

Who Gave More United States Foreign Aid To Sierra Leone? George W. Bush vs. Barack H. Obama

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Abstract: It behooves me to begin this article by making it very clear that it is not about explaining the causes/reasons and effects/outcomes for the amounts of the economic aid (i.e. humanitarian and development assistance) and military aid (i.e. military and police assistance) provided to Sierra Leone by the George W. Bush Administration (2001-2008) and the Barack H. Obama Administration (2009-2016), as I have done for a number of previous United States administrations in earlier works (Bangura, 2001, 2007, 2008, 2009 & 2015). Instead, the objective here is to determine which of the two Presidents provided more of this aid to Sierra Leone. In essence, it is a descriptive account. And, as I describe it and its import in our book titled *Peace Research for Africa: Critical Essays on Methodology*, the descriptive account seeks to answer the *what is* question; it is therefore important in developing an accurate profile of situations, events, or persons (Bangura and McCandless, 2007:128 & 165).

Keywords: United States, Sierra Leone, Foreign Aid, George W. Bush, Barack H. Obama.

INTRODUCTION

The United States Department of State informs us that ever since Sierra Leone and the United States established their diplomatic relations in 1961, following the former's independence from the United Kingdom, relations between the two countries (i.e. Sierra Leone and the United States) have been "warm and cordial." The agency notes that Sierra Leone and the United States are linked by history (via the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade that took place between the 15th and 19th Centuries), as a large number of enslaved Africans from what is known today as Sierra Leone were "sent to the then-colonies of Georgia and South Carolina to grow rice, a skill at which they excelled" (US Department of States, 2015). The agency also mentions that many of the descendants of these enslaved Africans "still live in the same region and have maintained their unique Gullah culture" (US Department of States, 2015). It adds that approximately "two percent of Sierra Leone's population is Krio, the descendants of freed slaves who returned to Sierra Leone beginning in the late 1700s from Great Britain and North America and from slave ships captured on the high seas," and "today, many

thousands of Sierra Leoneans reside in the United States" (US Department of State, 2015).

Furthermore, the agency states that "Sierra Leone relies on significant amounts of foreign assistance from both bilateral and multilateral donors" and "the United States is among the largest bilateral donors" (US Department of States, 2015). In addition to the Ebola crisis program, the agency points out that other United States programs for Sierra Leone include "support for trafficked persons, women's empowerment, judicial strengthening, police training, agriculture development, and assistance for the military's professionalization of peacekeeping operations and HIV/AIDS prevention" (US Department of State, 2015). Other aspects of United States relations with Sierra Leone are the following:

The Millennium Challenge Corporation is working with the government on developing a threshold program focusing on strengthening the regulatory environment for the water, sanitation, and power sectors. The Mission administers a small grants program for local communities. U.S. exports

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to Sierra Leone include transportation equipment, agricultural products, machinery, and chemicals, while its imports from Sierra Leone include minerals, metals, machinery, and agricultural products. Sierra Leone is eligible for preferential trade benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act. The two countries do not have a bilateral investment treaty. On September 17, 2012 senior officials for both countries signed an Open Skies air services agreement (US Department of State, 2015).

Given all this, it makes sense to investigate what recent United States administrations—in this article, those of Bush and Obama—did to foster the relations between the two countries. Thus, in this article, a quantitative methodology is utilized to delineate the differences between the economic aid (i.e. humanitarian and development assistance) and military aid (i.e. military and police assistance) provided to Sierra Leone by the Bush Administration (2001-2008) and the Obama Administration (2009-2016). Consequently, the major research question investigated in this paper is the following: Is there a significant difference between the economic and military aid provided to Sierra Leone by the Bush and Obama Administrations? The accompanying hypothesis is therefore H_1 : There is a significant difference between the economic and military aid provided to Sierra Leone by the Bush and Obama Administrations. The corollary null hypothesis is H_0 : There is no significant difference between the economic and military aid provided to Sierra Leone by the Bush and Obama Administrations. To answer the question and test the hypotheses, the rest of the paper is divided into three sections: (1) research methodology, (2) data analysis, and (3) conclusion. Before doing all this, however, it behooves me to end this section with a brief discussion of the competing postulates on United States foreign aid, albeit these are not tested in this paper.

