THE SHORT-TERM EFFECTS OF MILITARY INTERVENTIONS IN CIVIL CONFLICT

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Introduction

Managing intrastate conflict is tricky business. In spite of numerous efforts by outside parties to prevent, terminate, or ameliorate the trauma of interstate conflicts, we do not have a clear understanding of what an effective outcome looks like, nor apparently how to get there. In the conflict management literature there are two general outcomes that hold sway, a settlement and a resolution. The first reflects a more short-term or partial outcome, such as an agreement to end the fighting; the second a more enduring resolution of the issues at stake (see Burton, 1990; Diehl, 1993). There are, however, myriad gradations between the polar extremes of violent conflict and complete resolution. It is to these incremental outcomes to which I will direct my attention in this paper. Specifically I discuss the criteria and conditions for short-term settlements that result from military interventions in intra-state conflicts, paying particular attention to how we can conceptualize these outcomes, and the potential link between battlefield conditions and the negotiation process.

I first discuss the various ways that we can think about the outcome of conflict management, and how a focus on long or short-term expectations can shape our understanding of the policies employed and outcomes expected. Second, I explore the conceptual relationship between military intervention as a form of conflict management, peace negotiations, and the potential outcomes that result. In doing this I pay particular attention to theoretical and empirical developments in the literature. Next I discuss general trends in the data on the duration of intrastate conflicts. Finally I draw inferences that point toward further theoretical development.

Outcomes of Conflict Management

When we think about the management of inter- or intra-state conflict the immediate outcome that comes to mind is the end of the conflict and the peaceful coexistence among the
antagonists. In the short-term, however, this is probably more a chimera than reality, as much of the data-based research demonstrates. To a large degree the discrepancy between the intuitive understanding and empirical evidence can be found in the difference between long and short-term outcomes. Short-term conflict management outcomes generally have modest – albeit vitally important – goals such as temporary respites from the fighting, implementing mechanisms for controlling the magnitude of the violence, ceasefires, agreements to disarm, the distribution of resources, and possibly even power sharing arrangements. Each of these outcomes generally leads to the cessation of hostilities, even if not the direct cooperation among the antagonists. But the long-term and enduring end to the enmity reflects more closely an underlying change in the relationship between the conflicting parties. These endemic changes may be facilitated by efforts to manage the short-term aspects of the conflict, but clearly they require the parties to go beyond the mechanistic aspects of the conflict management arrangement to address issues of social and cultural factors (Ross, 1993).

Ross, for instance, argues that "social-structural" and "psycho-cultural" factors determine the interest of the parties in conflict and the intensity with which they hold to their positions. In effect, he lays the roots of the conflict in the fabric of cultural orientations toward the enemy and the psychological attachments to the issues at stake. Others, such as Burton (1990), also point toward a transformative process required to affect long-term resolution. While these societal factors are not immutable, neither are they easily manipulable in the short-term. A question of course lingers as to whether these types of social transformations are necessary conditions for the long-term resolution of conflicts, though this appears to be a consistent theme in the literature on peace and conflict resolution. What does seem clear, however, is that short-term settlements do not require such societal transformations, even though a short-term settlement may be a necessary condition for long-term resolution. In that regard a negotiated settlement may be preferable to victory; short-term management, however, has multiple paths.
Goertz and Regan (1997) suggest alternative ways to think about conflict management and possible outcomes that can result. Initially we can conceive of conflict management in terms of the process. Was there a mediation attempt? Did the parties meet to discuss potential settlement terms? What type of negotiating or mediation strategy was used? Those who emphasize bargaining models (eg. Pillar, 1983), practitioner handbooks (eg. Fisher et al, 1998), or research the conditions under which mediations are undertaken reflect this orientation (eg. Bercovitch and Houston, 2000). Alternatively we can think of conflict management in terms of the outcome of the process of trying to negotiate an agreement. Was a settlement reached? How long did it last? Did the fighting stop? Was the conflict shortened? Presumably one would expect a strong relationship between the existence of a management process and a successful settlement, though the evidence suggests that mediation fails more often than it succeeds (Bercovitch and Langely, 1993; Leng and Regan, 2002).

