
Method Parallelization and Method Triangulation: Method Combinations in the Analysis of Humanitarian Interventions

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Abstract

This article investigates the combinations of methods. It introduces the distinction between method triangulation, method parallelization and corresponding subtypes along the dimension of data generation and data analysis methods. While scholars often refer to the triangulation when describing in fact parallelization, the two should be clearly distinguished: method triangulation is based on a vertical logic of combining methods to aggregate data or data analysis techniques for the score of one explanatory factor, method parallelization follows a horizontal logic of combining methods according to their conceptual linkages. The article outlines the different challenges of each combination strategy and distinguishes between two types of method triangulation (data generation triangulation and data analysis triangulation) and three types of method parallelization (multivariate designs, research programs, and causal processes). To illustrate the differences and the applications between triangulation and parallelization, the article investigates a causal process of humanitarian interventions and analyzes both media attention and government action in France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States when it comes to the humanitarian crisis in Darfur/Sudan.

Zusammenfassung

Der Beitrag thematisiert die Systematik der Kombination verschiedener Methoden. Er führt eine Unterscheidung zwischen Methodentriangulation, Methodenparallelisierung und entsprechenden Subtypen anhand der Dimensionen von Datengenerierung und Datenanalyse ein. In der Literatur findet sich oft eine Referenz zu Methodentriangulation, wobei vielmehr Methodenparallelisierung dem eigentlichen Aufbau des jeweiligen Beitrags entspricht: Methodentriangulation bezieht sich auf eine vertikale Logik, nach der Methoden kombiniert werden, um Datenerhebungs- und Datenanalyse-Techniken zu aggregieren und um damit den Wert eines erklärenden Faktors zu ermitteln. Methodenparallelisierung folgt hingegen einer horizontalen Logik, in der die Methodenkombination nach der konzeptionell-sequenziellen Verbundenheit erfolgt. Der Beitrag stellt die unterschiedlichen Herausforderungen der Kombinationsstrategien dar und unterscheidet zwei Typen von Methodentriangulation (Daten-Erhebungs-Triangulation und Daten-Analyse-Triangulation) sowie drei Typen von Methodenparalle-

lisierung (multivariate Designs, Forschungsprogramme und Kausalprozess-Designs). Der Artikel illustriert diese Unterscheidung in einer exemplarischen Anwendung eines Kausalprozesses humanitärer Interventionen und analysiert Medienaufmerksamkeit und Regierungshandeln in Deutschland, Frankreich, Großbritannien und den USA in Bezug auf die humanitäre Krise in Darfur/Sudan.

1 Introduction and Overview*

As both the variety and the specialization of methods increases steadily, combining methods is a common thread in actual research and self-reflexive scientific discourses. There are different catch-phrases for these discussions like “mixed methods” (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998, Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003), “integrative social sciences” (Seipel and Rieker 2003), or “triangulation” (Flick 2011) – the latter gained arguably the most prominence throughout the last years. As the different catch-phrases or labels indicate, these debates both attract quite some attention and take place in various scholarly communities that each by and large focus on one aspect, be it a critical discussion on whether and how to combine qualitative (small-N) and quantitative (large-N) studies (see, for instance, “integrative social sciences”) or be it an analysis of various mechanisms of aggregating data, which is the focus of, for example, the “triangulation” camp. As fruitful as these debates were for advancing the methodological reflections and in fostering a pluralistic thinking in social sciences, they come with a certain baggage: firstly, there is a tendency of being either caught up in some ideological debates (a strive for pluralism and methodological non-conformism) or focused overly on a specific subfield (data aggregation in triangulation) losing sight of the overall picture of combining methods. Secondly, terms like triangulation and phrases like mixing methods have become ubiquitous in articles, conference papers, and grant proposals oftentimes not adhering to the rigor of the original concepts and thus making them more and more devoid of any methodological substance. Thirdly, there are new advances in the methodological literature that have not received attention by scholars devoted to method combinations. A case in point

* This article benefited immensely from the constructive critique of one anonymous review and from stimulating debates with Joachim Blatter. I am grateful for both.

is the role of temporality, most notably the discussions on causal process tracing or causal chains in case study designs (see, for instance, Blatter and Haverland forthcoming).

Hence, this article attempts to map a more comprehensive picture of combining methods, introduces a typology that focuses on the basic standards of each subtype, and exemplifies one specific subtype (causal chains) by investigating a theoretical framework, which explains humanitarian interventions as a multilevel process.

At the core of the typology is both a distinction between method triangulation and method parallelization and corresponding subtypes differentiated between the combination of data-generation and data-analysis techniques. While scholars often refer to triangulation when in fact undertaking parallelization, the two should be clearly distinguished: method triangulation is based on a vertical logic of combining methods to aggregate data or data-analyses for the score of one explanatory factor, method parallelization follows a horizontal logic of combining methods according to their conceptual linkages.

In the first part, the article introduces this typology and distinguishes between two subtypes of method triangulation (data generation and data analysis triangulation) and three subtypes of method parallelization: multivariate designs, research programs, and causal chains, whereas the latter links to current debates in methodological literature.

To illustrate the differences and applications, the article investigates international decision-making in the field of humanitarian interventions. To that end, humanitarian interventions are modeled as a causal process, which is analyzed by falling back on different methods at different steps of the process but sometimes triangulating methods to explore one condition at one step of the process.

2 Triangulating and Parallelizing Methods – Mapping Method Combinations

Combining methods in one research endeavor is nowadays quite common. However, mono-method designs dominated the scene before the 1990s (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998), even though the methodological reflection of combining various methods had already advanced quite considerably at that point of time: as early

as 1959, Campbell and Fiske called for combinations of various operationalizations of one explanatory factor to refine the measurement and to make the results more reliable and valid. Therefore, they introduced a now seminal technique of forcing researchers to think of alternative methods in one analysis, the multimethod multitrait matrix (Campbell and Fiske 1959).

While Campbell and Fiske focused on quantitative methods in psychological research, much of the methodological debates in the subsequent decades were consumed by the partially ideologically driven conflict between camps that were most commonly referred to as positivist-quantitative and interpretative-qualitative camps. The debate of combining methods was thus driven by an often pragmatic stance (Morgan 2007) against these methodological divides: proponents of “integrative methods” or “mixed methods” elaborated on various ways of integrating quantitative and qualitative methods in operationalizing one factor or throughout the research process. Tashakkori and Teddlie provide an in-depth overview of this development (Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998).

Combining elements of both quantitative and qualitative approaches was the common thread of most mixed method, triangulation and integrative method debates. Scholars engaged in them reflected on their philosophical assumptions, inquiry logics, guidelines and good standards of research practice, and even on the sociopolitical commitments of the researchers themselves (Creswell et al. 2003, Greene 2006).

In the following, a typology of method combinations will be presented that goes beyond these debate in three ways: firstly, it is truly integrative leaving the old method divides aside. Hence, it discusses combinations of methods no matter if they are qualitative or quantitative by nature. Secondly, it maps the complete field of method combinations by looking at and delineating both triangulating and parallelizing methods – and not either or. Thirdly, it puts a certain emphasis on the inclusion of developments that have gained considerable prominence throughout the last decade: temporality and causal processes.

2.1 Data Generation, Data Analysis, and Two Logics of Method Combinations

The term “method” is used for both techniques to generate data and for techniques to analyze data. Data generation methods pro-

vide techniques of standardization for tapping into new data sources and transforming raw data into analyzable forms. Narrative interviews or surveys are cases in point. Methods of data analysis refer to what comes after: by using analyzable data (even from the literature) they provide techniques to structure them and to apply them to some kind of causal inferences. The proof of causal relationships can take different ways: for instance, either a more positivistic one by employing experimental or quasi-experimental methods to draw conclusions from empirical data in a logical and controlled way (for instance, through systematic and co-variate cross-case comparisons), a more inductive-naturalist one by focusing on the richness of the data and finding “smoking-gun” observations that can hardly be disputed by common sense (see, for instance, George and Bennett 2005) or rather theory driven in the form of a congruence analysis (see Blatter and Blume 2008, Blatter and Haverland forthcoming). When combining methods, one should keep in mind whether one refers to data generation methods or data analysis methods. In some cases this leads to quite different challenges.

