

Win, Lose, or Draw: Third Party Intervention and the Duration and Outcome of Civil Wars

Andrew J. Enterline
University of North Texas
Dept. of Political Science
1155 Union Circle #305340
Denton, Texas 76203-5017
ajenter@unt.edu

Christopher Linebarger
University of North Texas
Dept. of Political Science
1155 Union Circle #305340
Denton, Texas 76203-5017
ChristopherLinebarger@my.unt.edu

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For about a decade after the Cold War ended, civil wars ended at a faster rate than new wars began, resulting in a decline in the number of ongoing conflicts in the international system. This chapter will explore several factors that influence whether a conflict will end in rebel victory, a government victory, or a negotiated settlement. One consistent finding across studies is that the outcome of a civil war is, in part, a function of its duration: the longer civil wars last, the less likely they are to end in military victory. When governments defeat rebels, they usually do so early in the conflict, when they have a military advantage over a nascent rebel organization. The evidence also suggests that rebel victories tend to occur early in the conflict. If neither side prevails early, then after about five years the most likely outcome is a negotiated settlement.

What, then, accounts for the duration of civil wars? One factor implicated in the duration—and, therefore, the outcome—of civil wars is that of third party intervention. A large proportion of post-World War II civil wars have been “internationalized” in the sense that one or more nations intervened on the government or rebels sides. The literature shows these interventions are typically associated with civil wars of longer duration, contrary to the expectation that intervention might tip the balance on the battlefield.

This chapter focuses on the impact of third party interventions on the evolution and conclusion of civil wars. Specifically, the chapter identifies those factors that affect the duration and outcome of civil wars by engaging the following questions: (1) What are the forms of third party intervention? (2) What factors make nations more or less likely to intervene in a given civil war? and, (3) How does third party intervention affect the duration and outcome of such conflicts? Several excellent extant reviews address these questions pertaining to third party interventions into civil wars, (e.g., Regan 2010; Shelton, Stojek and Sullivan 2013). Although we review existing research on their party intervention, our primary goal is to suggest ways forward for future research, the task to which we devote the latter portion of the chapter.

The Duration and Outcome of Civil Conflicts

Civil conflicts are a particularly deadly and destructive form of conflict, with features that are noticeably different from their interstate counterparts. According to Brandt et al. (2008), there were more than four times as many civil wars than interstate wars in the world during the period 1946–1997. These conflicts, on average, last about four times as long as interstate wars, and the average duration of civil conflicts increased even as the number of new conflicts has declined since 1994 (Fearon and Laitin 2003). As a result, there was a steady accumulation of ongoing conflicts that did not diminish until several years after the end of the Cold War. After that point, the duration of civil conflicts actually fell, resulting in fewer ongoing wars overall.

These patterns are important, as the duration of civil conflicts is highly correlated with their overall destructiveness. Although civil conflicts produce casualties at a lower rate than international conflicts, their relatively longer duration results in a much higher cumulative death toll. Civil conflicts are also known for their unusually high stakes. The warring factions are locked together within the same borders, must co-exist together after the war concludes, and defeat often means elimination for rebel leadership and followers alike. As a result, protracted civil conflicts are extremely difficult to bring to an end (Brandt et al. 2008; DeRouen and Sobek 2004; Fearon 2004; Greig and Regan 2008; Licklider 1995*a,b*; Mason and Fett 1996; Mason, Weingarten and Fett 1999; Walter 1997, 2002; Zartman 1989).

There is a significant body of empirical research that explores the dynamics of civil war duration and outcome. This literature finds, among other things, that duration and outcome are functions of the strength or number of the various factions (Cunningham 2006, 2010; Cunningham, Gleditsch and Salehyan 2009; Mason and Fett 1996; Mason, Weingarten and Fett 1999); the capacity of the state (DeRouen and Sobek 2004; Fearon 2004); or the strategy employed by the combatants (Arreguin-Toft 2001; Kalyvas 2006; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007; Mack 1975; Mason and Krane 1989). The duration of civil conflicts is also directly implicated in their outcome, with Mason and Fett (1996) finding that the duration of a civil conflict

is the single greatest predictor of whether a given war will end in a decisive victory or a negotiated settlement. Such logic leads Fearon (2004, 276) to conclude that “civil wars last a long time when neither side can disarm the other, causing a military stalemate. They are relatively quick when conditions favor a decisive victory.”

Given these empirical regularities, it is no surprise that social scientists and policy-makers each argue that it is imperative for third-parties to intervene into civil wars so as to effect as swift a conclusion as possible (Licklider 1995*a,b*; Smith 1994). There is serious disagreement in the extant scholarship on this point. For example, research finds that third party intervention can actually prolong civil wars (Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000; Cunningham 2006), and policy-makers have expressed serious reservations about the efficaciousness of third-party intervention. Luttwak (1999), for example, argues there is little that international parties can do to resolve a civil conflict, and that policy-makers ought to “give war a chance.” Only by allowing the grievances underlying a conflict to “burn out” on their own can a conflict ever be seriously resolved. To do otherwise risks freezing the conflict in place and delaying further hostilities for a later date.