When focusing on enduring rivalries Goertz and Regan (1997; see also Diehl and Goertz, 2000) argue that useful indicators of conflict management can be thought of in terms of changes in the basic level of a rivalry – or the average amount of violence over time, the avoidance of extreme forms of violence, or the amount of volatility in the conflict. In other words, did active efforts to manage the conflict result in changes in the patterns of behavior relative to a long-term trend. Rivalries, however, present a unique set of conditions that complicate inferences to a broader population of intra (or inter) state conflicts. That is, applying the Goertz and Regan conditions to all conflicts would prove difficult because many do not have the history required in order to observe the changed behavior that would purportedly result from the active management of a conflict.

Recently scholarship has begun to focus on the outcome of conflict management in intra-state conflicts (e.g., Walter, 2001; Regan, 2000 & 2002; Licklider, 1995; Diehl, 1993). In most of this research successful – or effective – conflict management involves rather short-term settlement agreements that effectively end the violent aspects of the conflict. For instance, Walter
argues that potential outcomes from conflict management efforts include failed negotiations, negotiations that achieve a settlement, and ultimately settlements that are fully implemented. A fully implemented agreement, under her conditions, is achieved if the terms of the agreement are enforced at least until the first transition of power. Given a normal electoral cycle this might be anywhere from four to six years. Empirically, relative few of the 80 cases in her sample actually achieve a fully implemented agreement and instead resort back to fighting after a period of time. So in spite of short-term successes, translating these into long-term resolutions proves difficult. Licklider (1995) considers an intra-state conflict to be ended if the fighting has stopped for a period of at least five years, and that any subsequent hostilities are over different issues. Paul Diehl (1993), on the other hand, views the success of peacekeeping operations on two dimensions: the ability to limit armed conflict and the resolution of the conflict. Both of these have indicators that can be seen as short-term outcomes, where, for example, one of the indicators of conflict resolution involves the signing of treaties to resolve the issues. This negotiated outcome, however, does not necessarily lead to the long-term resolution of the issues at stake (Walter, 2001). That is, negotiated settlements quite often do not last more than a few years.

In some of my own research focusing on military and economic interventions I have adopted two indicators of successful outcomes of third party efforts to manage intrastate conflicts: stopping the violent aspects of the conflict for at least six months (Regan, 2000), and shortening the duration of a conflict (Regan, 2002). Given certain strategies, third party military and economic interventions can contribute to the end of the hostilities, even though under most conditions an outside intervention extends the duration of a conflict.

Judging the outcome of interventions, should however, be viewed in relation to the overall patterns associated with the duration of civil conflicts. For example, there have been 153 civil conflicts with at least 200 fatalities since the end of World War II. And while the length of any one conflict is difficult to ascertain with a great degree of precision, they range in length from one month to over 50 years. What we observe as the length of a conflict depends on when the
start and end are coded, but in spite of differences in coding decisions by various researchers, the
general pattern of the duration of civil conflicts holds (see, Fearon, 2001; Doyle and Sambanis,
2001). That is, the modal category for a conflict’s duration is under one year, with a mean length
of about 6.5 years; the standard deviation, however, is about eight years. Eight conflicts, for
example, have lasted at least 25 years. The conflict in Burma, to point to just one, has lasted
more than 50 years and continues today. Forty-five conflicts were fought for one year or less, yet
efforts by outside parties to manage these conflicts took place in only about 50% of them.
Furthermore, about 30% of all of the approximately 1400 interventions took place within the first
year of a conflicts’ onset (see Regan, 2002 for a description of the data).