In general, two basic logics of combining methods should be clearly distinguished. First, the vertical logic, which refers to combining several methods in operationalizing and measuring one explanatory factor. Hence, one is mixing different data generation or data analysis techniques to measure the score of one explanatory factor. The challenge here is to identify the rules according to which data is aggregated. This is the logic behind method triangulation. Second, the horizontal logic, according to which methods are combined along a conceptual sequence in one research design or within a larger research process – method parallelization. The challenge is thus to be found in the conceptual depth of the theoretical framework.

In the following these two basic types of combining methods will be introduced in more detail and subtypes distinguished by falling back on the differentiation between data analysis and data generation methods. Figure 1 summarizes the typology.

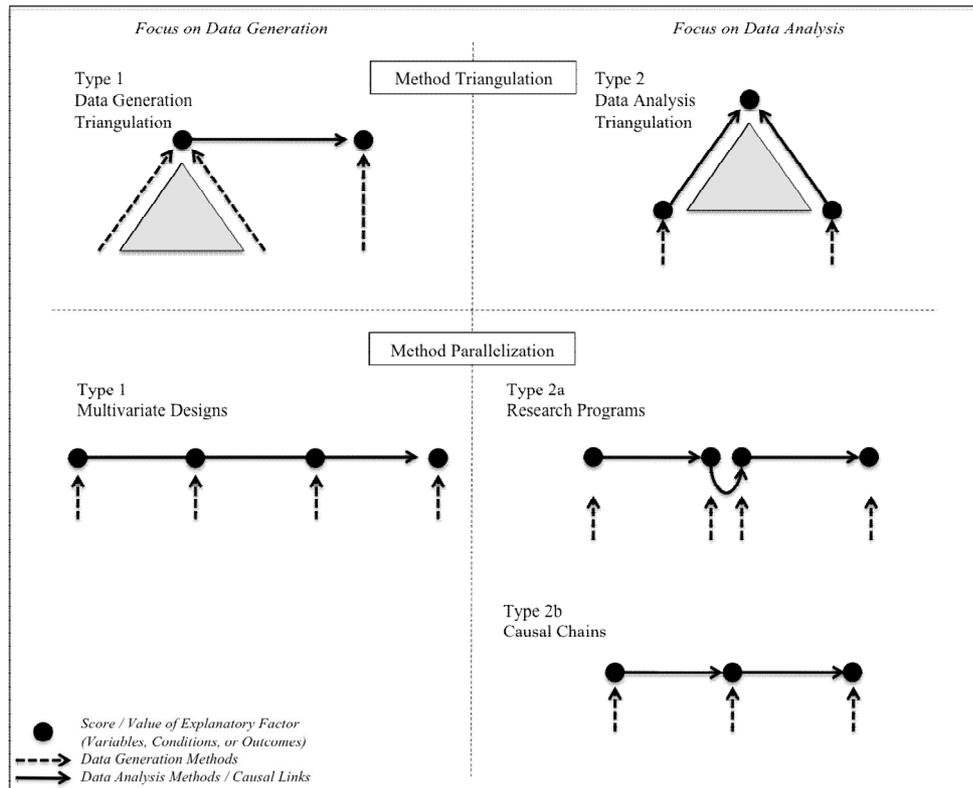


Figure 1 – Overview of Method Combinations

2.2 Method Triangulation

Combining methods according to the first logic is called triangulation. Two or more methods converge in the measurement of the score of one explanatory factor graphically forming a triangle (see figure 1). Triangulation is not a new term and the concept has been methodologically refined since the 1970s. However, scholars sometimes use it as a synonym for every kind of method combination by and large neglecting the vertical logic behind it.

Conceptually, it was coined by Denzin, who defines it broadly as “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena” (Denzin 1970: 297). But even before, as Flick (2011: 7-10) points out, triangulation has been used frequently or even highlighted as a research strategy (Strauss et al. 1964: 36) without referring to the yet relatively unknown terminology. Denzin (1970) distinguishes between data triangulation (the use of multiple sources of data), methodological triangulation (the use of multiple methods), investigator triangulation (the use of multiple interviewees, for instance), and theory triangulation (the use of multiple theoretical perspectives).

Discussing methods, however, this article focuses rather on

methodological triangulation, relating to it as method triangulation. Denzin differentiates two subtypes: within- and between-method triangulation. The former refers, for instance, to combining subscales within one survey (data generation), while the latter employs a logic of higher validity by competitively combining a variety of methods to overcome the limits of one single method (both data generation and data analysis). Denzin attracted a lot of criticism: whereas Silverman lamented that Denzin had not been explicit on the reactivity problem of methods, i.e. on whether different methods are truly measuring the same phenomenon (Silverman 1985), Fielding and Fielding questioned whether methodological triangulation in fact rather adds breadth and depth than accuracy and validation, i.e. rather complementarity than congruence to a research endeavor (Fielding and Fielding 1986). Only in reacting to this criticism, Denzin emphasized the “sophisticated rigor” as crucial in combining methods and highlighted that not method competition but rather the complementarity is at the core of the combination (Denzin 1989). Similarly, Flick argued for a systematic triangulation of perspectives in order to make use of their complementarity and show their limits (Flick 1992). See Flick (2011: 13-50) and Patton (2005) for a thorough discussion of these developments.

Following this logic, this article employs a definition of triangulation, according to which a researcher taps into a variety of methods to operationalize the score of one single explanatory factor. Triangulation is thus used to increase the quality of measurement and the validity and reliability of the research. The central challenge is the choice of strategy to aggregate the data (King et al. 1995: 479-480, Leuffen et al. 2010: 3). When it comes to data generation methods, the aggregation challenge refers to minimizing measurement errors by drawing on different sources of evidence (interviews and document analysis, for instance) and to make their scales congruent. Triangulation thus has to beware of measurement biases and is aimed at increasing measurement validity.

Leuffen, Shikano, and Walter – in their very useful piece on opening the black box of aggregation decisions – suggest five strategies of triangulation, which they weigh according to their comparative advantages and simulate their usefulness under various scenarios (Leuffen et al. 2010: 5-8): while the first strategy, the “random selection” among several rankings is not very help-

ful in qualitative research, the other four strategies might prove useful under certain circumstances: first, the aggregation according to the “arithmetic mean” (an unweighted average); second, a “majority” strategy if there are more than two data sources and enough independence of these different sources; third, a “weighted average” strategy if the researcher possesses additional information that enables him to rank the data-sets ex-ante or ex-post; fourth, the “winner takes it all” strategy, which considers only the most reliable information. The choice of strategy should be informed by the number, the nature and the degree of independence of the sources to be aggregated (Leuffen et al. 2010: 14). When it comes to data analysis methods, an issue Leuffen et al. do not discuss thoroughly, the challenge is similar but rather focused on whether different data analysis methods relate truly to the same or to complementary causal links (see figure 1).

2.3 Method Parallelization

The challenge of a horizontal logic of combining methods is completely different: various methods do not converge in one score but are rather used to provide an answer to complex research questions. Hence, the point of reference is not one explanatory factor but rather the research design as a whole in a sequential logic across various explanatory factors (see as well Creswell 1994). Rather than data aggregation, the challenge is to be found in the logic of the conceptual framework that binds the combination of methods together. For combinatory designs that employ this sequential logic are rooted in the conceptual framework, this article proposes the term “method parallelization” in contrast to triangulation. There are three basic subtypes of method parallelization, which are graphically summarized in figure 1: one related to combining data generation methods (multivariate designs: type 1) and two combining data analysis methods (research programs: type 2a; and causal chains: 2b).

