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Blocking resolution: How external states can prolong civil wars

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Abstract

What explains the effect of external intervention on the duration of civil war? The literature on intervention has made some progress in addressing this question, but it has been hindered by an assumption that states intervene in civil wars either to help one side win or to facilitate negotiations. Often, however, external states become involved in civil war to pursue an agenda which is separate from the goals of the internal combatants. When states intervene in this fashion, they make wars more difficult to resolve for two reasons. First, doing so introduces another actor that must approve any settlement to end the war. Second, external states generally have less incentive to negotiate than internal actors because they bear lower costs of fighting and they can anticipate gaining less benefit from negotiation than domestic insurgents. Through Cox regressions using data on the goals of all interventions in civil wars since World War II, this article shows that when states intervene with an independent agenda, they make wars substantially longer. The effect of independent interventions is much larger than that of external interventions generally, suggesting that the established finding that external interventions prolong civil war is driven by a subset of cases where states have intervened in conflicts to pursue independent goals.

Keywords

civil war, civil war duration, international intervention, veto players

Introduction

In 1996, Rwanda and Uganda invaded Zaire and, alongside a small rebel group led by Laurent Kabila, marched all the way to Kinshasa and overthrew the government of President Mobutu. Kabila became president of the renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC); however, relations with his external patrons quickly soured. Within a year, Rwanda and Uganda were again at war with the Congolese government, this time fighting alongside different domestic insurgents. In 2002, fighting largely stopped, but in the years following Rwandan withdrawal, tensions between Kigali and Kinshasa have remained high, to the point of threatening a return to full-scale war.

At roughly the same time, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) dispatched a force into Sierra Leone.[1] The ECOMOG forces overthrew the Revolutionary United Front (RUF)-led government and restored and provided two years of support to the previous government. Following the intervention, the RUF continued to fight but its ability to wage war was severely diminished. In 1999, ECOMOG withdrew and in 2000 the conflict ended.[2]

At the time, both of these external interventions in civil conflict were praised by many scholars and policymakers.[3] Some talked of an 'African renaissance' or of 'African solutions to African problems'. However, years later it is clear that, while the ECOMOG intervention in Sierra Leone contributed to the resolution of a long-running civil war, the high degree of external involvement in the Congo led to that conflict becoming the largest war since World War II.

What explains the effect of external intervention on the duration and termination of civil war? Interventions are an important area of study because, despite the implications of the term, 'civil wars' often contain high degrees of external influence. Foreign states can play a variety of roles from hosting and facilitating negotiations, offering incentives to groups to negotiate, deploying peacekeepers or peace enforcers, and providing economic or military support to either side, all the way to sending military forces to participate in the conflict.[4]

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[1] ECOMOG intervened in Sierra Leone in February 1998.

[2] The end of war in Sierra Leone was hastened by another intervention. In May 2000, British troops arrived to evacuate British nationals. They stayed and helped the government battle the RUF, leading the RUF to sign a ceasefire agreement in November 2000.

[3] The clearest example of this attitude was from Connell & Smyth (1998). They argued that leaders such as Uganda's Museveni and Rwanda's Kagame represented a new generation of African leaders opposed to the kind of corrupt and dictatorial rule represented by Mobutu.

[4] For studies focusing on the roles that external states play, see Gleditsch & Beardsley (2004), Salehyan & Gleditsch (2006), Salehyan (2007), and Gleditsch (2007).

Scholars of conflict studies have focused increasing attention on the effect that these various 'interventions' have on the likelihood of conflict resolution. In general, this literature has assumed that these actions are intended to expedite the resolution of conflict, either by improving the prospects for negotiation or by helping one side win a military victory. In this article, however, I focus more directly on the goals of intervention and argue that states often intervene in civil war not to end the conflict, but rather to pursue some specific objectives that are additional to the goals of the internal combatants. When states intervene in this fashion, they make settling the conflict more difficult and this leads to longer civil wars.

To properly examine the effect of external intervention on the duration of civil war, one must have a basic understanding of the factors that drive the duration of civil war. In the next section, I provide a brief overview of these factors. This framework will be used to examine how different types of external interventions can affect the duration of conflict.