How we think about the short or long term outcome from conflict management influences
our ideas about potential policy inferences as well as the theoretical frameworks that guide our
understanding. For example, six months without fighting is hardly sufficient to call a conflict
resolved; five years without fighting might be, even though the underlying issues may not have
been fully addressed. Politically, however, six months may provide a sufficient respite from the
violence to engage the antagonists actively in pursuit of terms of an agreement to resolve the
issues. A five-year break from fighting may put an excess burden on our link between the action
and the outcome, making the determination of the role of a military intervention difficult to
discern. A potentially more coherent short-term indicator of the effectiveness of military
interventions is the duration of a conflict given the timing of the intervention. If on average we
expect civil conflicts to end sooner if third parties intervene, then we can evaluate interventions in
terms of their conflict management functions. One of the links between military interventions
and successful settlements, I posit, is in the effects of battlefield conditions on negotiating
behavior. This is where I next move the discussion.
**Interventions and Outcomes**

There are two distinct ways to think about outside interventions in terms of their role in influencing the course of a conflict. First, interventions can take place in response to the termination of hostilities. We often think of these in terms of peacekeeping operations, though they are not restricted to multinational efforts. For instance as part of a negotiated agreement the conflicting parties may request guarantees from other states (Walter, 2001). The intervention, then, must be evaluated in terms of its ability to maintain the peace rather than help create it (Diehl, 1993). Second, interventions can take place during violent hostilities. At this stage the intervener is effectively becoming a participant by using military aid (money, material, or troops) to influence the course of the conflict, either toward restoring the pre-conflict status quo or altering it on terms favorable to the opposition group.

If we assume that outside interventions into internal conflicts are designed as a form of conflict management, then we can think about the ex ante expectations we hold regarding their effectiveness. This assumption is not without controversy, though it is useful for framing the role of interventions. There are undoubtedly multiple motives for outside actors to get involved militarily in an internal conflict, though imputing a goal of conflict management has useful analytical payoffs, and allows us to examine the empirical relationship between a policy and a particular outcome. For example, if we assume that states intervene in an effort to reduce the duration, magnitude, or violence associated with the conflict, then we would expect that on average they would be effective at achieving these outcomes. The alternative is to view interventions as a form of inter-nation influence designed to achieve a much broader range of outcomes, only one of which might look like conflict management. Since military interventions during a civil conflict are a method of altering the balance of capabilities between the rebels and the government, the target of the intervention will be a critical determinant of the effectiveness of the intervention. Supporting the rebel movement with military aid might not appear to be an attempt at conflict management, while similar support for the government might. For example,
an intervention supporting the rebels would, in general, be balancing the capabilities toward parity (Lindsey-Balch and Enterline, 2000) and therefore potentially prolong the conflict. That is, an intervention on behalf of the opposition is designed to alter the pre-conflict status quo ante. In contrast, when an outside actor intervenes on behalf of the government we can assume that this is an attempt to restore the pre-conflict status quo ante. If a disparity in capabilities leads to an earlier settlement, then balancing the capabilities in favor of the government could be expected to shorten the conflict's duration and therefore act as a method of short-term conflict management (Balch-Lindsey and Enterline, 2000; Elbadawi and Sambanis, 2001).

My focus is on the effect of an intervention into an ongoing conflict, for which there are two dimensions from which to judge its effectiveness. First, the intervention can influence the duration of the conflict. In effect, how long the conflict will last should be a function of the role of military interventions (Elbadawi and Sambanis, 2001; Regan, 2002). Second, a military intervention can influence the likelihood that once a settlement is reached the conflict does not re-ignite. In other words, if a military intervention is successful at stopping the fighting or shortening the duration of a conflict we can then ask whether it contributes to stability over the longer run.

a) Prior Empirical Results

Recent research has made considerable strides in developing both the logic and evidence pointing toward a relationship between certain strategies for intervening in conflicts and the ability of these strategies to influence how long wars (either inter or intrastate) will last. Much of the evidence-based work relies on analogies and methodologies adopted from the medical sciences, whereby patients are observed over the life of their ailments, and various treatments can be isolated to identify the impact on life expectancy. For example, Bennett and Stam (1996) found that the expected length of international wars were a function of democracy, levels of internal repression, and the balance of military capabilities between the combatants. Another
similar study (Regan and Stam, 2000) found that the timing of third party mediation is an important part of the conflict management strategy. The simple existence of a mediator is not enough. In other words, the time in the life cycle of a conflict at which parties sit down to talk has an influence on the potential success of the mediation.