When researchers combine various methods sequentially, there are two basic modes of doing so: along the research process or more deeply rooted in the actual theoretical framework along a conceptual dimension of temporality. This article will introduce briefly the former relating to type 1, multivariate designs, and type 2a, research program, before elaborating on the latter (type 2b, causal chains). As stated above, this last type certainly points to the most lively discussions and latest developments in debates

on qualitative research methods.

When focusing on the sequential logic of combining methods, this does not exclude falling back on a triangulatory logic within the same research process. It might make sense to combine method parallelization and method triangulation within one research design. Emphasizing a sequential logic across explanatory factors does not mean that the score of a single explanatory factor cannot be triangulated beforehand. Hence, combinations of the two logics are certainly possible.

2.3.1 Sequential Logic in the Research Process: Multivariate Designs and Research Programs

In the first type - multivariate designs - the sequential logic is not as evident since one explanatory factor does not follow logically from the other. Rather, there are many explanatory factors or independent variables that are linked causally to one explanatory factor or the dependent variable. These may be operationalized by using a different data generation method for measuring the score of each factor. The horizontal logic thus refers to a sequence in the research process. However, the combination logic is still based on a challenge that derives from the concept of the research design and is clearly different from the data aggregation challenge posed by triangulation.

While multivariate designs refer to a sequence of data generation methods, there can be a sequence of data analysis methods too: combining a large-N study with a medium or a small-N study in one research program is necessarily sequential. For instance, a researcher analyzes a larger data-set first to identify outlier or outlier cases that one investigates deeper later in the research process (see Gerring 2007) or starts with a small-N study to then expand the cases under investigation in a medium- or large-N study. This two step approach is widely used, serving as a basis for sophisticated case selection in a narrow sense and, more to the point made here, for a more complete picture of the complexity of the research question and the validity of a given theoretical framework. While the former (small-N followed by medium-/large-N) can contribute to testing the internal validity of a causal framework, the latter – by generalizing the findings to a larger population of cases – can contribute to testing the external validity of a given framework or might contribute to concept formation and measurement (see for a helpful summary and the

specific use of different case study types in this regard: Blatter and Haverland forthcoming). In addition, there is the subtype of multilevel use of methods (see as well Tashakkori and Teddlie 1998), which refers to the multilevel nature of the concept and/or the empirical reality. One might employ a statistical method to analyze a causal link on the national level while falling back on qualitative methods to analyze the corresponding link at the regional or international level.

In all of these cases, the sequence of either data generation and of data analysis methods has its roots in the conceptually based logic of the research process. Once the research design focuses theoretically on temporality, the combination of data analysis methods is linked even more densely to the conceptual framework. This is the case when investigating causal chains, which will be scrutinized in the following.

2.3.2 Sequential Logic within the Conceptual Framework: Causal Chains

Method parallelization becomes especially prevalent in analyses that focus on timing and processes. If one investigates chains of necessary and sufficient conditions for explaining specific outcomes, conceptual connectedness is naturally at the core of the analysis and the combination of methods necessarily follows that logic too. While being, in a general sense, still part of a research process that tries to come to valid conclusions, the term process is – in a stricter sense – the research object of the observation and the temporal sequence critically important for drawing causal inferences. Blatter and Haverland stress this point in their careful analysis of causal process tracing, the CPT type of case studies, as they call it (Blatter and Haverland forthcoming). Causal chains consist of links or steps. The combination of data analysis methods has to be chosen in the light of identifying the intervening causal processes between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable.

Hence, the challenge of combining methods in a research design based on causal chains is the ontological and epistemological soundness of the temporal sequence of causal links in the conceptual framework. In essence, the logic of causal chains (Goertz and Levy 2007) and causal conjunctures (Pierson 2004) is based on “configurational thinking” (Ragin 2008: 109-123). Ontologically, this refers to viewing outcomes in a social world

as results of combinations of causal factors, of potentially diverse pathways (equifinality), and of context dependency (causal heterogeneity). As Blatter and Haverland highlight, this leads epistemologically to an emphasis on observations and corresponding methods that allow to determine comprehensive story lines, which provide a high degree of certainty when linking the observation back to the causal link (“smoking guns”, in the sense of Bennett and George (2004)), and that specify in-depth the mechanisms that link causes and effects (“confessions”) (Blatter and Haverland forthcoming).

Those various causal links are the natural playing field for method parallelization. While one outcome might be analyzed by using a content analytical method, the next outcome in the causal chain might well be investigated by relying on a survey or interview method. Of course, each outcome, condition or causal link is potentially an access point for method triangulation if it serves the quality of the research – and if it is still manageable: as Flick points out, triangulation tends to consume a lot of researcher’s resources (Flick 2011: 100) and this is even more true in combining it with a sequential logic of causal chains.

In the following, one causal chain will be presented: the multi-level decision-making process that results in an international humanitarian intervention. It serves as an illustration on how both method parallelization and method triangulation could be usefully applied in one analysis. Within the scope of this article, a focus on type 1 of method triangulation and type 2b of method parallelization seems to be warranted to illustrate the most important features and challenges and to include the most recent developments on qualitative research methods, the analysis of causal chains. The article will briefly introduce the topic of humanitarian interventions, presents a causal chain that is modeled on making public and political attention in a multi-level system the main starting points, illustrates one way of combining methods along the causal chain, and presents some empirical findings on the first causal step in more detail.

3 The Case of Humanitarian Intervention

Humanitarian interventions as understood in this article go far beyond the delivery of purely emergency aid. They usually involve a military element combined with a nonmilitary aspect of

socio-economic and political reconstruction. As during the last ten years in Kosovo, East Timor, Liberia, and the Darfur region of Sudan, these humanitarian interventions help pave the road to complex peace operations intended to reconstruct whole states and create sustainable peace in post-conflict environments.

Humanitarian intervention can be defined as an involvement by a group of states in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state for the sole, or at least clearly dominant, purpose of alleviating human suffering. The willingness of states to invest in these kinds of foreign operations contradicts in some instances assumptions central to long-time dominant theories of International Relations, namely, realism and liberalism, which hold that states are unlikely to devote many resources to activities (or to risk the lives of their soldiers and citizens in situations) that do not impinge on either their security or their economic interests. These theories are therefore unable to cope easily with reactions that build on moral responsibilities, media dynamics, or entrepreneurship – or that are rather non-functionalist by nature. Theories that focus on those explanations tend to be less rigorous and ambitious in their methodological foundations (see Junk and Blatter 2010). The framework that is outlined briefly in this article aims at explaining both situations, in which there is no direct and obvious link between (a) the humanitarian tragedy to be eliminated by the intervention and (b) the security or material interests of the intervening states, and situations, in which there is a link. In addition, it takes the complexity of the process leading to a decision to intervene on humanitarian grounds seriously by modeling a causal process. The model presented here and developed in-depth by Junk and Blatter (2010) systematically identifies the interdependencies between three political levels of humanitarian interventions—the domestic, the inter- and supranational, and the transnational arena. Within the sequence of events giving rise to a humanitarian intervention, the concentration is on the connection between the domestic discourses in the countries with the potential to intervene and on the international diplomatic efforts to reach an agreement. Hence type 2b of method parallelization is at the core of the research design combining various methods along the explanatory factors at crucial steps along the causal chain.

In the following, this article elaborates briefly into this causal chain, before taking these core arguments two steps further: first-

ly, by applying it to the framework of method combinations as put forward in this article to analyze the key links of this causal chain, and, secondly, by presenting first empirical evidence of a larger research project that currently analyzes media and government agendas in Germany, France, UK, and the US when it comes to the humanitarian crisis in Darfur.

3.1 The Complete Causal Chain of Humanitarian Interventions

As stated above, this article presents briefly a theoretical framework that explains humanitarian interventions as a multilevel process and explores in more detail the combination of methods (in particular type 1 of method triangulation and type 2b on method parallelization) in the analysis of this framework empirically in the next section.

This section introduces the conceptual underpinnings of a causal chain of humanitarian interventions. A precise theoretical framework, which outlines the major steps of the causal chain and is meticulous as possible on the temporal unfolding, is, as elaborated, necessary, when combining methods according the logic of type 2b.