External intervention and the duration of civil war

Understanding the duration of civil war inherently involves an analysis of the factors affecting the termination of those conflicts. Civil wars end in a variety of ways but, in general, war ends can be divided into two categories: military victory or negotiated settlement.[5] The duration of civil war is affected both by factors that make military victory easier (or harder) and by factors that make negotiated settlement easier (or harder). These two strategies are linked, however, because parties use the battlefield to strengthen their position at the negotiating table (Wagner, 2000). Since war is costly, parties seek constantly to find a negotiated settlement that gives them higher expected utility than continued warfare.

At every point over the course of the conflict, then, each party compares the expected utility from three options: ceasing the armed struggle, agreeing to some negotiated settlement, or continuing fighting. If actors are rational and risk-neutral, they will pursue the policy that gives them the highest expected utility. Once fighting has begun, groups rarely concede the conflict without receiving any benefit unless they are wiped out militarily.

Throughout the conflict, then, parties decide between continuing to use violence and accepting some deal that gives them something short of their total demands. In the absence of negotiated settlement, wars continue until one party wins or all parties but one concede the conflict. Consequently, the duration of warfare is driven by factors that affect the ability of parties to win the conflict, the incentives they have to negotiate, and the ease of reaching a negotiated settlement.

External states can affect all of these factors. In particular, existing approaches to external intervention can be divided into two schools: those that focus on the ability of parties to negotiate, and those that focus on the capability of combatants to wage military warfare.

A number of scholars have examined how external actors can affect the ability of parties to negotiate. Walter (2002) sees external actors as playing a critical role in the termination of civil war because she argues that it is nearly impossible for parties to commit credibly to stop fighting without an international guarantee to enforce the peace. Doyle & Sambanis (2000) argue that certain strategies used by international actors are more effective at reducing hostilities in a civil war environment and helping to build peace.

Other scholars examine the effect of external intervention on the ability of the government and rebel groups to achieve military victory. Balch-Lindsay & Enterline (2000) argue that one-sided interventions lead to shorter civil wars because they increase the probability that side will win the conflict outright. Balanced interventions, by contrast, in which multiple external states intervene to support each side, lead to longer conflicts because they create a stalemate, making it harder for one side to win. Regan (2002) similarly finds that neutral interventions prolong civil wars, while interventions biased toward either the government or the opposition shorten them.

Regan & Aydin (2006) examine these two roles together. They show that diplomatic interventions decrease the duration of civil wars and that economic and military interventions lengthen them.

These approaches are important and have facilitated theoretical and empirical progress in our understanding of the effect of some types of interventions on civil war duration. However, both approaches miss a key effect that external interventions can have on civil conflict because they assume that external actors are intervening with one of two goals in mind: to help one side win militarily or to contribute to the resolution of the conflict through negotiated settlement.

External interveners with independent agendas

These are important goals that in many cases motivate intervention. However, there are also cases where external states intervene to pursue independent objectives in the war outside of the goals of the domestic combatants. These states, then, fight to advance those objectives, not necessarily to help one side win or to help resolve the conflict.

During the Cold War, for example, South Africa provided military support to neighboring states and insurgents. It did not do so out of some ideological affinity with the groups that it supported; rather, it intervened because it wanted to keep anti-apartheid governments out of the region. Chester Crocker (1999), who was Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs from 1981–1988 and oversaw negotiations in several different southern African conflicts, argues that internal conflicts such as the long civil war in Angola could not be resolved until the

[5] These are not dichotomous distinctions; there are negotiated settlements that are cover-ups for military victory and cases where one side wins the conflict but loses on many of its demands. However, it is theoretically useful to examine war ends as fitting into these categories.

external dimensions of those civil wars (primarily the involvement of South Africa and Cuba) were removed. Crocker and the United States negotiating team committed to addressing the external dimension first, and in 1988, a peace agreement between Angola, Cuba, and South Africa was signed at the United Nations. That agreement paved the way for an internal peace agreement in Angola in 1991, albeit one that broke down a few years later.