Recent research into the termination of civil wars has pointed to a number of important inferences. Roy Licklider (1993) has argued that the willingness of two sides in a civil conflict to settle is a function of the balance of capabilities. Outside interventions can play an important role in affecting this balance. A very similar argument is made with regard to interstate war, and in general evidence seems to lend support. Barbara Walter (2001) builds on these ideas to suggest that the ability to maintain a stable peace once parties reach a settlement requires confidence from both sides that disarmament agreements will be complied with and that their opponent will not reinitiate the conflict. At the end of a negotiated agreement that stops a civil war, the government generally has the upper hand because of its ability to rearm. This results in reluctance on the part of the opposition to agree to fully implement the terms of the agreement, and in effect, a security dilemma faced predominantly by the rebels hampers the implementation of a negotiated settlement. We saw this recently in Northern Ireland where the IRA resisted disarmament allegedly out of fear of Loyalist rearmament on terms unfavorable to the IRA. According to Walter, outside interventions are necessary to maintain the stability of a negotiated settlement by imposing costs on the side that rearms.

A number of other studies more directly pose the question about the conditions under which third party interventions shorten or prolong a civil war (Bach-Lindsay & Enterline, 2000; Elbadawi & Sambanis, 2000; Collier, Hoeffler & Soderbom, 2001; Regan, 2000; 2002). Initially, I examined 138 internal conflicts during the post World War II period with and without interventions and reported that those with interventions lasted considerably longer than those without. The ability to draw inferences, however, was limited by notions of causality. That is, the results do not make clear whether states simply choose to intervene in the longer running
conflicts, rather than the intervention extending their length. Certain types of interventions, however, contributed significantly to the termination of the violent aspects of the conflicts, particularly mixed interventions in support of the government. In a follow up study using a hazard analysis I was able to demonstrate that external interventions generally contribute to longer rather than shorter conflicts (Regan, 2002). In other words, the interventions extend the expected length of a conflict, at least on average. Others have developed more formal arguments positing a causal relationship between cultural fractionalization and role of outside interventions in the expected length of a conflict. The general theme is that the balance of capabilities and the ability of the opposition to mobilize are critical determinants in the duration of a civil conflict.

In developing a theoretical framework that would account for the role of military interventions as a tool of conflict management I focus on the decision by the actors to accept a settlement now versus fighting on under the conditions of an uncertain victory. The decision to continue fighting can be thought of in terms of the costs and expectations associated with continued conflict, with the ability to mobilize and the resulting balance of capabilities influencing this calculus. For example, there was something about the pre-conflict status quo that precipitated violent hostilities, and since fighting is costly we can assume that efforts to negotiate an acceptable arrangement prior to the onset of violence failed. Any future agreement, therefore, must take into account the pre-conflict status quo and the ability of each side to prevail on the battlefield. As expectations about what is likely to happen on the battlefield change, so to should negotiation strategies. Military interventions, although only one factor in the decision to accept a negotiated settlement, should influence battlefield capabilities, and therefore indirectly influence the course of political negotiations. We know, for instance, that in interstate conflicts the strategy of the combatants makes a difference in how long we can expect a conflict to last, and we might intuit from this that the strategy of an outside intervener also influences a conflict’s duration. We also have some evidence that the timing of an intervention can effect a conflict’s duration. Finally, evidence suggests that the nature of the conflict – at least in terms of who is rebelling
against the government – has a direct influence on the length of the conflict. In effect, many contextual factors influence the conditions that lead to negotiated settlements, though I focus primarily on the unique role of outside military interventions.