In the following, the framework will therefore be presented in more detail. It takes the two-level game proposed by Putnam (1988) as the main conceptual point of reference, for it provides clear hypotheses about the interplay between political processes at the domestic and the international levels. However, to make this interest-based, liberal, intergovernmental approach applicable to the specific characteristics of humanitarian interventions, it is not domestically generated preferences, which are at the core of the analysis but rather the attention that an international issue receives. It decides both the political priority of the issue for the government and the government's activity at the international level. The functional equivalents of the "win-sets" (Putnam 1988), which characterize the domestic leeway of government negotiators in interest-based accounts, are called "windows of recognition" in this model on humanitarian interventions. Windows of recognition are the time spans when humanitarian crises receive so much attention in domestic public discourses that it is appropriate for the government to give them high priority on the government's agenda and to actively promote an international agreement for humanitarian intervention.

By transforming the liberal two-level game concept into a social constructivist multi-level framework, time has a much more systematic place. A focus on the temporal dimension makes it possible to connect the information- and communication-based model to similar information-centered concepts within the field of policy analysis, especially to Jones and Baumgartner's work on politics of attention and agenda setting (Baumgartner and Jones 1993, Jones 1994, Jones and Baumgartner 2005) and to Kingdon's concepts of window of opportunity (see Kingdon 1984). Kingdon refers to the coupling of different streams that is necessary within a policy field in order to make reforms possible. By contrast, a window of opportunity is defined here as the period when all governments that are necessary for a decision on a humanitarian intervention can reach an international agreement because an intervention is recognized in their domestic arenas as adequate. In other words, these windows of opportunity open up during those times when all relevant governments have open windows of recognition.

Windows of opportunity do not automatically lead to international agreements, though. In an information-centered approach one must take into account the time that is necessary to process information: the formulation of the details of an international agreement, the consent on operational specifics, and the formula of burden sharing for the implementation of a humanitarian intervention.

A comprehensive framework includes a variety of arenas. First, there is the space of the humanitarian crisis with its conflicting parties. The second arena is the domestic sphere of the countries that can provide the intervening forces—the "TCCs" (troop-contributing countries). It is only for analytic purposes that this arena is thought of as a single distinct one. In reality, it consists of many domestic arenas. Next, there is the international (and supranational) arena, in which the representatives of the nation-states and representatives of international organizations discuss the humanitarian crisis and decide whether and how to intervene. The overlap between the domestic and the international arenas contains the core analytic element, the window of opportunity. Lastly, the transnational arena represents an intermediary space in which nongovernmental actors can try to link the various arenas and to influence the processes within them. The boundaries between the transnational arena and the others are

porous and fuzzy, for the transnational arena is by nature linked and intertwined with the national and international ones. Specific actors can have a hybrid character; they can be strongly anchored in a specific nation-state but can aim to transcend national boundaries and to transmit information across various arenas. Furthermore, the boundaries of the transnational arena are flexible.

Figure 2 contains the entire chain of necessary steps and linkages from the recognition of a humanitarian tragedy by the media of the developed world to the impacts of the humanitarian intervention. However, only the main links and directions of causality are highlighted.

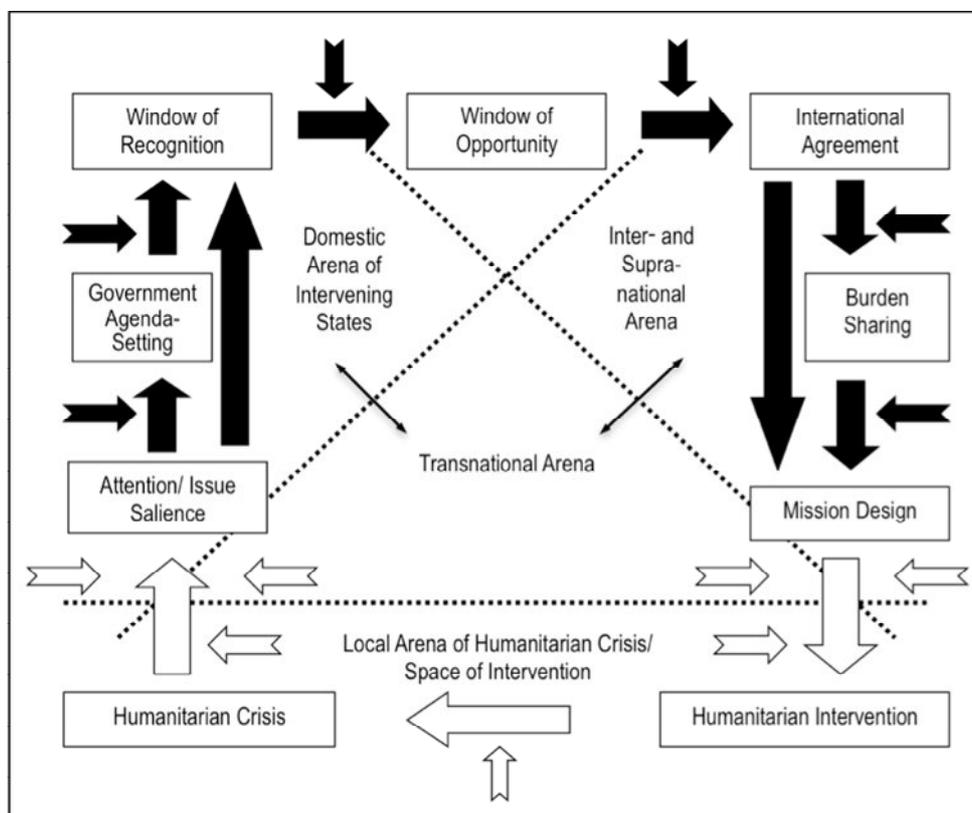


Figure 2 – The causal chain of humanitarian intervention

Following the core arguments just outlined, the framework contains all the steps usually necessary when the international community reacts to a humanitarian crisis by means of a humanitarian intervention (see Junk and Blatter 2010). The first necessary step is that the media in the potentially intervening states become aware of the humanitarian crisis. Many factors influence whether the media attention focuses on events in far-off places and makes

a humanitarian tragedy a salient issue in domestic discourses. The starting assumption is that the logics of the media system foster such intense domestic attention that the resulting discourse pressures the government to put a distant crisis on its agenda. The stimulus for a governmental response to a humanitarian tragedy usually comes from beyond the borders of this given country. There are, however, several domestic factors that determine whether this stimulus translates to a high governmental priority on addressing a humanitarian crisis and leads the government to recognize its moral duty to intervene. The next step is to acknowledge that states willing to intervene usually cannot do so alone. The governments that are necessary for an intervention in a crisis must therefore be compared by their willingness to take that action. If enough governments are willing to intervene in the crisis, we can speak of a window of opportunity. A window of opportunity is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for an international agreement. Supra- and international factors, too, determine the likelihood and content of such agreements.

This international agreement, in turn, shapes the following steps linking the international level with the place of intervention in terms of what is to be done and when. First, the provisions of the international agreement bear greatly on the mandate, resource allocation and, hence, the institutional design of an international effort like a full-fledged peace operation. The success or failure of humanitarian interventions largely hinges on their characteristics and the degree to which a constant influx of the necessary resources is accepted in both the place of intervention and the intervening states.¹ In the following, one way of investigating this model empirically is presented.

¹ In the model of Junk and Blatter (2010), entrepreneurship and thus agency are acknowledged to take a central role in all aspects of this causal chain: entrepreneurs are able to create attention, opening windows and facilitating international agreements. They might even be able to bridge specific segments of the causal chain, divesting them of their status as a necessary condition. As for the scope of this article and as it does not touch upon its core message of method combinations, this part of the model is not reflected upon here.