As I recount elsewhere (Bangura, 2001 & 2008), in examining the debate over the purposes of United States foreign assistance to Africa and other developing countries, one is able to discern at least two major contending schools of thought. These are the classical and the critical. Proponents of the classical school see American foreign aid as important if used appropriately: that is, if it can contribute to break bottlenecks (massive poverty, illiteracy, low life expectancy, malnutrition, unemployment, etc.) in development and encourage innovation. Advocates of the critical school see the whole complex of United States aid, in many respects, to be a typical example of quasi-reform. The functions of American are perceived to be many: to make “weak” economies capable of joining the international capitalist market, to make them more able to suppress internal rebellions, to link them to one or the other of the main political blocs, and to

facilitate the spread of the Western model of development.

Following the proposition of the classical school, then, an empirical analysis of the effects of American foreign aid to developing countries should find that as the level of United States development assistance increases to those countries, so would overall economic development in those countries. But in light of the position of the critical school, such an empirical study should find that increases in American development assistance to developing countries would lead to negative economic effects in those countries (Bangura, 2001 & 2008). Unfortunately, the required quantitative exercise to test these propositions is beyond the scope of this essay.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As mentioned earlier, a quantitative methodology is utilized to ground this research in order to determine whether there is a significant difference between the economic and military aid provided to Sierra Leone by the Bush and Obama Administrations. The approach is explicated in this section.

To begin with, quantitative research can be defined as the systematic scientific investigation of phenomena and their relationships. Quantitative research tends to be theory driven; uses fixed research designs—the most common being pre-experimental, quasi-experimental, and experimental; and involves the collection of numerical data. From this perspective, quantitative research involves inquiry into human problems based on the testing or application of theory that is operationalized into variables and analyzed with appropriate statistical or social scientific analytic procedures. Quantitative research is generally approached using scientific methods and processes that include (a) the generation of models, theories, and hypotheses; (b) the development of instruments and methods for measurement; (c) the experimental control and manipulation of variables; (d) the collection of empirical data; (e) the modeling and analyzing of data; and (f) the evaluation of results (Bangura and Hopwood, 2014:ix).

Next, the objective of quantitative research is therefore to develop and use mathematical or representational models designed to indicate systematic patterns of relations, time sequences or causal connections in data, and theories and testing of hypotheses pertaining to natural phenomena. The process of measurement is central to empirical observation and the mathematical expression of quantitative relationships (Bangura and Hopwood, 2014:ix-x).

Contrastingly, in qualitative research, theory arises from the investigation. Theory and conceptual insights derive *from* data collection rather than prior to

it. Such approaches generate hypotheses, as opposed to testing them. Qualitative methods are more interpretative, historical, and ethnographic than the quantitative approaches. Thus, the critical issues for qualitative research involve scrupulousness, meticulousness, commitment to scholarly rigor in the investigation of research questions, determination to find the truth, and intellectual honesty (Bangura and Hopwood, 2014:x).

In sum, whereas qualitative studies are basically enumerative, quantitative studies are more causally oriented. Thus, although qualitative studies are as important as quantitative studies, quantitative studies are methodologically more complex than qualitative studies (Bangura and Hopwood, 2014:x).

It may appear, however, that the difference between qualitative and quantitative methodologies is a somewhat artificial dichotomy, since each group combines both approaches in its underlying assumptions. This is because the quantitative approach calls for a great deal of qualitative description prior to counting (in order to empirically ground each category) as well as after counting (statistical tendencies have to be interpreted as to what they reveal about causal relations). And the qualitative approach has an implicit

notion that ‘more is better’: that is to say, the more instances of a phenomenon to be found, the more a researcher can trust his/her interpretation of an underlying pattern (Bangura and Hopwood, 2014:x).

Despite these underlying similarities, qualitative and quantitative approaches are different in some ways. In addition to some of the more obvious procedural differences (for example, quantitative studies categorize and count occurrences), the two types of approaches differ in their overall orientation toward inquiry: the qualitative focuses more on particularities and the quantitative focuses more on generalities (Bangura and Hopwood, 2014:x).

DATA ANALYSIS

As can be gleaned from Table 1, the Bush Administration gave about twice as much economic aid (from 2001 to 2008) to Sierra Leone compared to that given by the Obama Administration (from 2009 to 2016) to that country. The table also shows that there was a greater year-to-year variation in the amount of aid provided by the Obama Administration compared to that given by the Bush Administration. Such a variation in funding can make it difficult for coherent development planning.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of US Economic Aid to Sierra Leone

| Year | Bush (in US \$) | Obama (in US \$) |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Year 1 | 39,875,000 | 20,050,000 |
| Year 2 | 40,609,000 | 30,500,000 |
| Year 3 | 35,187,000 | 18,927,262 |
| Year 4 | 21,709,000 | 17,204,000 |
| Year 5 | 23,929,000 | 12,954,000 |
| Year 6 | 29,227,000 | 15,063,000 |
| Year 7 | 34,215,000 | 11,400,000 |
| Year 8 | 22,467,000 | 6,500,000 |
| Total | 247,218,000 | 132,598,262 |
| Range | 18,800,000 | 24,000,000 |
| Mean | 30,902,250 | 16,574,783 |
| Standard Deviation | 7,664,078 | 7,127,362 |