This leaves us with two ways to think about the short-term effects of interventions in civil wars. First, does the intervention make a settlement more likely and contribute to shorter a shorter conflict? Second, do interventions lead to only short-term respites in otherwise long running conflicts? That is, does an intervention contribute to a short-term respite even though in the long-term the parties will continue the fight?

b) A Theoretical Framework for Thinking about Interventions and Outcomes

Interventions have two defining characteristics: 1) they break with convention, and 2) they are targeted at the authority structures that determine the contours of the conflict. By convention breaking I mean that the intervention falls outside the normal conduct of relations between the target and the intervener. In this sense the form of the intervention includes more of, substitutes for, alternatives to, or reductions in some good provided by the intervener. The notion of “convention-breaking” moves us away from what might be normal forms of international influence. When restricted to a range of military instruments we can put tangible labels to these goods, such as intelligence, advisors, troops, air strikes, military sanctions or blockades. Furthermore, an intervention needs to be targeted at the structures of authority within the conflictual country. In effect by targeting the structure of authority an intervention is attempting to alter the balance of capabilities between the rebel group and the government. From this perspective the intervener’s interest is in shaping the course of the conflict, and presumably affecting the outcome.

We can productively assume that interventions are a form of conflict management used by the intervener. That is, an intervener does not intervene in order to exacerbate the conflict but rather would prefer that the conflict end on terms favorable to its client. There are undoubtedly
multiple goals one could assign for a given intervention but it seems reasonable to assume that it
is not in a state’s interest to invest in a conflict and have this investment drag out over multiple
years. More likely they will intervene in the hope that either their side wins -- and wins earlier
rather than later -- or that the intervention leads the opposing sides to the negotiation table.
Relative strength on the battlefield, moreover, affects reservation points and concession at the
negotiating table. By altering the balance of capabilities the intervention influences each sides
estimate of their probability of prevailing in the conflict. In general without an intervention the
government will be more powerful relative to the opposition group, and therefore an intervention
on behalf of the opposition should bolster their expectations for victory. That is, military
interventions have a direct link to negotiation strategies and outcomes.

If we think of two sides calculating the probability of winning the conflict, and from this
estimate determining the value of a settlement now on terms less favorable than they would
obtain in victory, then the closer the capabilities come to parity the more likely that 1) they will
have some reasonable expectation of victory, 2) that there will be significant error in this
estimation, and 3) the greater your expectation of victory the more resolute will be your position
at the bargaining table. Outside military support for the government under these conditions
should in the norm shift the balance of capabilities toward preponderance, and therefore the
opposition might consider that the potential terms possible in negotiation have a higher utility
than the outcome of further military contest. In other words, an intervention on behalf of the
government should lead to shorter conflicts.

Alternatively, an intervention on behalf of the opposition should, in the norm, shift the
balance of capabilities toward parity. Under these conditions the rebel leadership would have an
increased expectation of their chances for victory. The closer the estimate gets to even odds the
more likely there is to be “forecasting errors” on the part of the rebels (Collier and Hoeffler,
2000), and given a fixed level of grievance – which we can think of in terms of the pre-conflict
status quo -- the intervention should encourage the rebel movement to fight on and eschew
negotiations, at least at the present time. Two factors point toward this inference. First, as the balance of capabilities moves toward parity the rebels can at minimum expect to extract greater concessions at the negotiating table. The government, under conditions of parity, will have to make greater concession in order to buy off the rebel movement because of the rebels increased expectations for gaining concessions commensurate with their capabilities. If the government is unwilling or incapable of making concessions -- as they might be in an ideological conflict – the rebels will continue to fight. This might lead to what some have described as a hurting stalemate (Zartman, 2000). Second, in light of outside support for their movement the rebels are more likely to incorrectly estimate their chances for victory. Interventions in support of rebel movements are more difficult than those in support of a government for reasons of logistical efficiency and international norms, yet the net effect on a rebel movement is greater than the same intervention supporting a government. In effect, a small intervention supporting the opposition may increase their capabilities by a considerable amount, thereby bolstering their expectations, even though not convincingly weighing the balance of capabilities in their favor. This would lead the rebel leadership to press for greater demands at the bargaining table and be more resolute in their decision to fight. We should expect, therefore, that interventions have a different affect on outcomes depending on the target.