3.2 An Overview of Method Combinations in the Analysis of Humanitarian Interventions

As time and timing are central in the presented framework, the tracing of causal processes is an especially appropriate analytic technique that can be applied in case studies in order to test the model's usefulness for understanding and explaining specific cases. A theoretically based and internally coherent approach generates predictions not only about the final outcome of a political process but about all its elements. Within specific cases one can test whether the processes evolved as predicted (Blatter and Blume 2008, George and Bennett 2005).

Within this general setting of a case study design, the article proposes in the following several combinations of methods – both according to a sequential logic of parallelizing data analysis methods in a causal chain and according to a triangulation logic of aggregating some observations within one explanatory factor – as helpful to analyze the very key steps of this causal chain. It will not go into detail on all possible ways of operationalizing the conditions and outcomes along the causal chain, but the main aspects will be highlighted and illustrated to show how the combination of methods is crucial when investigating a causal process like this. Figure 3 summarizes this illustration of parallelization of data analysis methods and highlights some data generation methods that can be triangulated along the way. It presents only one choice of methods and places them within the key steps of the causal chain.

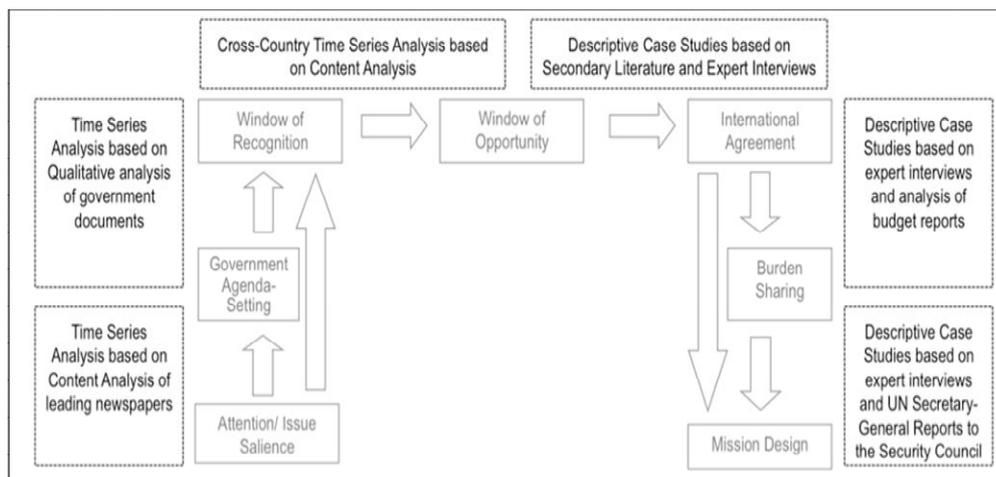


Figure 3 – Method parallelization in the analysis of the causal chain on humanitarian interventions

As elaborated, the framework proposes to begin with a theory in which the aspect of “attention” and of the role of media takes center stage. As regards the concept of “attention”: a similar kind of theory has been developed by Jones and Baumgartner (Baumgartner and Jones 1993, Jones 1994, Jones and Baumgartner 2005) who dwell on the question of governmental agenda-setting. Agenda-setting is thus the “process by which information is prioritized for action, and attention allocated to some problems rather than others” (Jones and Baumgartner 2005: viii/ix). As the model takes the role of the media into far greater account than they do, it makes sense to attribute the bottleneck of attention less to government than to the media. High media salience is translated directly into high priority on the government’s agenda (see as well Jones and Baumgartner 2005: 249-273).

There are three primary factors determining the salience of the humanitarian crisis in the media:

- 1) The magnitude of the humanitarian crisis and, even more important, the availability of dramatic reporting and pictures that make the suffering of people in distant places visible to the people in the countries that can potentially intervene. This article proposes, a content analysis of relevant newspapers focusing on the general characteristics of the text (see coding scheme in 3.3) (see Franzosi 2004, Krippendorff 1980, Mayring 2000, Neuendorf 2002). In particular, whether the coding schemes allow to filter those articles that display atrocities related to the humanitarian crisis and to control other factors that are more in line with the interest-based approaches like security- and economy-related reasoning for interventions.
- 2) The “filter” that determines which signals are placed on the agenda of the domestic media system and which form they take there. The more liberalized and internationally oriented the media system is, the more likely it is that the humanitarian crisis will receive a great deal of attention. This can be analyzed by descriptive case studies on the media systems of the countries involved (see Blatter and Blume 2008, George and Bennett 2005).
- 3) The “crowdedness” of the agenda. The model is informed by the fact that the attention given to humanitarian tragedies is contingent on what else is happening at the same

time. Scarcity of attention makes an issue's salience a function of both its own newsworthiness and the journalistic attractiveness of other, concurrent events. A content analysis of official government documents might be a good way forward. In addition, and as an example of triangulation, codes that measure governmental and parliamentary decisions and actions can be added to the content analysis of the newspapers as described above.²

These – partially triangulated – data generation methods are then analyzed by the use of a data analysis technique that is able to guard for timing. This aspect of temporality is crucial for the choice of method: the proposed content analysis needs to put therefore an emphasis on a date code. With this time signifier, a time series analysis can be conducted that aggregates to, for instance, a daily, monthly, or yearly basis are possible. This time series analysis can reveal both, the development of media attention as well as of government attention over time, and the sequentiality and synchronicity of the two (which will be illustrated in section 3.3) and the link to the next step: international negotiations and agreements.

As for the latter, structural rules and institutional complexity as well as the complexity of an issue can result in the fact that a window of opportunity does not immediately lead to an international agreement and that there are considerable time lags on this causal step. Both the institutional complexity and the issue complexity can be analyzed by falling back on expert interviews conducted with national diplomats, United Nations diplomats and

² Apart from these three aspects, which are crucial for the causal chain, one can conceive of others, more static concepts, which are highlighted in Junk and Blatter, but which go beyond the scope of this article. This refers, firstly, to the relative strength of the value that provides the normative underpinning for humanitarian interventions and of the value that restricts the willingness to intervene in foreign countries. Secondly, to the cultural attitudes within a given country. Countries can tend toward an isolationist or an interventionist attitude. Thirdly, the institutional factors, especially the institutional differentiation of the government. A differentiated organization is better able to process more issues in parallel than a monocentric organization (Junk and Blatter 2010). An analysis of secondary literature will be used to create descriptive country case studies in all of the three cases.

experts knowledgeable of the inner workings of the United Nations Security Council.

Another factor determining the existence of an international agreement is the overall willingness to invest not only in the intervention but also in the decision-making process that leads to the international agreement creating legitimacy for the intervention. This in turn greatly determines the strength of the intervention and, thus, of the peace operation. The wider the windows of recognition, the greater the resources the governments may be willing to provide and the clearer the wording of the underlying mandate might be. But there is a certain ambivalence built in: The greater the willingness to invest the greater the burden a country is expected to bear but it might as well lead to first-mover advantages, being able to frame and influence both the discourse and the decision-making procedure at the international level.

Methods that can be used to analyze these conditions of willingness to intervene and patterns of burden-sharing are a triangulation of expert interviews and a thorough analysis budget reports of the peace operations (as put forward by the General Assembly, in particular by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee) analyzed and reports on voting behavior.

Having outlined one possible path of method parallelization (type 2b) and of method triangulation (type 1), the next section presents in more detail an empirical analysis of the Western media attention and government reaction in case of the humanitarian crisis in Darfur in the years 2001-2008.

3.3 Method Combination in Research Practice – An Empirical Illustration from Media Attention to Government Agenda-Setting

As elaborated above, the salience of an issue in the media depends on being recognized as important in both the media and the government agenda. This is the crucial causal link, on which all other steps in the causal chain depend. The choice of methods is summarized in the following figure 4, but will be presented in much more detail below.