That said, civil conflict duration and outcome are highly amenable to outside intervention (Brandt et al. 2008). One significant set of findings is that the apparent decline in civil wars after 1994 is a function of intervention by the international community, including the deployment of peacekeepers, negotiators, and mediators (Hegre 2004; Harbom, Höglbladh and Wallensteen 2006). However, third party interveners are not uniform in their methods, purposes, or goals. Some interveners actually seek to deliberately prolong conflicts or alter the battlefield for their own purposes (Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000; Findley and Marineau N.d.; Gent 2008).

Third party interventions also vary widely in their forms and functions, ranging from the supplying of combat personnel and war material, to the direct use of military force by the third party (Regan 2010). This variation is suggestive of the fact that conflicts do not occur in isolation, waiting for outside powers to intervene but, rather, are deeply enmeshed

in world politics prior to, and during, the civil war phase of hostilities. In the following four sections, we elaborate the ways in which international relations directly effect the duration and outcome of civil conflicts.

Forms of Third Party Intervention

While it is possible to speak of purely “internal” conflicts, there is a longstanding recognition in the literature that the civil war process has a significant international component (Deutsch 1964; Modelski 1964; Rosenau 1964). Much of the contemporary research on civil war draws upon these foundational insights, and attempts to define the various forms of third-party intervention (Balch-Lindsay, Enterline and Joyce 2008). A brief look at the early research on subject is therefore necessary in order to provide the necessary context for contemporary advances.

Third party intervention encompasses an extremely broad class of behaviors, and it can be difficult to identify said behaviors because they are so easily conflated with those policies to which international actors resort in order to influence the domestic politics of other states. However, as Rosenau (1968, 1969) discusses at some length, simple third-party influence is a normal part of the ordinary course of international affairs. This distinction is crucial, as the earliest literature on third party intervention is, according to Rosenau, seen as conflating intervention with much larger classes of behavior, including propaganda (e.g., Fenwick 1941), diplomatic intervention (e.g., Wright 1939), and ideological persuasion (e.g., Morgenthau 1967).

Although these latter phenomena might be seen as intervention, they are relatively more common than the introduction of military force; moreover, they are common policy tools that are well within established norms of international practice. An overly vague conception of third-party intervention also renders the topic nearly impossible to analyze. The topic therefore requires an operational definition that meets sharp criteria in order to reduce vagueness. Rosenau argues that a definition of intervention must satisfy two general criteria.

Intervention is: (1) convention breaking, meaning that it occurs outside the normal course of international politics; and, (2) authority targeting, meaning that it is “directed at changing or preserving the structure of political authority in the targeted society” (Rosenau 1968, 167). By these criteria, the normal practices of international relations can be excluded from an intervention occurring outside the bounds of international laws and norms (Regan 2000, 9). It should be noted, however, that these criteria are not necessarily concerned with civil wars, but with military interventions in general.

With respect to civil war, Regan (2000) offers a definition that satisfies Rosenau’s criteria; namely, that third-party intervention is the use of an actor’s resources to affect the course of a civil conflict (Regan 2000, 9). These resources may be spent in a variety of ways that include, but are not limited to the following: (1) diplomatic methods, which can include mediation, arbitration, or the use of international forums (Regan 2000; Regan and Aydin 2006; Regan, Frank and Aydin 2009, 6-7); (2) economic intervention, including sanctions, inducements, and foreign aid (McNab and Mason 2007); (3) the deployment of peacekeepers (Fortna 2004); (4) covert or overt support for one of the warring factions in the form of funds, sanctuary, and weapons (Salehyan 2009; Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham 2011); and, (5) direct military intervention (Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000; Balch-Lindsay, Enterline and Joyce 2008; Mason and Fett 1996; Mason, Weingarten and Fett 1999).

Diplomatic interventions, economic inducement, and the deployment of peacekeepers are covered elsewhere in this volume, and our focus here is on external support and direct military intervention. This limit to the discussion is not unreasonable, as external support and military intervention are convention breaking and specifically designed to affect the balance of power on the battlefield. Such actions can also be extremely costly to the intervener. The decision-making processes underlying interventions therefore merits special attention.

What Factors Make States More Likely to Intervene?

Among the most important questions in the intervention literature are: “which third parties intervene?,” “where do third parties intervene?,” and “why do third parties intervene?” The conventional wisdom asserts that third parties intervene in order to engage in conflict resolution, thereby reducing the duration of civil war and increasing the odds of a negotiated settlement (Carment and Rowlands 1998; Krain 2005; Licklider 1995*a,b*; Regan 2000). There is considerable debate on the plausibility of assuming the motives of third parties. Some scholars claim that third parties are rarely willing to pay the costs of intervention for purely humanitarian reasons (e.g., Morgenthau 1967), while others argue that third parties may intervene in pursue to of other, extra-civil war goals (e.g., Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000).

The management of civil conflicts gained considerable attention following the conclusion of the Cold War (e.g., Annan 1999; Deng 1995, 1996; Smith 1994; Stedman 1993; Wheeler 2000). The failure of the global community to prevent genocide in Rwanda and Bosnia generated a movement among policy-makers commonly called the “Responsibility to Protect,” or R2P, in which it is held as a duty of the international community to intervene in states that fail to prevent atrocity within their own borders. In a contrary assessment, Stedman (1993) argues that this post-Cold War tendency leads its advocates to engage in increasingly expansive and unrealistic interventions. However, the evidence seems to suggest that international interventions are remarkably successful in bringing about a negotiated settlement (Brandt et al. 2008; Mason, Weingarten and Fett 1999). Notably, Finnemore (2004) tracked the evolving purpose of intervention, finding that assertions of universal human rights have become a common justification.