When states intervene to pursue independent goals in conflict, they often do work through domestic combatants. In the Congolese conflict of 1996–2002, Rwanda and Uganda both intervened initially to help Kabila overthrow Mobutu. There was a year-long break in fighting when Kabila took power in the summer of 1997. However, relations between Kabila and the governments in Kigali and Kampala quickly soured because Kabila proved unwilling to disarm Rwandan and Ugandan insurgents based on Congolese territory. In 1998, those countries again went to war in the Congo, this time fighting alongside new insurgent groups. Throughout the 1998–2002 phase of the war, the rebel groups with which Rwanda and Uganda allied changed, those two countries battled each other, and each country proved willing to support whatever group it saw as advancing its goals and opposed any government or rebel organizations it saw as standing in the way.[6]

A similar example can be seen in Libya's intervention in Chad in the 1970s. Libya sent its military into Chad to support northern 'Arab' insurgent groups against a dominant southern government. However, after intervening, Libya annexed the Aouzou Strip, an area in northern Chad rumored to possess uranium. This annexation led to conflict between Libya and some northern groups who were unwilling to cede control of the Aouzou Strip. Libya, then, brought a separate agenda to the conflict – securing control of Chadian territory.

The difference between interventions to help one side win and interventions to pursue independent goals, then, is not that in the former case the external state supports an internal group and in the latter it does not. Rather, the important theoretical distinction is that in cases of independent intervention, the external state brings an additional set of demands into the conflict that have to be addressed to settle the war, short of all-out victory by one side. In the DRC conflict, for example, a negotiated settlement proposing a political solution to the internal dimension of the conflict could not end the war if it did not also address the security concerns of Rwanda and Uganda. In fact, an agreement was signed in Lusaka, Zambia, in 1999, but the war continued for three years, largely because Rwanda and Uganda refused to withdraw from Congolese territory. In the civil war in Chad, an agreement to end the conflict would have had to address both the internal dynamics of the conflict and Libya's claims to the Aouzou Strip to fully resolve the war.

When an external state intervenes to pursue separate preferences over the outcome of the war, it makes sense to treat it as a separate combatant who must either be defeated militarily or satisfied through some sort of agreement for the war to end. This is true even if that external state works closely with an internal ally. States intervening in this fashion makes resolving civil wars harder for two reasons. First, it is harder to resolve civil wars when they contain more combatants with separate preferences over the outcome of the war. Additionally, external states are likely to anticipate less gain from negotiating than internal combatants, and so inducing them to stop fighting becomes more difficult.

Why external interventions with independent agendas prolong conflicts

When external states intervene in civil wars to pursue independent goals, resolving those conflicts becomes more difficult because there is an additional actor who has to be either defeated militarily or consent to an agreement to end the war. In other work (Cunningham, 2006), I have shown that conflicts are longer when there are more combatants in the conflict who have diverse preferences over the outcome of the war and the ability to block agreement. I identify four dynamics that make negotiation in multi-party conflicts more difficult.[7] I discuss them briefly here.

First, when a combatant with separate preferences joins the civil war, it introduces an additional set of issues that need to be addressed in negotiation. The addition of these issues complicates the bargaining environment because it shrinks the 'bargaining range' of acceptable agreements that all combatants could prefer to continued warfare.[8] This dynamic makes it more difficult to find one specific agreement that all of the combatants will accept.

Second, in fractionalized conflicts, it is harder for combatants to use battle outcomes to update their beliefs about the likelihood that they will win the conflict. Informational models (Filson & Werner, 2002; Slantchev, 2003; Smith & Stam, 2004) have gained prominence in the study of bargaining and war. These models see the onset, duration, and termination of warfare as one process driven by information asymmetries. Conflict begins because parties overestimate the likelihood they will win the war, they use their performance on the battlefield to update their beliefs about the probability of victory, and when enough updating has occurred, a bargaining range

[6] It also appears that Rwanda and Uganda had another goal in the conflict – the exploitation of resources such as diamonds, gold, and cobalt. It is not clear if these resources were solely a means to fund participation in the conflict or a goal themselves.

[7] In Cunningham (2006), I discuss these theoretical arguments in more detail and show empirically that conflicts are much longer when there are a greater number of combatants with separate preferences over the outcome of the conflict and the ability to block agreement.