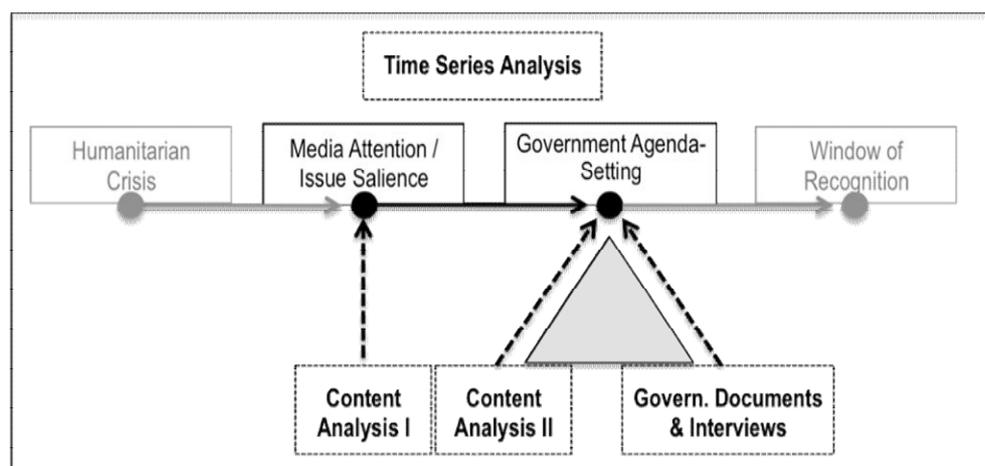


Figure 4 – Method Parallelization and Method Triangulation in the Empirical Illustration

The case Darfur has been chosen as an illustrative example, as it was called the first test case of the newly established international principle of the responsibility to protect (Beardsley 2009).³ In this context, it has been referred to the human rights violations committed by the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Janjaweed-Militias as their proxies in the tribal areas of Darfur. There is a controversial debate on whether these human rights violations can indeed be called genocide (see, for instance, de Waal 2007b, Markusen 2009, Prunier 2005), but this is not of high relevance for the arguments made in this article. It has surely been a grave humanitarian crisis (see Evans 2009: 11, Sidahmed et al. 2010: 104) and it has been a case of a humanitarian intervention, in which the international community intervened – albeit reluctantly and not with sufficient means (Bellamy 2005, see as well contributions in Black and Williams 2010, de Waal 2007a, Evans 2007) – based on several resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, most notably the resolutions 1706, 1755, 1769, and 1778.

In order to analyze the causal link between media attention and government agenda-setting, this article proposes a time series analysis in the sequence of methods used in parallel and a content analysis of both newspapers reporting on the humanitarian crises and official documents of governments pointing to this humanitarian crisis.

³ See for some overviews of the responsibility to protect Bellamy (2011), Orford (2011), Verlage (2009), Junk (2011), or von Arnould (2009), for instance.

As for the media attention in intervening countries, the analysis includes plural, Western democracies, that are decisive in shaping decisions on humanitarian interventions in the respective forums and that allow for a in-depth media analysis as a necessary component to quantify the media attention an issue receives. The following newspapers have been analyzed (roughly corresponding by and large to a moderate right-left scheme: Germany: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (n=1537) and Süddeutsche Zeitung (n=1306); United Kingdom: Guardian (n=1178) and Times London (n=712); USA: New York Times (n=1642) and Washington Post (n=1062); France: Le Monde (n=959) and Le Figaro (n=773). Hence, 9.169 newspaper articles were coded using the software Atlas.ti 6.⁴ All articles were chosen that were somehow crisis-related and contained the terms “Darfur...” (or “Darfour...”) and “Sudan...” (or “Soudan...”) at least as a part of a word and that appeared between January 2001 and June 2008.

As a statistical software, STATA 11 IC has been used to conduct the time series analysis. As elaborated above, the content analysis put therefore an emphasis on a code “date” as a time signifier. Due to graphical reasons, the time series contains monthly aggregated data across the two newspapers chosen in the given country.

The coding scheme has been tested and adapted several times to find a balance between the inclusion of as many variables as possible while keeping the whole project manageable for 9.169 articles at the same time. In the following, table 1 provides an excerpt of the coding scheme.

⁴ This content analysis is a part of another, bigger data-set, which analyzed the humanitarian interventions in Kosovo and Southern Sudan as well. The content analysis was part of a research project „Casualties of the New World Order“ within the Collaborative Research Center (SFB 485) at the University of Konstanz, Germany. The sources were both Lexis Nexis and the digital archives of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and the Süddeutsche Zeitung.

<p>Display of negative effects of the conflict:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - atrocities / humanitarian disasters: Effect Atrocity, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - local deaths/deads - massacres - internal refugees /displaced - suffering - local wounded - genocide - torture - etc. - external effects: security: Effects Security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cross-border refugees leading to regional instability and/or to security concerns in the Western country - spread of weapons - terrorism originating in conflict region - kidnapping of Western citizens - etc. - external effects: economic: Effects Economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - disturbances in market access / natural resources for Western countries - economic regional instability - etc. <p>Government Agenda and Action: Gov Action (Newsp)</p>

Table 1 – Content Analysis – Summary of Coding Scheme⁵

The coding scheme of the content analysis takes codes into account that reflect the display of negative effects of the Darfur conflict and of the worsening humanitarian situation. It focuses on those effects that the literature generally regards as potentially decisive for the reaction of states and their decision to intervene (see, for instance, Bahador 2007, Jakobsen 1996):

- 1) Atrocities and grave human rights violations (“Effects Atrocities”) that affected the conflict area and not the wider region (with the exception of humanitarian conditions in refugee camps close to the border);
- 2) Direct implications for the regional and international security (“Effects Security”) like geopolitical destabilization, trans-border refugees, and spread of crime, terrorism and weapons, all affecting the perception of the security in the intervening state;

⁵ The complete code book can be obtained from the author upon request.

- 3) External economic aspects (“Effects Economy”) like economic destabilization of the region, barriers to the access of natural resources, or barriers to market access.

The content analysis does not only serve as a data generation tool for the media attention, but as well as one of two indicators of the respective government agendas. Articles were not only coded according to the displayed conflict effects but according to their reporting on governmental action as regards both the country, in which the newspaper is published, and the conflict at hand (Darfur). This points primarily to decisions of cabinets, presidents, heads of governments and heads of state but included conflict related official statements too (even by ambassadors or press secretaries) and the participation in conflict related votes in multilateral bodies like the United Nations Security Council. These codes are summarized as “Gov Action (Newsp)” and marked by gray dots in the graphics below. The time series was then triangulated with the results of both another frequency analysis of the key official documents and of expert interviews that were conducted in New York, in Sudan, in Kosovo, Washington, Berlin, London, Paris, and Brussels with current and former national diplomats, United Nations staff, journalists, and experts from think tanks and academia (“Gov Action (OD&Int)” marked by black dots in the graphics below). This article uses two shades of marking the dots in the graphic in order to make the two sources for method triangulation (type 1) more visible. The triangulation itself will be elaborated shortly and descriptively below.

The aggregation challenge of triangulation is at the same time fairly easy and hard to tackle in this case. It is relatively easy, because there is a common reference point for the merger of both rankings: the time signifier. Oftentimes, sources differ already on this reference point and have to be adapted accordingly. Each triangulatory design should guard for this already from the beginning. In this case, the coding of the date variable was taken care of throughout the process of testing the coding scheme and its intercoder reliability.

It is, at the same time, the usual hard task to identify a triangulation strategy that serves the quality of the different sources (number, nature, and independence, as outlined in the first part of this article) best. As described by Leuffen et al. random selection is not preferable and a majority strategy cannot be used in this

bimodal sample (Leuffen et al. 2010: 5-8). As the data-sets in this article's example do generally not provide a informational basis for ranking one above the other and, hence, for any weighted approach, be it either the "weighted average" strategy or the "winner takes it all" strategy, the "arithmetic mean (unweighted average)" strategy seems to be the most appropriate. Hence, if the "Gov Action (Newsp)" score is 10 (articles) on a given time and the corresponding "Gov Action (OD&Int)" one is 0 (official documents and interviews pointing to government action on this date), the aggregated score would be 5. However, if the "Gov Action (Newsp)" score is 10 and the "Gov Action (OD&Int)" one is 2, the aggregated score would be 6. As said, this is not reflected in the following figures to make the two data sources visible but the aggregated score is easy to be derived from them.