Despite these changing norms, empirical research shows that not all conflicts are likely to be targeted for intervention. Humanitarian interventions are conditioned by a selection effect. Specifically, the very process by which a civil conflict captures the attention of the global community, the requirements for achieving collective action among nations and obtaining

consent from the UN Security Council, and then the assembling a peacekeeping force means that only the most difficult civil conflict cases are the subjects of UN intervention (Gilligan and Stedman 2003).

It is clear that conflict management is an increasingly important motive, but accumulating evidence also shows that third-parties are anything but selfless. Foremost among ulterior motives is that of geopolitics, in which a civil conflict's regional environment motivates outside powers to action. The regional environment provides the necessary milieu for third party interaction with a civil conflict and in which the willingness of states to bear the costs of intervention is highest (Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008; Gleditsch 2007). Some of the earliest studies in this area suggest that the geographic proximity is one of the most influential factors in determining who intervenes and where (Pearson 1974).

Civil wars also generate considerable cross-national externalities within their regional environments by generating refugee flows, depressing regional economics, and destabilizing nearby states (Murdoch and Sandler 2004; Gleditsch 2007; Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006). Inter-governmental organizations may intervene in order to stabilize the conflict region (Beardsley 2011), and nearby states may become involved if their leaders believe that their own states are vulnerable to the spread, or contagion, of civil conflict (Kathman 2010, 2011). Third parties may also become involved in conflicts for purely material reasons, intervening in order to plunder resources or protect economic interests (Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000; Balch-Lindsay, Enterline and Joyce 2008; Findley and Marineau N.d.; Koga 2011). The Second Congo War (1998–2003) remains the classic example, in which states across Africa intervened in order to extract a variety of precious stones and metals in what has been called Africa's "first world war" (Stearns 2011).

Ethnicity also exerts a special kind of influence within the regional milieu, with cross-border communities and transnational diasporas providing a crucial link between interveners and their targets (Carment 1993; Carment and James 1996; Carment and Rowlands 1998; Davis and Moore 1997; Gleditsch 2007; Trumbore 2003). Which states are likely to intervene

in favor of their co-ethnics is a source of considerable controversy. One conventional wisdom asserts that the norms of sovereignty within international society is a natural limit placed upon intervention (e.g., Jackson and Rosberg 1982), while another is that states vulnerable to ethnic secession will be reluctant to intervene abroad for fear of setting a precedent on their own domestic politics (e.g., Herbst 1989; Touval 1972; Zartman 1966). Saideman (1997, 2001, 2002), by contrast, asserts that leaders of would-be interveners must pay attention to the preferences of their own constituencies. Should these constituencies share an ethnic affinity with citizens of another state, rational and self-interested politicians may be forced to consider intervention into a conflict that involves their co-ethnics. Koga (2011) elaborates on the special role played by domestic politics, finding that democratic states are especially likely to intervene in the presence of ethnic ties.

Beyond the regional environment, world politics have a significant role to play. Research in this area is tentative, but a number of interesting conclusions have been reached. At this level of analysis, third parties are often less concerned with regional stability than with the possibility of undermining their interstate rivals (Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski 2005; Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000; Balch-Lindsay, Enterline and Joyce 2008; Findley and Teo 2006). Moreover, the mere presence of a rivalry is enough to prolong a civil conflict because rebels expect to benefit from intervention (Akcinaroglu and Radziszewski 2005). Examples from the Cold War are frequently invoked in this line of reasoning.

The Cold War also highlights an interesting class of intervention, that of the “proxy war.” Because intervention can be extremely costly, and aiding a rival state’s rebels constitutes a direct violation of sovereignty, many states wage war covertly or on the cheap, basically outsourcing their militaries. Prominent examples include Sudan and Uganda hosting rebel movements on one another’s territories, and the creation and supply of Congolese rebel movements by Rwanda and Uganda. Empirical research shows that rival states give sanctuary to one another’s territories and supply rebel movements with men and material (Salehyan 2009; Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham 2011). Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham

(2011) develop this logic within a principle-agent framework, arguing that foreign supply of patronage and rebel demand for it are, in part, a function of rebel group strength. The strongest rebel groups are unlikely to seek outside support, while foreign powers are unlikely to aid weak rebel groups. Similarly, rebel movements are more likely to receive support if they have an international audience or constituency, including ethnic and religious affinities (Jenne 2007; Saideman 1997, 2001, 2002; Trumbore 2003).

The Cold War is also interesting because of the way scholars model its effects in their statistical studies. Typically, the Cold War enters into a quantitative model as an atheoretical indicator variable marking the years 1946–1989. Yet, the Cold War was more than a period of heightened tensions occurring in a particular time. Rather, it was a period in which policy-makers observed the entire international system when considering the implications of their decisions. The United States intervention in Vietnam, for example, was motivated by concerns over the security of regional states and with its reputation among American allies globally. Similarly, the Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan in order to uphold the so-called “Brezhnev Doctrine” that sought to maintain solidarity within the Soviet bloc, and American counter-intervention there was concerned with the security of the Persian Gulf.