[8] This argument is similar to veto player approaches to governmental bargaining such as Tsebelis (2002) and Cox & McCubbins (2001).

emerges and agreement is reached. For these models, then, the primary factor driving the duration of war is the ability of combatants to use the battlefield to update their beliefs.

Updating is difficult in multiparty civil wars because the battlefield reveals information less clearly than when there are only two participants. While these wars are multiparty, individual battles continue to be primarily dyadic, as the state usually fights separate battles against individual insurgent groups or external interveners. Dyadic battles allow parties to become more realistic about their chances of defeating the other actor in the battle but do not reveal information allowing them to become more realistic about their chances of winning the conflict overall. It is harder, then, for combatants in these conflicts to use the battlefield to adjust the demands they make or the extent of concessions they are willing to offer to the other parties.

Third, when there are more parties in the conflict who must sign an agreement, the incentives for each to hold out in the hope of getting a better deal as the last signer increase. Civil war negotiations are long processes, and at the end, the last signers can demand significant concessions to incorporate into the existing negotiation framework or threaten to scuttle the whole process. The ability to demand substantial concessions late in the process means that all parties have an incentive to hold out in the hope of being the last signer, and so actors take more hard-line positions toward negotiation when there are more combatants.

Finally, negotiations in multiparty conflicts are prone to breakdown because of shifting alliances between parties when different issues are introduced. Because of the difficulties inherent in multiparty bargaining, combatants have incentives to form coalitions that can reduce the number of actors. Often, for example, the various insurgent groups form some umbrella organization to negotiate on their behalf. These negotiating blocs are inherently unstable, however, because combatants in multiparty conflicts can form different coalitions on different issues areas. Shifting alliances on these issue areas lead coalitions to break down. This dynamic makes it harder for all actors to agree to one specific bargain that encompasses multiple issues.

External states intervening with a separate agenda, then, make wars harder to resolve because they increase the number of actors. Additionally, in many cases it will actually be more difficult to induce external states to exit the conflict short of fully achieving their goals because of differences between external states and internal combatants in the attractiveness of negotiation.

External actors and negotiations

Negotiations in civil war are affected by each party's subjective estimation of the expected utility of negotiation versus continued warfare. If combatants anticipate higher utility from continuing to fight than from negotiating, the conflict will drag on. External states involved in civil war generally perceive low utility from negotiation because they bear lower costs from fighting and can anticipate gaining less benefit from a negotiated settlement than the domestic insurgents.

The costs of fighting

The costs of participating in a civil war are lower for external states than for internal insurgents for two reasons. First, when an external state intervenes in a civil war, the fighting does not take place on that state's territory. The costs of civil war primarily involve human costs, including the loss of life or health, and economic costs, such as destruction of infrastructure and disruption of local trade. External states intervening in civil war certainly bear human costs; however, these costs are limited to the military personnel intervening, whereas the highest human costs in civil wars are felt by the civilian population. Economic costs are lower for external states as well. While there may be regional effects of the civil war, the intervening state does not experience the destruction of infrastructure and disruption of domestic trade felt by the civil war state.

Second, wars can be less costly for external states because they can exploit local resources in the civil war state to offset some of the costs of intervention. In recent years, an increasing number of scholars have focused on the effect of lootable resources on the duration of civil war.[9] They argue that parties to civil war often gain access to resources during the war and that having this access lowers their incentive to negotiate.

A fundamental problem with these approaches is that they do not explain why the government cannot just include these resources in a settlement to end the war. If a group does not have an incentive to stop fighting because it controls resources, the government should be able to offer to allow it to continue to control some or all of these resources after the war. If the group sees this commitment as credible, it would no longer have an incentive not to negotiate.

For external states, however, the argument is more applicable. While states might be willing to cede control of lootable resources to domestic groups to end a war, they are unlikely to continue to grant external states control over them. Additionally, even if states offer external interveners access to resources, the offer is less credible because if the state reneges on the deal the external intervener can do little, short of attacking again.