In the following, preliminary results of these analyses are displayed with some data still to be coded on the ("Gov Action (OD&Int)" side (see comments to each case). Within the scope of this article, only the nexus between media attention and the government agenda is shown. The causal inference can be approximated by a visual analysis of the patterns of sequentiality between peaks in media attention (lines) and peaks in government action (dots). If media reporting predates structurally the aggregate of government action, there is a strong case for a causal link in the direction assumed.

In the illustrations of this article, only monthly aggregates were chosen. However, all data-sets used allow for zooming into both weekly or even daily aggregates (for a more fine-grained picture of the temporal unfolding) and the actual content of the texts (for analyzing qualitatively the patterns of the reporting and government documents).

As regards the actual combination of methods according to type 2b, the same time series graphs can easily rearranged to show the potential cross-country synchronicity, which serves as a condition for the opening of a window of opportunity to continue along the causal chain. Again a visual analysis of the synchronicity of peaks on various aggregate levels can serve as a basis for a causal inference. Overall, this example serves as an illustration of methods used, when analyzing steps within a causal chain. The interpretation of the data will be subject to further research and, hence, only briefly mentioned.

As regards the analysis of the French data, the online archives of the Élysée palace were consulted and any presidential and ministerial communiqué coded. As figure 5 shows there has been strong reporting on security related effects in the years 2002, which is linked (as it is in the other cases below) primarily to the threat of terrorism and the fact that Osama Bin-Laden once found a refuge in Sudan – and after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 newspapers were concerned with the Sudan being still a safe haven for terrorists, in particular if it destabilizes further. In the case of France it is, furthermore noteworthy, that, in comparison to the other countries, the amount of reporting on atrocities in particular and on Darfur/Sudan in general tended to be comparatively small. It only increased, when the situation in Chad became part of the picture.

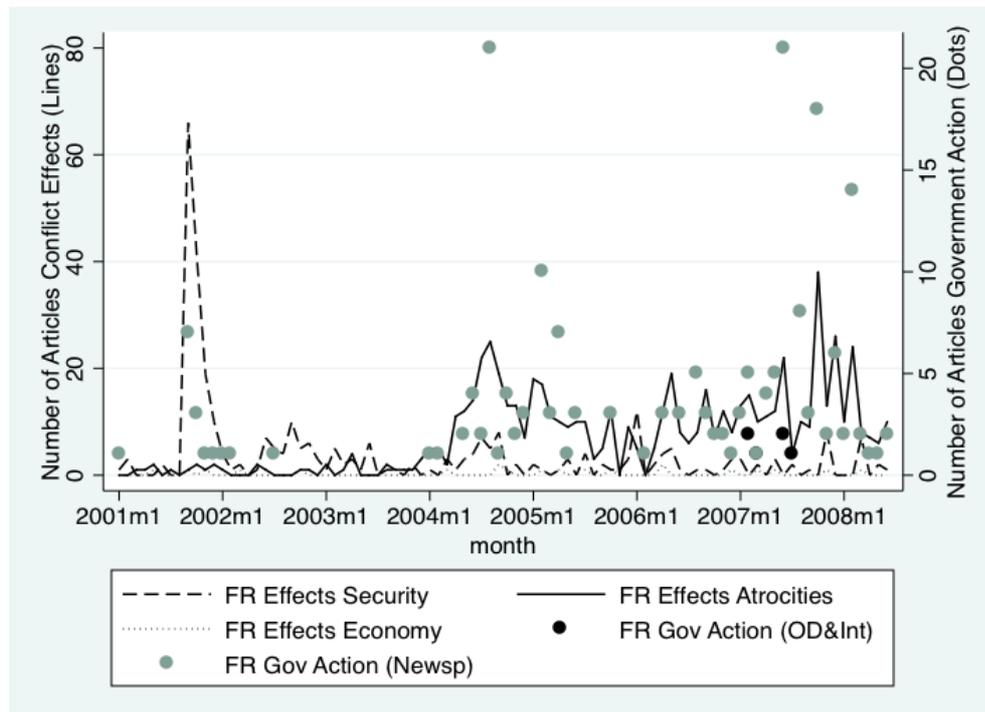


Figure 5 – France

In the case of Germany, the access to government documents is more restricted than in the case of France - and even much more than in the cases of UK and USA. Therefore, a detour was necessary and I could negotiate the access to the archives of the “Bundespressekonferenz”, which is a forum run by journalists in Berlin, where the major press conferences take place. However, Darfur was never truly on the agenda there (in contrast, for in-

stance, to Kosovo). The federal government then provided access to the only two cabinet decisions on Darfur. Future research will need to take the debates and decisions of the Bundestag, the German parliament, into account as well. In the meantime, one could think of employing a different triangulation strategy in a case like this: for the quality of one data-set is far weaker than the other, the “winner takes it all” strategy might be more useful. As it is the case in the UK and the USA too, media attention to the atrocities of the Darfur took up pace in the second quarter of 2004 (see figure 6), with a considerable time lag of the actual situation on the ground, where the conflict escalated end of 2003. Government action as displayed in the media followed that media attention by and large. Major events influencing these peaks of government action can be seen in the debates or even decisions of the UN Security Council and European Union institutions. This is, however, much more obvious in the next case of the reporting in British newspapers.

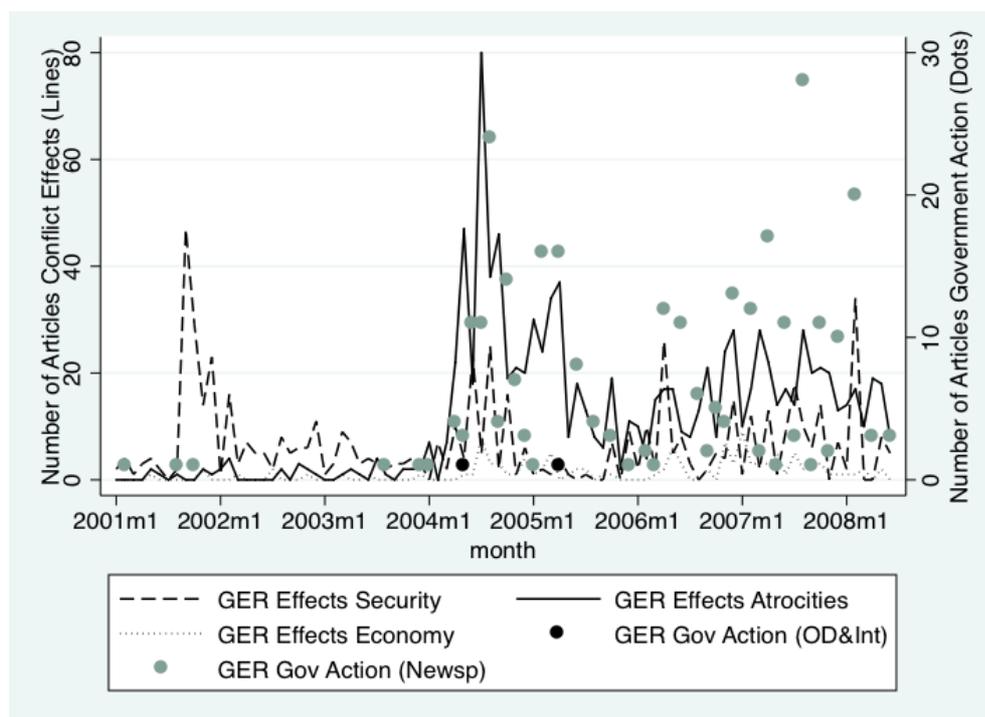


Figure 6 – Germany

The data access was much easier in the case of the British government. An online archive of official documents on the website of the government provides access to so called command papers. In contrast to Germany, there was a second peak of report-

ing related to the discussion surrounding the deployment of a hybrid mission to Darfur with elements from the United Nations and the African Union. As said, government action as displayed in the newspapers followed by and large the decision-taking process within the UN Security Council: a first peak relates to the resolution 1547, 11 June 2004, which condemns the aggravating conflict in Darfur for the first time, followed by more relevant resolutions 1556, 30 July 2004, supporting an intervention by the African Union, resolution 1598, 31 March 2005, authorizing investigations and persecutions by the International Criminal Court, and finally the resolutions, which actually mandated peace operations: 1706, 31 August 2006, which extended explicitly the mandate of the existing United Nations Mission to the Sudan (UNMIS) assisting in implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Northern and the Southern Sudan to cover as well the situation in Darfur, and 1769, 31 July 2007, authorizing the deployment of the hybrid African Union-United Nations Mission to Darfur (UNAMID).