We therefore propose that military intervention and proxy war should be considered as components of a broad class of security-seeking behaviors engaged in by third parties, each of which has a direct bearing on the duration and outcome of civil war. Existing empirical research has already shown that the Cold War directly affected the way that civil conflicts were fought (Kalyvas and Balcells 2010), yet it was also a period in which policy-makers considered the strategic implications of their behavior on a global basis. Global and systemic observation by policy-makers may have diminished after the Cold War, yet we argue that political leaders still consider civil wars within global and regional systems. Strategic behavior by third parties in the civil conflicts in Syria and Ukraine are contemporary cases in point.

When and Why Do States Intervene Over the Course of Conflict?

In this section, we address the question of the timing of third party intervention; that is to say, when and why do third party states intervene in conflict? The question of timing is naturally situated within the logic of bargaining and rational cost-benefit calculations in conflicts (e.g., Fearon 1995; Powell 2006; Reiter 2003; Schelling 1960; Walter 2009). The bargaining and cost-benefit perspectives hold that conflicts are an information revealing processes in which the warring parties learn about one another's capability as combat ensues, and then continually update their estimates of the utility for continuing the fight or seeking to resolve the conflict through alternative means.

This perspective affords important insights for understanding the outcome and duration of civil wars. Given that capability and will are not normally known at the outset of conflict and, because neither side is able to credibly commit to a peace agreement, war becomes the default solution (Walter 1997, 2002). War, then, is a bargaining failure, and if one side possesses an advantage in capability or will, then that side is likely to achieve victory quickly. However, because the state nearly always possesses an advantage, rebel victory is rare. When rebels actually succeed, they generally do so in the first few years of the conflict. After about five years, the odds that either side will achieve victory in the civil war declines to nearly zero (Brandt et al. 2008; Mason and Fett 1996; Mason, Weingarten and Fett 1999). Even after the odds of victory have fallen, however, protracted civil war may continue in a condition called a "mutually hurting stalemate" owing to the fact that neither side is able to credibly commit to peace (Zartman 1989). Third parties may provide the solution. International interveners are able to credibly commit to desegregating and demobilizing the warring factions, basically guaranteeing the peace (Carment and Rowlands 1998; Licklider 1995*a,b*; Mason and Fett 1996; Regan 2000; Walter 1997, 2002).

However, these findings, so favorable to conflict management, run directly counter to significant findings in the literature. Several scholars have argue that third parties can intervene and lend their support to one side or the other in an attempt to alter the balance

of power on the battlefield for their own interests (Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000; Balch-Lindsay, Enterline and Joyce 2008). Some third party interveners are also more interested in looting resources or in undermining rival powers (Balch-Lindsay, Enterline and Joyce 2008; Findley and Marineau N.d.; Ross 2004). Thus, third party intervention can actually increase the duration of civil war for reasons of an entirely strategic nature unrelated to humanitarianism.

For these reasons, several studies have undertaken the crucial step of disaggregating interventions by type: government biased, rebel biased, and balanced (Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000; Balch-Lindsay, Enterline and Joyce 2008; Collier, Hoeffler and Söderbom 2004; Mason and Fett 1996; Mason, Weingarten and Fett 1999; Regan 2002; Regan and Aydin 2006). Balch-Lindsay and Enterline (2000) and Balch-Lindsay, Enterline and Joyce (2008) find that interventions on behalf of the government decrease the time until negotiated settlement and increase the odds of such an outcome, but intervention on behalf of the rebels increases the odds of an opposition military victory. Balanced interventions in which third parties intervene on behalf of the government and rebels simultaneously, however, decrease the odds of negotiated settlement and lengthen the duration of hostilities.

Collier, Hoeffler and Söderbom (2004), on the other hand, show that rebel-biased interventions decrease the duration of civil wars, but interventions in favor of the government have no effect. Mason, Weingarten and Fett (1999) find that third party intervention reduces the probability of settlement, regardless of its bias, although this effect attenuates with time—if a conflict becomes protracted, intervention and negotiated settlement become more likely. Finally, Regan (2002) and Regan and Aydin (2006) find that biased interventions have no effect.

This collection of contradictory findings poses an exceedingly difficult puzzle for the literature. Gent (2008) argues these contradictions arise because the primary goal of an intervention is to affect its outcome, not its duration. Because third-parties are concerned mainly with outcome, they will intervene when military force will have the greatest marginal effect;

“going in when it counts” to use Gent’s turn of phrase. Because government forces are able to defeat weak rebels, government-biased intervention is unlikely to occur in such a case. Only when governments are on the verge of defeat by stronger rebels will government forces intervene. Conversely, weak rebels are unable to defeat the government even with military support; thus, third parties will intervene in favor of rebel forces only when they present a credible chance of victory over the government.

Regan (2010) further suggests that these contradictory findings are a result of the use of very different datasets, each with its own definition of civil war and intervention. It is further possible that interventions consisting in the actual deployment of military forces decrease the odds of a quick victory or negotiated settlement, but that less obtrusive interventions produce a more dramatic impact.