One way that external states can bear higher costs from intervening in civil war is if they face international pressure to withdraw. Sometimes, the international community responds harshly to an external state intervening in a civil war. In this case, it can put pressure on that external state in the form of sanctions or other economic disruption that may lead it to quit the conflict either by withdrawing entirely or signing some agreement. In the absence of this international pressure,

[9] See, for example, Collier, Hoeffler & Söderbom (2004) and Buhaug, Gates & Lujala (2002).

however, external states are likely to bear lower costs from fighting than internal insurgents.

Although external states generally bear lower costs from fighting, this does not necessarily mean that they will be more likely to achieve military victory. The probability of military victory and the costs of war are separate factors affecting the expected utility of fighting that do not necessarily correlate. In many civil wars, groups and external interveners operate in areas that are geographically outside of the reach of the state, and the ability of the state to impose costs on them is low. These low costs mean that groups may have little incentive to negotiate, even if their probability of victory is quite low, and can lead to seemingly endless conflicts in which fighting continues even though neither side appears to have much chance of defeating the other militarily (Cunningham, Gleditsch & Salehyan, 2009).

The benefits of negotiating

In addition to facing lower costs from fighting, external states are likely to perceive a lower benefit from negotiation than domestic groups. When civil wars end in some negotiated settlement, the domestic combatants can generally transform into political movements that pursue their agendas through nonviolent means. Often, peace agreements contain provisions for power-sharing which give the combatants a large share of votes in the subsequent government.[10] This provision can alleviate groups' fears that they will be excluded from decisionmaking once they exit the conflict.

External states, by contrast, do not have this option. Domestic combatants are extremely hesitant to share power in government with an external state. External states, therefore, either have to continue to pursue their goals by participating in the conflict or withdraw and return to using foreign policy. The latter option is certainly possible; however, it is notoriously difficult for states to convince other states to change their course of action, and so external states have much less ability to continue to influence politics in the civil war state after they exit the conflict than domestic groups that have signed a peace agreement and joined the government.

The duration of civil war

This discussion suggests that when external states intervene in conflicts to pursue a separate agenda, the conflict will be harder to resolve and therefore longer. There is one important caveat, however. This argument holds only if external states have the military capacity to continue the war if the other parties sign a settlement. If external interveners are such marginal participants in the conflict that the internal combatants could reach agreement and exclude them, then they will not have the same effect because satisfying their preferences is not a necessary precondition to the conflict ending. An assumption in this theoretical argument is that these interveners are strong enough to block settlement.

Like any theoretical assumption, this condition will not hold in all cases. However, in most conflicts, external interveners are sufficiently strong that they have a significant military presence in the conflict. While rebel groups are often undertrained, may be undisciplined, and may not have advanced equipment, states that are capable of sending their armies into other states generally have militaries that are relatively well organized, trained, and equipped and often represent a more disciplined and effective force than the domestic combatants.

When an external state has intervened in a civil war and brought preferences that are separate from those of the internal parties and it has the military capability to block a settlement to the war, that state is likely to see little incentive to stop fighting short of achieving its overall goals. Its participation in civil war, then, will lead those conflicts to drag on. This theoretical argument leads to one main empirical prediction:

> *Hypothesis*: Civil wars with independent external interventions will be longer.

Empirical analysis

The dataset

To test this hypothesis, I need to differentiate between interventions in terms of whether the intervener has an independent agenda. The first step is to determine the population of interventions into civil conflict. Empirical studies of civil war are complicated by the fact that there are multiple datasets available.[11] These datasets use different definitions of conflict and of combatants and so can lead to substantially different populations of interveners. In this study, I use Version 3, 2005 of the Uppsala/International Peace Research Institute Oslo Armed Conflict Dataset (ACD).

The ACD dataset identifies incidents of violence involving at least one state actor that generate more than 25 casualties in a given calendar year, over some incompatibility classified as control over the central government or territory, where groups seeks secession or autonomy of a particular piece of territory (Eriksson & Wallensteen, 2004; Gleditsch et al., 2002). It includes all conflicts that began between 1945 and 2004 and divides these conflicts into four types – interstate wars, 'extrasystemic wars' such as anticolonial conflicts, intrastate wars, and internationalized civil wars. In this study, I include all conflicts from the last two categories.