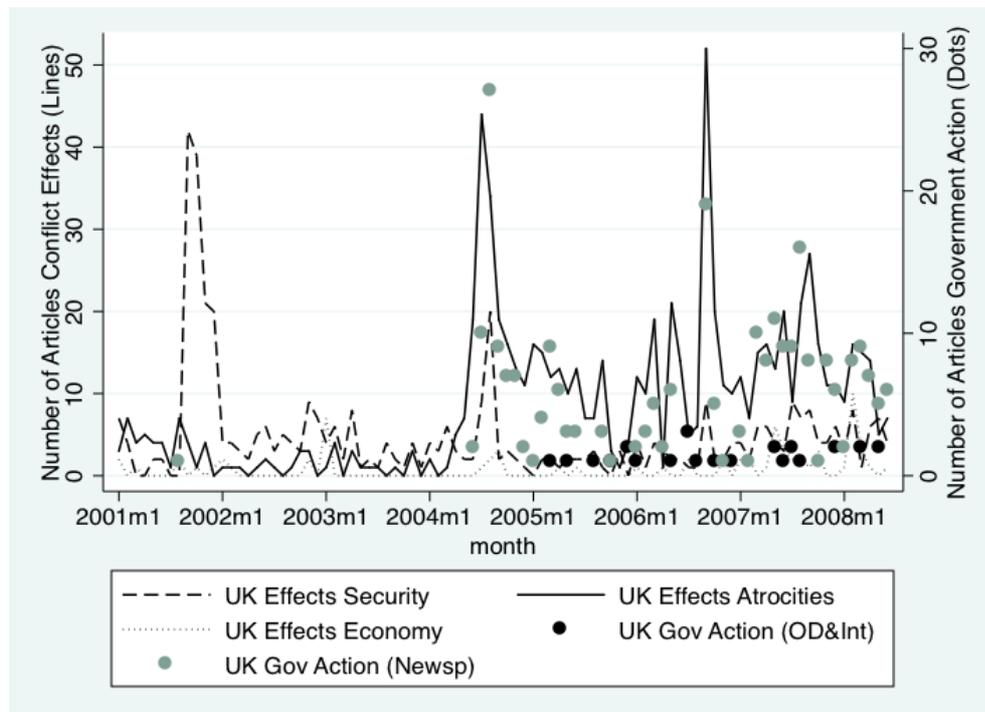


Figure 7 – United Kingdom

In the case of the USA, all “Presidential Documents” and “Rules and Regulations” were available online and were coded accordingly. The peaks on atrocities reported were most frequent

among all cases analyzed. There are two interrelated reasons for that: well-organized and engaged grass-roots movements promoting a more interventionist approach to the humanitarian crisis in Darfur (see, for instance, the Save Darfur campaign), a debate within the government and within in the public on whether the situation in Darfur has the characteristics of a genocide, and some very committed journalists reporting and commenting on the situation in Darfur regularly – in particular, Nicolas Kristof of the New York Times was devoted to the humanitarian tragedy unfolding in Sudan (Sidahmed et al. 2010).

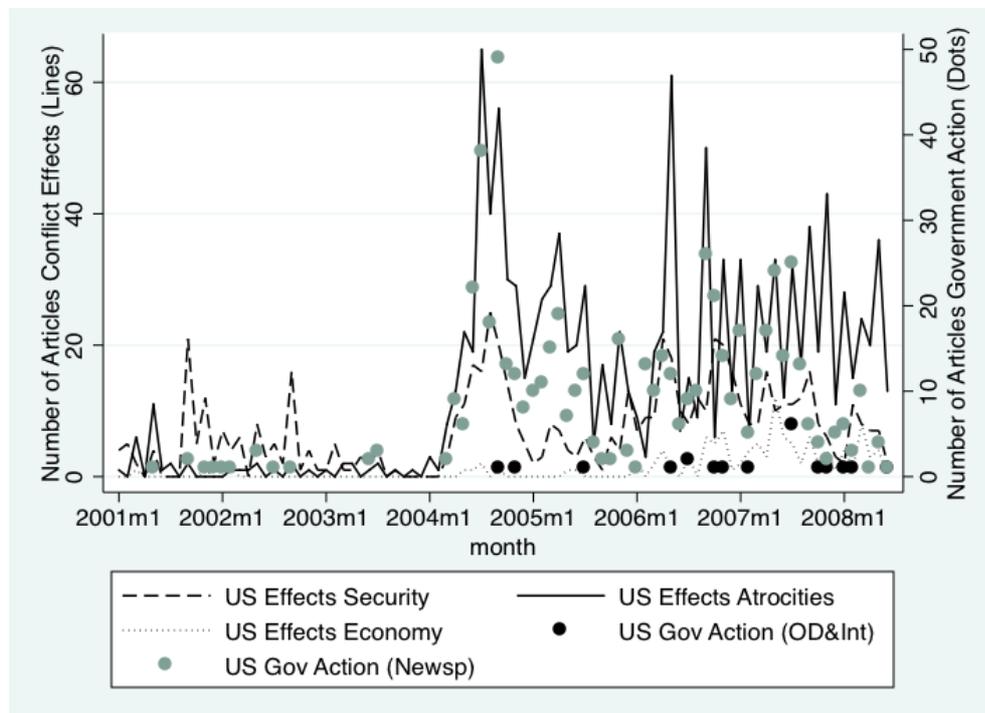


Figure 8 – United States

To sum up, despite all mentioned differences, there are quite some similarities and sequentiality in the distribution patterns of the both the newspaper reporting on atrocities and the government action. There is some first evidence for the causal claim to be true. A time series analysis allows for both comparing developments within one country as well as across countries and, as scrutinized only partially here, analyzing sequentiality of steps along a causal chain by combining two time series analyses in parallel. The example showed as well how the data analysis methods (be they part of method parallelization or not) can be combined with a triangulation of data generation methods and the

difficulties of choosing the right triangulatory strategy: in general, the “arithmetic mean” strategy might make sense. However, as the case of Germany shows, there might be a weaker data-set included, which might lead to employing a different, in this case the “winner takes it all” strategy.

4 Conclusions

This article has introduced the notion of method parallelization to this special issue and distinguished it from method triangulation, a form of combining methods that has received much more attention of systematic methodological debates and has been conflated by much less systematic research with patterns of parallelization.

The challenges these two method combinations pose are quite different. In the case of method triangulation, the aggregation of data generation or data analysis methods is at the core, while method parallelization depends heavily on the quality of the underlying conceptual depth that needs to be transparent either on the sequential use of methods along the research process (as in multivariate designs or in complex research programs) or on the conceptualization of temporality within the theoretical framework itself, as it is the case in causal chains. As regards the latter, a systematization of the use of various methods can contribute to the fast developing and still innovative research area of causal processes.

Therefore, this article put an emphasis on causal chains by illustrating both the importance of a theoretical framework for the choice of methods and the actual methods that can be used in analyzing the sequentiality of events. A theoretical framework on how humanitarian interventions are decided upon was developed and one part of it empirically illustrated by an analysis of the media attention and the corresponding government action as regards the case of Darfur. In particular the visualization and (even sequential) graphical interpretation of time series graphs and the triangulation of methods aggregated along a time signifier have proven to be helpful in this regard.

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