How Does International Intervention Affect the Duration and Outcome of Conflicts?

Recently, the literature has settled on the actual mechanisms by which conflict outcome and duration are affected by intervention. Scholarship in both the academic and policy arenas find that external patrons and military interventionists can dramatically assist rebel movements in their ability to challenge governments. Rebels are typically at a military disadvantage relative to the governments they seek the challenge, and so external support is one of the crucial determinants of rebel military success and decreased odds of government victory (Balch-Lindsay and Enterline 2000; Byman 2001; Connable and Libicki 2010; Mason, Weingarten and Fett 1999; Record 2006, 2007; Salehyan 2007, 2009; Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham 2011; Shelton, Stojek and Sullivan 2013). Only one study finds evidence that external support for rebellion decreases the odds of rebel military victory—Thyne (2009). Thyne argues that when particularly weak states support rebel movements, the odds of opposition success are greatly diminished.

Evidence in favor of government-biased interventions is less certain and conditional on highly nuanced factors. Sullivan and Karreth (2014) find that government biased interventions are effective only when rebel capabilities match or exceeds those of the state, and Lyall and Wilson III (2009) find that government-biased intervention is counter-productive because it is perceived as illegitimate by the population, thereby increasing support for rebel movements within the conflict state.

Beyond biased-intervention, outside actors can prolong civil wars and shape their outcome simply by being present (Mason and Fett 1996, 553). Indeed, the introduction of military forces by an outside power adds another actor whose consent is required in order for a negotiated settlement to occur (Cunningham 2006). Derived from the veto player theory of political institutions (e.g., Tsebelis 2002), this argument asserts that conflicts with more actors have fewer possible agreements that are acceptable to each of the involved parties, information asymmetries are more acute, and there is a greater incentive for each individual actor to hold out for a better settlement. These issues are especially problematic when intervening powers bring their own separate agendas to the table (Cunningham 2010). A classic example is again the Second Congo War, which saw intervention by nearly every surrounding state, many of which did not even support the government or a rebel faction.

An additional body of work examines the effect of intervention on war-fighting tactics and civilian victimization. Tactics are not directly the subject of this chapter, but the manner in which wars are fought are a product of international factors (e.g. Fearon 2004; Kalyvas and Balcells 2010). In turn, tactics directly impact civil war duration and outcome (e.g., Fearon and Laitin 2003; Enterline, Stull and Magagnoli 2013; Lyall 2010*b*; Lyall and Wilson III 2009; Paul, Clarke and Grill 2010; Sullivan 2007). Tactics may influence the duration and outcome of civil wars in two general ways: opposition use of insurgent and asymmetric tactics, and war-fighting methods that either recruit civilians or victimize them.

With respect to insurgency, nascent rebel organizations are frequently forced to hide from governmental forces (Arreguin-Toft 2001; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Lyall and Wilson III

2009). This tactic carries a political dimension, in that it seeks to prolong conflict beyond the patience of the incumbent authorities (Arreguin-Toft 2001; Mack 1975; Mason and Fett 1996; Record 2007). Many of the classic works on guerrilla strategy expound on the use of these tactics in such places as China, Vietnam, Cuba, and Algeria (e.g., Giap 1962; Guevara 1961; Mao 1961; Taber 1970).

Such insurgent tactics frequently have an international origin. Fearon and Laitin (2003) call them “technologies of rebellion” that may be passed around among rebel actors in the international system. Kalyvas and Balcells (2010) make a special point of this, noting that during the Cold War there existed a transnational Marxist movement, trained and armed by the Soviet Union, responsible for funneling thousands of insurgents into conflicts around the world. Modern civil conflicts find a counterpart in the transnational Islamist movement and the movement of foreign fighters (Bakke 2013; Hegghammer 2010, 2013).

The manner in which governments oppose asymmetric methods has a bearing on duration and outcome as well. Weak states afflicted with corruption, inept counter-insurgency practices, and authoritarian governments frequently lack the ability to even find insurgents and so react by “draining the sea;” that is to say, by disrupting the population that gives sanctuary to the rebels (Downes 2006, 2007; Mason and Krane 1989; Toft and Zhukov 2012; Valentino, Huth and Balch-Lindsay 2004; Zhukov 2007). Rebels, too, often engage in civilian victimization and prey upon the populations under their control (Hultman 2007; Kalyvas 2006; Wood 2010). Civilian victimization, predation, and harsh-counterinsurgency carries significant risks, however, because such tactics can alienate the population and drive them into the arms of the opposing side (Kalyvas 2006; Kalyvas and Kocher 2007; Mason and Krane 1989; Zhukov 2007). More effective tactics try to recruit civilians through a “hearts and minds” style of warfighting (Enterline, Stull and Magagnoli 2013; Lyall 2010*a*). Shifts to such a strategy are notable features in the late stages of Vietnam, as well as the contemporary Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts.