The ACD identifies a list of participants in each conflict, by year, for every conflict, divided into 'Side A' actors which are broadly on the side of the government and 'Side B' actors

[10] See Hartzell & Hoddie (2007) for a discussion of power-sharing arrangements in civil wars.

[11] See Sambanis (2004) for a discussion of civil war datasets and of the different results that they can produce.

which are broadly opposed to it. Of the 700 or so participants in the internal conflicts in the ACD data, most are either governments or domestic insurgent groups. However, the ACD does identify external states that have a military presence in the conflicts.

In this study, it is these actors that are the set of external interveners into conflict. The ACD identifies 60 external actors that have intervened militarily into civil wars in the last 60 years.[12] The analysis here, then, is limited to cases of direct military intervention. Limiting in this fashion leaves out an interesting set of cases where external states are heavily involved in civil war even if they are not direct military participants. However, military intervention is the most observable form of intervention, and so the analysis is limited to those cases.

Measuring goals of intervention

To properly test the theoretical argument in this article, I need a measure of the goals of states intervening in conflicts. In particular, that measure needs to identify whether the external state has an agenda in the conflict which is separate from that of the other actors involved. Three methods are used to code whether interveners bring a separate agenda.

First, one indicator of divergent preferences is external states and their internal allies engaging in armed conflict over their agenda in the conflict. In the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda shifted their support to different groups over time, most clearly by bringing Laurent Kabila to power in 1997 and then starting a rebellion in 1998 aimed at overthrowing him. In Chad, Libya engaged in armed conflict with both the government and many rebel groups after it annexed the Aouzou Strip. In the Western Sahara conflict involving both Morocco and Mauritania, when Mauritania reached a peace agreement with the rebel group POLISARIO in 1979, Morocco responded by annexing all of the Western Sahara, including the Mauritanian controlled section, and continued to fight. In the long-running conflict in Afghanistan, the United States intervened in the 1980s to undermine the Soviet-led government, and then became involved again after the 11 September 2001 attacks to overthrow the Taliban-led government that included many of its former allies. Direct armed conflict between external states and their internal allies is relatively rare, however, and so it can only be used to code a handful of cases.

A second method is to look at stated demands. In some cases, states indicate explicitly that their intervention is motivated by goals other than the internal dynamics of the conflict. Israel's intervention into southern Lebanon in 1982, for example, was clearly motivated by a desire to weaken the Palestinian Liberation Organization there. However, a state indicating that it has an independent agenda is quite rare, because states have incentives to disguise their intentions. Declaring an intervention on the basis of independent goals can open a state up to charges of violating sovereignty, so states are likely to rhetorically align themselves with one of the internal sides of the conflict, even if in practice they have different preferences.

Because conflict between external states and their allies and expressed demands can only be used to code a handful of cases, I need a third method to identify the goals of the remaining interventions. To code these cases, I examine historical sources, using two main types. First, I use news reports around the time of the conflict/intervention, such as Lexis Nexis and Keesing's Record of World Events, that give an indication of the perceived reasons for the intervention. Second, I use case histories written by scholars who are knowledgeable about these conflicts which indicate what they believe the goals of the external states to be.

Using these sources in combination allowed me to come up with a general measurement of the reasons motivating states to intervene in conflict. Once I had this coding of goals of the intervention, I looked for evidence of preference divergence between the internal allies and the external state. There were several clear examples where this divergence was not present. In the Cuban invasion of 1971, for example, the United States and its Cuban allies clearly had one common goal – the removal of the government of Fidel Castro. In other cases – such as France's intervention in Gabon in 1964, Iran, Jordan, South Yemen, and the United Kingdom in Oman in 1965–1976, Zimbabwe in Mozambique from 1976–1992, Russia and Uzbekistan in Tajikistan in 1992–1998, Zaire in Rwanda in 1990, and Guinea and Senegal in Guinea-Bissau in 1998–1999 – external states deployed their militaries at the direct request of an allied government to prevent it from being overthrown. In all, there were 29 cases of intervention in which the intervener clearly was becoming involved directly to help one internal actor win or to help hasten the resolution of the conflict.

