs fulfills the criteria of the two models that have been used for their selection: a) all four meet the criteria of the modern *Sherwood Forest Model* (commit cross-border violence, operate in areas without state power, and act in accordance with radical ideology proclamations), and b) each of them fulfills the parameters of just one of the land use model – tactical or operational or strategic.

The chosen methodology represents a multivariate approach to case study analysis. The research methods and their succession resonate with the contemporary and by research practice in the United States of America proven way of conducting conflict research in the international relations discipline, which is based on the scientific realism metatheory and is guided by a position of qualitative-explaining epistemology. After determining the criteria of the individual phenomena, the research proceeds methodologically as follows: In step one, intra-case congruence, the values of phenomena predicted by the hypothesis are related to empirically detected values and it is observed in which criteria their values covariate. In the second step, process-tracing, a causal mechanism is defined in each of the four cases, which shows why in some cases and in some phenomena there is congruence with the hypothesis prediction, and not in other cases and other phenomena. And in the final third step, cross-case comparison by Mill's method of concomitant variation, a causal relationship between the phenomena, inferred in the previous steps, is confirmed/refuted. The research data comes from both primary and secondary literature, as well as from communication and conversation with experts who professionally pursue VNSAs under research and their locations, repeatedly stay there and are able to communicate their knowledge and findings.

The output analytical finding is a partial confirmation of the hypothesis: a) there is no directly proportional relationship between territorial penetration and the effectiveness of objectives, and b) territorial penetration and territorial governance are necessary conditions for the effectiveness of objectives. However, the influence of territory and the ability to govern is not absolute – the analysis also shows for which types of objectives this influence is at the same time a sufficient condition and for which it is not. The analysis also extends and specifies the

hypothesis by detecting specific intervening phenomena and contextual factors that are causally involved in amplifying/moderating the influence of territory on the effectiveness of goals. Finally, the analysis outlines threshold values of territorial penetration criteria and other circumstances at which, if they are exceeded and set in, a VNSA may present a security threat to its surroundings.