Yet, if the use of harsh tactics by either side is so counter-productive, a significant puzzle must address why combatants choose them in the first place. Third-party intervention and world politics provide part of the answer. Recent work has modeled intra-war dynamics and posited that as the various factions in a conflict gain or lose strength, they seek to impose costs on the other side or to extract resources from the population as capabilities decline (Hultman 2007; Kalyvas 2006; Wood 2010). These variations over the course of a conflict, as we have seen, are what partly determines when and how third parties intervene (e.g., Gent 2008). Wood, Kathman and Gent (2012) therefore conclude that because military intervention significantly adds to the strength of the supported faction, the side so supported will reduce their need to victimize civilians or to extract resources from them. However, the waging of proxy war below the threshold of direct military intervention also reduces the need for rebels to obtain civilian support, but not to the point that they can function independently, thus encouraging predation of civilians by the rebels (Salehyan, Siroky and Wood 2014).

The choice of war-fighting tactics, the strategic logic of political violence, civilian victimization, and the effect of third-party intervention on each is a rapidly growing area in the literature full of interesting puzzles and excellent research (e.g., Lyall and Wilson III 2009; Lyall 2010*b*; Zhukov 2007), but little work has connected them to civil war duration or outcomes. The work that does exist in this area does not paint an optimistic picture for third-party decision-makers in great power democracies like the United States. Sullivan (2007) argues that the effect of military power and resolve on war outcomes varies, and that stronger states are likely to underestimate the costs of victory as the impact of resolve increases relative to war-fighting capacity. Thus, high capacity democracies, which are so susceptible to public opinion, may be especially prone to defeat during insurgencies, although Lyall (2010*b*) contradicts such logic by finding no link between regime-type and intervention outcome or duration. That said, one of the few studies on the long-term impact of third party counter-insurgent tactics on war outcomes finds that there is a “window of opportu-

nity” for counter-insurgents to employ the hearts and minds strategy. The effectiveness of this strategy declines after about eight years (Enterline, Stull and Magagnoli 2013).

Research in this area remains tentative, and a number of interesting questions remain unresolved. For instance, in what ways does civilian victimization contribute to civil war duration? In what way does the defection of civilians from one side to the other affect war outcome? How does the prospect of international intervention affect the likelihood that a particular tactic will be adopted even before the intervention occurs? We return to these and other questions in the next section.

Future Research

In this section, we identify unresolved puzzles in the literature and suggest directions for future research. These directions are: (1) consideration of alternate units of analysis; (2) opening up the “black box” of third parties by examining the way in which domestic politics and institutions in third parties affect their decision-making with respect to civil war outcomes; and, (3) a re-integration of research on intervention with the broader literature on world politics. We discuss each direction in turn.

Alternate Units of Analysis

One fact that stands out in the third-party intervention literature is the presence of so many conflicting findings. Findley and Teo (2006) contend that this has occurred because much of research has not actually studied third party intervention; rather, its focus has been upon those traits of civil wars that attract third party interveners. Indeed, the field has historically been *phenomenon centric*; which is to say that the research has taken the civil war or the state in which the conflict occurs as its unit of analysis. However, such a focus causes the researcher to preference a conflict’s traits at the expense of “who intervenes, why, and on whose side” (Findley and Teo 2006, 828). Answering questions such as these requires an *actor-centric* approach in which the research examines the traits of actor, rather than the conflict.

Consistent with this insight is the recent rise of dyadic datasets that pair rebel actors with the governments with whom they are at war. These datasets contain information on the actors involved in conflict. Among other things, these data have enabled a new stream of research to examine the effect of rebel military strength, command ability, territorial control, and transnational constituencies on conflict duration, peace processes, and the likelihood of that external actors will provide arms and funding (Cunningham, Gleditsch and Salehyan 2009; Salehyan, Gleditsch and Cunningham 2011). A natural move for this literature is therefore to incorporate the involvement of third party militaries into the dyad, or to even move beyond the dyad into more complex units.

Another important data-related development is that of events-data, which catalog individual battles and atrocities within the conflict. The emergence of such data allow researchers to explore the way in which intra-conflict events affect the bargaining environment and, thus, the likelihood that third parties will involve themselves. Following from Gent (2008), it is known that third parties are more likely to intervene when they will have the greatest impact. Events on the battlefield should, therefore, provide this information to the third parties, teaching them the utility of intervention.

There several possible research questions. For example, do battle outcomes affect the likelihood that third parties will intervene in civil war? Violence in places like Libya in 2011 and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1998 suggest that the answer to this question is “yes.” As battle events move toward strategic locations, such as capital cities, ethnic enclaves, or mineral and oil deposits, third parties may become more likely to interfere in order to protect their interests. In Libya, for example, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) intervened as a result of rebel battle losses, but in the DRC, various governments intervened to support the government after it sustained losses at the hands of Rwandan and Ugandan backed rebels. Another possibility is that the victimization of civilians and the commission of atrocity at the events-level also attracts third parties. Victimization of civilians by the Libyan regime was also a factor in NATO intervention.

Domestic Politics

The traits of rebel actors and conflicts have been a frequent object of study, but those of the third party state have received considerably less attention. Our second suggested area of focus is therefore the third-party policy-maker's decision calculus. Third party states must pay for the costs of intervention, including those paid in terms of casualties, monies, or the opportunity to carry out other international or domestic priorities. Indeed, the decision-makers within these states, like all political actors (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003), must satisfy their domestic constituencies, and the costs attendant to intervention may make this impossible. The interventions of the United States in Vietnam and Iraq, or the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, were notable for the domestic dissatisfaction their costs incurred, and consequent turning out of political leaders from office. This link is well understood with respect to international conflict (e.g., Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995), but civil war researchers have thus far focused scant attention on this area.