There were another 12 cases where the external intervener clearly had independent goals. These include the cases of Rwanda, Uganda, and Angola in DRC, Libya in Chad, Israel in southern Lebanon, Mauritania in the Western Sahara conflict, and the United States in Afghanistan. Additionally, the list includes Tanzania in Uganda in 1979 (which was motivated by tension between Nyerere and Amin, rather than by the internal dynamics of the conflict), as well as South Africa in Angola (discussed in more detail below).

Between these two extremes, however, there were a set of cases in which it was difficult to determine whether the intervention brought a separate set of preferences that would have

[12] The vast majority of these external interveners are individual states. However, in some cases, the ACD lists all participants of a coalition as separate interveners. For example, in the Kosovo conflict of 1998–99, all member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization are listed as 'Side B' actors. In this study, however, NATO is treated as one external intervener into the conflict. The assumption in aggregating allies such as NATO is that the alliance members either would or would not collectively be satisfied with a specific war end and that separate members within NATO would not make separate decisions about whether or not to continue the war.

to be satisfied for the conflict to end. Recall from the theoretical argument that the important distinction is whether an agreement that satisfied the internal parties would also satisfy the external intervener and therefore lead the conflict to end. Even if an intervener has somewhat different preferences over the outcome of the conflict, if it is willing to let its ally operate and negotiate freely, it does not represent an actor with separate goals that have to be satisfied in the conflict.

In many cases, determining whether the internal parties would be allowed to negotiate independently (in the absence of actually observing this behavior) is difficult. Examples include interventions such as those by the United States in the conflicts in Vietnam and Cambodia. Although it supported these governments, there is no question that the USA had at least somewhat separate goals from them over the outcome of the war. However, because these differences were not extreme, the governments may have had the ability to operate freely. A similar situation arises in the current US involvement in the civil war in Iraq. There are clear differences of opinion between the United States and Iraqi governments, both over the correct strategy for pursuing the conflict and over what a post-war Iraq should look like. However, the question motivating the coding here is: if the Iraqi government was able to broker a political compromise among the various competing factions that the United States did not find ideal, would the United States allow the compromise to go forward or would it continue fighting?

To deal with these cases that are in-between, I have created a trichotomous coding. Interventions are coded as non-independent, clearly independent, or quasi-independent. The quasi-independent category includes those cases such as the USA in Iraq where it is not entirely clear whether the intervener had a separate agenda. This trichotomous coding allows me to code three different variables, one only includes interventions that are clearly independent, the second includes both those that are clearly independent and those that are quasi-independent, and the third is a measure of non-independent interventions. Appendix A includes a list of the interventions and how they are coded.

Before I proceed to the analysis, two caveats are in order. First, the 'non-independent' coding is by no means meant to suggest that these interventions are somehow altruistic or not self-interested. There are a variety of self-interested reasons that external states enter conflicts without bringing a separate agenda. External states may intervene to support a government that shares a common ideology, prevent the spread of refugees, support their ethnic kin, or prevent regional instability. The important distinction is whether the goals for the outcome of the conflict between the external states and the internal combatants are different, and if these goals are motivating the intervention.

The second caveat is that the theory to be tested here makes no prediction about the relative impact of the two variables measuring independent interventions. The first variable is simply coded based on a more restrictive conception of independence, and the second includes a number of questionable cases. Therefore, there is no theoretical motivation for why one intervener is 'clearly independent' and another is 'quasi-independent'; that difference arises because of the difficulty in measuring the concept empirically. If similar results are found using the two variables, then that would suggest that the analysis is robust to different measurements of the same concept.

I will briefly discuss an example to make the above coding discussion clearer. The Angolan civil war of 1975–2002 had a high level of external involvement. That conflict broke out almost immediately after independence when three groups that had worked together to oppose the Portuguese colonial power – the MPLA, UNITA, and the FNLA – could not agree on a post-independence settlement and returned to war. The MPLA became the government and fought a brief war with the FNLA and a decades-long war with UNITA.