Source: Self-generated by Author Using SPSS and Data from Security Assistance Monitor (2016)

Also shown in Figure 1 is that the Bush and Obama Administrations’ economic aid to Sierra Leone had large swings, with those of the Obama Administration mostly sloping downwards. This result suggests that there was less certainty in the economic aid policy of the Obama Administration toward Sierra Leone compared to that of the Bush Administration.

Thus, on the question of whether there is a significant difference between the Bush and the Obama Administrations’ economic aid to Sierra Leone, Table 2 suggests that there is a statistically significant difference between the two administrations’ funding at the 0.01 level. Thus, there was no consistent or smooth continuation of the Bush Administration’s economic policy toward Sierra Leone by the Obama Administration.

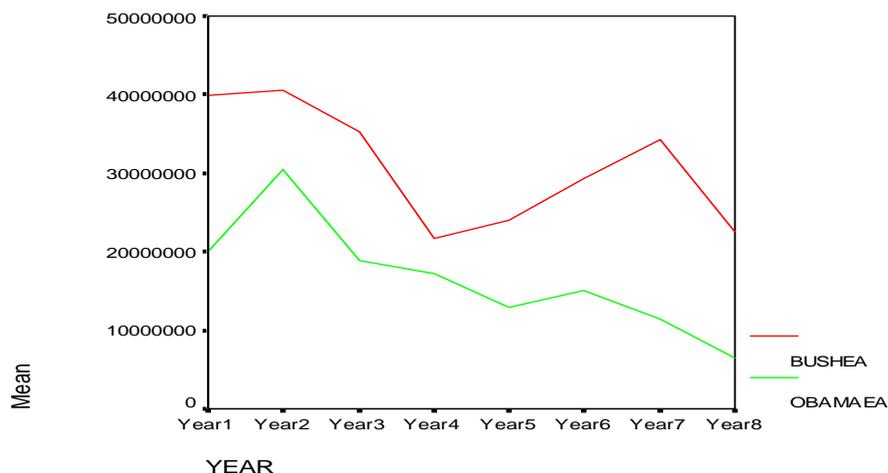


Figure 1: Line Graph of US Economic Aid to Sierra Leone

Source: Self-generated by Author Using SPSS and Data from Security Assistance Monitor (2016)

Table 2: Paired Samples Test of US Economic Aid to Sierra Leone

| Paired Differences | Economic Aid: Bush-Obama |
|---|--------------------------|
| Mean | 14327467 |
| Standard Deviation | 5784522.495 |
| Standard Error of the Mean | 2045137.5 |
| 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| Lower | 9491485.4 |
| Upper | 19163449 |
| t-Statistic | 7.006 |
| Degrees of Freedom | 7 |
| Significance (2-tailed) | 0.0001 |

Source: Self-generated by Author Using SPSS and Data from Security Assistance Monitor (2016)

Table 3 reveals that similar to its economic aid to Sierra Leone, the Bush Administration also gave almost twice as much military aid (from 2001 to 2008) to Sierra Leone compared to that given by the Obama Administration (from 2009 to 2016) to that country.

The table also shows that there were similar year-to-year variations in the amounts of military aid provided by both administrations given their levels of funding. Such variations in funding can make it difficult for coherent military planning as well.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of US Military Aid to Sierra Leone

| Year | Bush (in US \$) | Obama (in US \$) |
|---------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Year 1 | 37,644,651 | 1,693,683 |
| Year 2 | 198,903 | 16,860,690 |
| Year 3 | 417,711 | 1,760,258 |
| Year 4 | 745,213 | 497,301 |
| Year 5 | 312,736 | 436,334 |
| Year 6 | 498,160 | 533,646 |
| Year 7 | 2,259,611 | 299,000 |
| Year 8 | 485,210 | 310,000 |
| Total | 42,562,195 | 22,390,912 |
| Range | 37,445,748 | 16,561,690 |
| Mean | 5,320,274 | 2,798,864 |
| Standard Deviation | 13,077,428 | 5,713,253 |

Source: Self-generated by Author Using SPSS and Data from Security Assistance Monitor (2016)

As further demonstrated in Figure 2, whereas the Bush Administration’s military aid to Sierra Leone began very high, dropped sharply, and then started rising, that of the Obama Administration began very

low, rose, declined and stayed that way. This result likewise implies that, like the economic aid policy, there was no consistent or smooth continuation of the

Bush Administration’s military policy toward Sierra Leone by the Obama Administration.