The issue of domestic politics and the costs of intervention suggest a number of puzzles. Current literature examines the effect of war-fighting on the public's willingness to absorb the costs, and the effect of war on democratic elections (Arena 2008; Sullivan 2008; Koch and Sullivan 2010). In the next wave of research, scholars should examine the way in which future-regarding leaders integrate the impact of public opinion into their initial intervention decisions. Third-party decision makers are almost certainly aware of public opinion's effects. It therefore makes sense if they act strategically, incorporating this information into their decision-making.

There are a large number of possible topics here, each of which examines the initial decision to intervene. For example, how and when do leader assessments of public opinion affect the decision to intervene, and how do they affect the scale of that intervention? How do the outcomes of past interventions affect leader tenure-in-office? Relatedly, are all interventions the same, or does the level of commitment by the third party generate feedback into the domestic political system and, hence, have an inevitable effect on civil war duration and

outcome? Moreover, does a costly military intervention render future leaders less likely to engage in them, effectively making them “learning” actors that take cues from events decades in the past? Initial research would suggest this to be the case (e.g., Pickering 2001).

These questions focus mainly with the initial decision to intervene. Future research should also explore public opinion over the course of the intervention. A large and rapidly growing literature already addresses the effects of casualties and their media portrayals on public support for war (e.g., Baum and Groeling 2009, 2010; Berinsky 2009; Eichenberg, Stoll and Lebo 2006; Gartner and Segura 2000, 1998; Gartner 2008; Gelpi, Feaver and Reifler 2006; Gelpi, Reifler and Feaver 2007; Groeling and Baum 2008). Research using leaders or intervening states as their units of analysis could touch upon the willingness of third-party publics to extract a negotiated settlement or a military victory over time, and if the effect of public opinion affects intervention strategies.

There is also the issue of opportunity costs. Leaders come into office with a whole portfolio of international and domestic policy programs and preferences. Emphasizing one or the other reduces the time that can be spent on another, with increased military spending detracting other domestic priorities. Lyndon Johnson learned, much to his detriment, that intervention in Vietnam crowded out funding for his Great Society programs, and drained his political capital (Bernstein 1996). Yet, Johnson found himself caught in a trap of his own making—a precipitous failure in Vietnam would have meant the likely end of the Great Society. It is arguably the case that President George W. Bush’s 2005 push for social security reform was similarly impacted by the war in Iraq.

This emphasis on domestic politics also suggests a need to “open the black box” of the third party state. To date, most of the quantitative literature treats the third party state as a unitary actor. Yet, states are, in actuality, aggregations of multiple competing interests. Some important qualitative literature has examined this area. Scott (1996), for example, examines the effect of bureaucratic infighting on the development of the Reagan Doctrine of American intervention in Cold War-era conflicts. The final form of the doctrine, rather

than simply being a directive issued by Reagan and then seamlessly executed by the policy apparatus, actually evolved out of the interaction of the President's ability to influence the bureaucracy, laws enacted by the Congress, and the preferences of various agencies. As with public opinion research, work incorporating the effects of the American political system is not generalizable across all potential interveners, but its study does suggest that a leader's domestic prestige and a political system's level of decentralization affect the decision to intervene and, therefore, exert an influence on the duration and outcome of civil conflicts.

These puzzles therefore suggest that the duration and outcome of civil wars and the domestic policies of the would-be intervener are informed by multiple feedback loops. Because there are so many different possible causal chains in this area, researchers availing themselves of this dimension must give careful attention to causal mechanisms.

The World Politics of Intervention

In the last major area of research, we suggest an increased attention to findings from other areas international relations research, and an effort to connect civil wars to insights in the broader world politics literature. In particular, we see a major division that separates existing work into two competing paradigms. The first such paradigm is that of realism, the traditional and formerly dominant perspective among international relations scholars. Within this paradigm, scholars argue that concerns over security or power motivate third-party intervention (Ayooob 1995; Buzan 1991; Heraclides 1990). Although realism contains several well-known flaws, particularly its inability to predict the future (e.g., Gaddis 1992), it is worth noting that some empirical research introduces realist expectations and variables into their statistical models (Regan 1998; Saideman 2001, 2002).

By contrast, modern research has given preference to a second paradigm—the bargaining model of war. In this model, conflict and the actors within them are almost considered in isolation. Yet, over forty years ago, Mitchell (1970) argued that there were four categories of factors generally responsible for influencing interventions: (1) the characteristics of the conflict state, (2) the characteristics of the intervener, (3) linkages between the target and

intervener, and (4) the character of the international system. The first three categories of factors are those preferred by the bargaining model, with each responsible in some way for making more difficult for conflicting actors to come to the negotiating table.