There is evidence, however, that interventions in general prolong the duration of an internal conflict (Regan, 2002; and with Abouharb, 2002), so even though different targets for the intervention may be able to make use of the support with different degrees of success, an intervention itself detracts from the ability to settle a conflict. Furthermore, opposing interventions – unless of dramatically unequal quantities – would tend to maintain the status quo balance of relative capabilities, albeit at higher absolute levels. Both sides would anticipate that they have increased prospects for victory or a significant utility from holding out at the bargaining table for greater concessions from the opponent. What this suggests is that in civil conflicts without interventions both sides have a reasonable understanding of the capabilities of
their opponent, so concessions, victory, or defeat will come reasonably quickly. When outside parties take on a role of intervening in the conflict, estimations of victory or defeat can begin to change in ways that exacerbate rather than ameliorate the conflict. In general, interventions – and specifically opposing interventions -- prolong a conflict’s duration. Two key intervening variables, the target and the timing of an intervention, are exceptions that I will come to shortly.

Doyle and Sambanis (2000) present results suggesting that UN peace operations increase the likelihood of a settlement lasting at least two years. Their focus is specifically on the character of a UN mandate and levels of economic assistance provided. One inference from their research is that interventions carried out under the auspices of international or supranational organizations can have short-term ameliorating effects. Furthermore, international organizations are most likely to intervene in the most visible – and possibly the most intractable – civil conflicts, making them particularly resilient to intervention efforts. In spite of Doyle and Sambanis’ analysis there is no convincing reason to expect that the identity of the intervener should significantly influence the outcome of the conflict. Some evidence points to the opposite conclusion, that even interventions by international organizations increase the duration of a conflict (Regan, 2002; with Abouharb, 2002).

Regan and Stam (2000) demonstrate that in terms of mediation in interstate militarized disputes, not all efforts by outside parties are equal with regard to their timing. In fact what they found was that the effect of the timing of mediation efforts on outcomes was curvilinear, with early and late mediations having greater effects on durations than interventions during some intermediate period. Since military interventions into civil conflicts represent efforts to alter the balance of capabilities, the timing of such interventions should prove to be an important determinant in the duration of a conflict, if for no other reason than they influence expectations that drive the negotiating process. We can see this by looking at the organizational development of a rebel movement.
At the early stages of a conflict opposition movements will generally be small, lightly armed, and lacking the crucial support of the general public. Participation in opposition movements is costly and it often takes a small committed group to get the movement rolling (DeNardo, 1983; see also Collier and Hoeffler, 2000). So in the early stages we might anticipate that an armed opposition movement is rather fragile and more susceptible to military defeat or early accommodation. The also have a clear understanding of the status quo ante at this initial stage. Any negotiated agreement must at least move beyond the status quo, though net yet approach their reservation point. But after a period of consolidation by the opposition forces they will have higher – maybe even inflated – estimates of their prospects for victory, and increased levels of resolve to press on toward victory or a more favorable compromise at the negotiating table. Therefore, an intervention that takes place early in an armed rebellion should have a considerably greater impact on the future course of the conflict. For example, an intervention supporting the government early on will make the prospects for an opposition victory appear more dire and lead them to either settle for a compromise or endure the overwhelming capabilities of the government. Alternatively, an early intervention on behalf of the opposition will facilitate the organizational capabilities of the opposition, contribute to the recruitment of additional troops, and increase estimates that they can hold out for victory, and therefore press for greater demands at the negotiating table. In short, early interventions should have a significant contribution to the expected length of a conflict, and the target of an early intervention will determine whether it contributes to a shorter or longer conflict.