Consequently, on the question of whether there is a significant difference between the Bush and the Obama Administration’s military aid to Sierra Leone,

Table 4 shows that there is no significant statistical difference between the two administrations’ funding at the 0.05 level. In essence, both administrations’ military aid policies towards Sierra Leone were relatively similar.

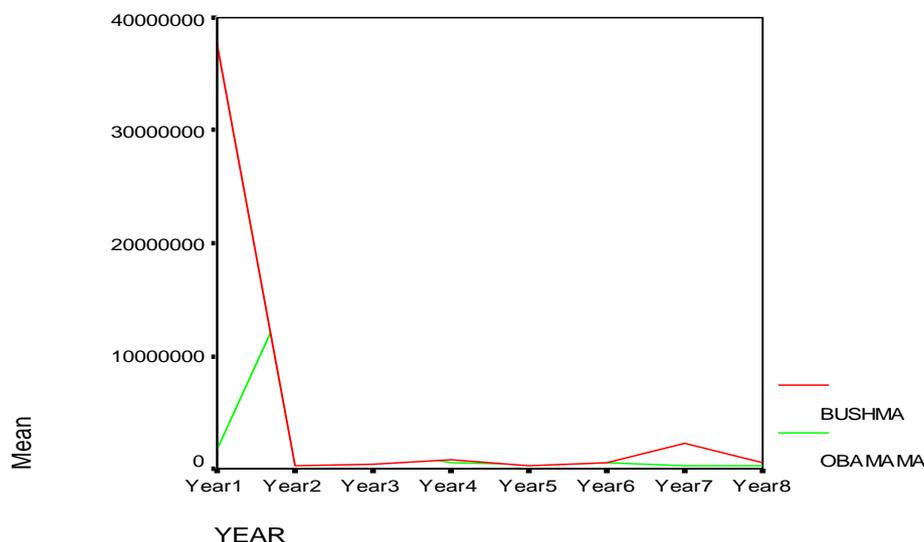


Figure 2: Line Graph of US Military Aid to Sierra Leone

Source: Self-generated by Author Using SPSS and Data from Security Assistance Monitor (2016)

Table 4: Paired Samples Test of US Military Aid to Sierra Leone

| Paired Differences | Military Aid: Bush-Obama |
|---|--------------------------|
| Mean | 2521410.4 |
| Standard Deviation | 14759898.792 |
| Standard Error of the Mean | 5218412.3 |
| 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| Lower | -9818174 |
| Upper | 14860995 |
| t-Statistic | 0.483 |
| Degrees of Freedom | 7 |
| Significance (2-tailed) | 0.644 |

Source: Self-generated by Author Using SPSS and Data from Security Assistance Monitor (2016)

CONCLUSION

This paper sought to probe the question about whether there is a significant difference between the economic and military aid provided to Sierra Leone by the Bush and Obama Administrations. The accompanying hypothesis tested was H₁: There is a significant difference between the economic and military aid provided to Sierra Leone by the Bush and Obama Administrations. The corollary null hypothesis was H₀: There is no significant difference between the economic and military aid provided to Sierra Leone by the Bush and Obama Administrations. The preceding analysis shows that (a) the Bush Administration gave twice as much economic and military aid to Sierra Leone than the Obama Administration, (b) there is a statistically significant difference between the two administrations’ economic aid funding at the 0.01 level, and (c) there is no significant statistical difference

between the two administrations’ military aid funding at the 0.05 level. Therefore the hypotheses tested can be partially accepted.

There are at least two policy implications from the findings. The first is that there is no consistent or smooth continuation of the Bush Administration’s economic and military policies toward Sierra Leone by the Obama Administration. The second is that the significant variations in funding can make it difficult for coherent economic and military planning.

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About the Author

Abdul Karim Bangura is a researcher-in-residence of Abrahamic Connections and Islamic Peace Studies at the Center for Global Peace in the School of International Service at American University and the director of The African Institution, all in Washington DC; a visiting graduate professor of Regional Integration at the University of Cabo Verde in Praia, Cabo Verde; an external reader of Research Methodology and Municipal Government at the Plekhanov Russian University in Moscow; an inaugural peace professor for the International

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