However, few present-day scholars give much attention to the fourth category—the international system—or to world politics more generally. To the extent that international factors enter into modern empirical work, it is through Mitchell’s third category of factors—linkages between target and intervener—which includes ethnic affinities between the two, rivalry, or the regional political environment. To date, only a few scholars examine the way the system itself affects civil war duration and outcome. Fearon and Laitin (2003) and Hironaka (2005), for example, argue that decolonization produced a number of weak states that gave would-be rebels significant opportunities to mobilize and persist, resulting in an uptick in the number of civil war onsets and an increase in their duration during the Cold War. Kalyvas and Balcells (2010) go further, arguing that the tactics used by rebels was for many decades a product of the bipolar power struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. Given the interrelation between tactics, war duration, and outcome, it is a surprise that the international origins of these factors received so little attention in the research of the last twenty years.

Given these gaps in the literature, we would suggest a research agenda that integrates findings from a broad swath of the international relations sub-field. Consider the following. At the end of World War II, much of the international system was organized around American hegemony and the community of democratic nations. These states supported and, in some cases, installed authoritarian regimes around the world. That democratic states would engage in this behavior should not be surprising, as authoritarian states have less of a need to respond to large domestic constituencies and are more likely to deliver upon the preferences of their international patrons (Bueno de Mesquita and Downs 2006). In the case of the Cold War, the aims of such a foreign policy included the suppression of local communist movements and the containment of the Soviet Union (Westad 2005). Moreover, a view would later emerge

among American policy-makers that such regimes, however distasteful, were preferable to their totalitarian rivals, and also more likely to make the transition to democracy (e.g., Kirkpatrick 1982). Political debate over these points helped give rise to an entire line of empirical work on the interrelationship of foreign aid and human rights in recipient states (Cingranelli and Pasquarello 1985; McCormick and Mitchell 1988; Meernik, Krueger and Poe 1998; Lai 2003).

More to the point, as we have noted, decision-makers choose to intervene, or not, based on their perception of the international system. The United States decided against intervention in 1956 Hungary, but in favor of such in 1960s Vietnam. Similarly, both the Americans and the Soviets intervened in the wars of southern Africa in the 1980s. In Hungary, deterrence played a role, with the United States unwilling to risk war with the Soviet Union. Vietnam, on the other hand, stood at risk of falling in the Soviet orbit, and American policy makers were determined to prevent that. Finally, in the case of Africa, policy makers in both superpowers were trying to outflank one another in order to aid or thwart revolution in South Africa. This highly strategic behavior, similar in many ways to a game of chess, occurred as a product of security-seeking on the international level.

It therefore not the case that the bargaining model of war is somehow deficient; rather, its proponents have neglected to examine those international and strategic features that set the context of bargaining. There are a few articles along these lines. Indeed, it is notable that as the Cold War began to draw down, the wars in southern Africa proved remarkably amenable to settlement.

As an example of this style of research, Daxecker (2011) argues that shocks to state capacity may prevent either the government or the state from credibly committing to peace. While many of these shocks originate domestically, changes at the systemic level have their part to play as well, with economic recession, defeat in war, or changes to the international balance of power complicating the bargaining environment and, thus, contributing to civil

war onset. Although this logic is primarily concerned with civil war onset, there is significant room for scholars to examine war duration and outcome as well.

Beyond these strategic factors, researchers should also consider the deeper historical contexts of the interventions in their datasets. For example, it is by this point well established that authoritarian regimes, lacking alternative policy tools for conflict resolution, are more likely to engage in the kind of repression that eventually aids recruitment into rebel organizations (Kalyvas and Kocher 2007; Mason and Krane 1989). From this perspective, civil war actually represents a kind of policy failure for the patrons of the repressive regimes. The revolutions that overturned Soviet and American client states in Nicaragua, Iran, and Afghanistan in 1979 would seem to substantiate these points. Thus, intervention might be a reaction to the previous policy failure, with foreign patrons attempting to rectify the failure by supporting their preferred regime, and rivals attempting to undermine them. Although this perspective is one enmeshed in the logic of the Cold War, it is generalizable to all historical periods. Following the Cold War, for example, the withdrawal of foreign support for regimes in Zaire, Somalia, and Afghanistan contributed to the onset or continuation of war in those countries.

If, as we contend, many civil wars represent international policy failures, then the way that empirical researchers treat civil conflicts should be re-conceptualized. Rather than seeing them as the beginning of a process, they should instead be seen as one phase of continually evolving international relations. Systemic and dyadic relationships between and among states are established many decades before the onset of civil conflict, and these affect foreign aid flows, the repression that regimes engages in, and those states that interveners choose to target with military force. This “big picture” approach provides crucial context that is, at present, missing from the bargaining model.

To conclude, third-party interventions are directly implicated in the way civil wars are fought. They affect the duration and, therefore, the outcome of civil conflicts. The interest in intervention is long standing, and modern empirical research has significantly expanded

our understanding of the topic. Nevertheless, numerous puzzles remain, partly because researchers have, for reasons of both theory and data, focused almost entirely on the traits of the conflict or conflict-state. Although the literature risks becoming bogged down in conflicting findings and becoming stagnant, exciting new theoretical and data-driven developments should keep this from happening. Increasing precision in data and theory will allow researchers to provide key useful analyses to policy-makers without becoming distracted increasingly arcane details. In the present time, with policy debates raging over the Responsibility to Protect, the war in Iraq, and events in the Middle East, such research cannot be timelier.

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