If military interventions serve to alter the balance of capabilities and thereby affect the calculations of estimates of victory and payoffs from settling now, they do little or nothing to influence the conditions that led to the onset of a conflict. In other words, military interventions do not – and probably cannot – address the issues at stake between the combatants. For example, even if an intervention compelled one side to agree to a settlement for short of their initial demands, the intervention cannot remove the underlying source of contention. The short-term
agreement would be borne of strategic pragmatism. So, if the decision to settle now versus continuing the fight is merely a function of the relative balance of capabilities, and this balance is a direct function of an outside intervention, then the respite in the conflict may be but a short interlude between hostile interactions. That is, a military intervention that contributes to a shortening of a conflict may only do so for a short period of time, after which the conflict re-ignites. In large part this is a product of the specific tool used to manage the conflict, and a tool for which the means are incompatible with the ends of a long-term resolution. Military interventions simply are insufficient to address some of the deep-rooted issues, such as grievance, deprivation, cultural tensions, or political access that are often associated with the onset of civil violence (Elbadawi and Sambanis, 2001; Sambanis, 2001). In fact of the 77 countries that have been involved in civil conflict, slightly over 50% of them have experienced more than one conflict. Put differently, 40 of the 153 conflicts in my data set take place within a country that only experiences one conflict in the latter half of the 20th century (see Regan, 2002 for a description of the data). On the other hand, many countries experience multiple conflicts, and in fact in one country the conflict stops and restarts five times in the last half century.¹

Since altering the balance of capabilities is probably insufficient to fully resolve a civil conflict, then in order to achieve a modicum of long-term outcomes, military interventions probably have to take place in conjunction with diplomatic efforts that address some of the initial grievances that motivated the conflict. When the willingness to compromise short of complete victory is a function of estimates of the probability of victory, reservation points beyond which no deal is certain, and the initial grievances, other aspects of the “causes” of civil conflicts must be addressed if longer-term resolution is the objective. Diplomatic efforts to help negotiate the redistribution of resources should help contribute to long term success.

¹The number of individual conflicts within a country is in part of function of the coding rules that determine start and end dates. Not all data compilations agree on these dates, but the general theme holds
Conclusion and Questions for Further Research

One of the key questions that need to be answered regarding civil conflicts is why some are so short and others drag on for such long periods of time. We can search for these answers in the role that outside interventions play in the duration of a conflict. If we think about conflict as a form of bargaining, then there are two venues to focus on, the battlefield and the negotiating table. Outside interventions should be able to manipulate preferences and expectations in both venues. The ability to press demands at the bargaining table will be a function of how capable the coalition an actor can put together on the battlefield. The skills of a negotiator, therefore, are tempered by the prowess of the soldier. The type of systematic evidence necessary to uncover such inter-relationships is recently available for testing coherent theoretical argumentation.

Knowing the conditions that lead to the resolution of civil conflicts would contribute to efforts by the world community to stabilize and develop many parts of the world. The World Bank, for instance, is currently engaged in a serious effort to identify those factors that lead to the onset of civil violence, and account for its intensity and duration. But conflict resolution – in its purest sense – is a long way beyond short-term settlements, though the latter may be necessary for the former. Military interventions by third parties are an oft-used form of conflict management, and at least in many of the more visible instances, the expressed goal of the interveners is to bring an end to the violence so that diplomatic initiatives can bear fruit. Finding out the best strategy by which third parties can contribute to both long and short-term outcomes is vitally important to that mission.

regardless of who is coding the data (see Licklider, 1995; Doyle and Sambanis, 2001).
References