The ACD identifies four external interventions into the Angolan civil war. Cuba sent 11,000 troops to support the MPLA in 1975, and these troops stayed until 1989. South Africa intervened several times across the conflict to support UNITA and to oppose the MPLA, which had taken an anti-apartheid stance. Zaire supported the FNLA in 1975. Namibia assisted the government from 1999–2002, as it was able to finally defeat UNITA.

In the analysis for this article, the only intervention that is coded as independent is that of South Africa. Zaire's involvement was very brief and limited to providing logistical support directly to FNLA. Namibia sent troops to assist the government in its defeat of UNITA but had little other involvement in the conflict. Cuba, while it had a substantial force in Angola for 14 years, had little interest in the region other than preventing a fellow Marxist government from being overthrown. South Africa, on the other hand, had a strong interest in undermining anti-apartheid governments, and so its involvement in Angola brought a separate agenda to the conflict.

The reason Cuba is coded as non-independent and South Africa is coded as independent is that the assumption is that the Angolan government had greater freedom to negotiate with UNITA than vice-versa, even though both were heavily dependent on foreign support for their military viability. If the MPLA and UNITA had reached some negotiated settlement that compromised on ideological issues, it is unlikely that Cuba would have used its military power to block implementation of that agreement. However, South Africa would likely have remained involved militarily in Angola as long as the government there had a strong anti-apartheid stance, and therefore a negotiated agreement that addressed the political dynamics of the MPLA–UNITA conflict but did not address that issue would not have satisfied South Africa and ended the war. The assumption motivating the coding, then, is that any deal that satisfied the government of Angola would have satisfied Cuba, but that South Africa would not necessarily have allowed any agreement to go forward simply because UNITA was willing to accept it.

Statistical analysis

To test the effect of independent interventions on the duration of civil war, I use a Cox Proportional Hazards model regression, one of a set of hazard models that examine the effect of covariates on the likelihood of observing some event (in this case, a war end) at any point in time, given that that the conflict has survived to that point. The Cox model does not assume a baseline hazard function, but rather fits the baseline function to the shape of the data.[13] Here, the duration of civil war is measured in days.

The ACD data are not, in their current form, well suited to duration analysis because the dataset lists conflicts by calendar year and treats all governmental conflicts in the same country as one conflict, regardless of how far apart in time they are. To address these problems, I use data from Gates & Strand (2004) which indicate the start and end date for each war. This precise dating allows for a duration analysis with more accurate data on the dependent variable. To address the problem of recurring conflicts, when there is a two-year break in fighting a new conflict is coded.

Table I presents the results of several Cox regressions that test the effect of independent interventions on the duration of civil war.[14] Models 1, 2, and 3 include the measures of intervention agenda in a 'core model' which also includes three variables that could affect both the presence of an independent intervention and the duration of civil war. First, the presence of lootable resources in the conflict could be an inducement for external states to remain in the war, and lootable resources have been found to prolong conflict.[15] Second, I include an annual measure of the number of battle-deaths, log transformed.[16] More costly conflicts may be shorter (because parties have greater incentive to end them), and they also may discourage intervention because the intervening state evaluates the costliness of intervening before becoming involved. Finally, I include a dichotomous variable of the regime type of the civil war state.[17] External states may be more hesitant to intervene to pursue an independent agenda in democracies because of the international costs associated with doing so, and regime type could also affect the duration of war.

As can be seen from Models 1 and 2, both measures of independent agendas have coefficients with negative signs, and therefore both are associated with longer civil wars. The measure of clearly independent agendas achieves significance at the 0.1 level (one-tailed test), while the quasi-independent measure does not. The coefficient on each measure of independence is quite large, however, suggesting that interventions with an independent agenda prolong conflicts substantially. By contrast, in Model 3, the measure of non-independent agendas is nowhere near statistical significance and the coefficient is substantially lower than for either of the other two measures. We cannot determine the effect of non-independent interventions on the duration of war with any confidence. These results show that external states intervening in conflict with an independent agenda make civil wars substantially more difficult to resolve.

The lootable resources measure performs as expected, with conflicts containing resources lasting longer. The number of battle-deaths is significant in all three models, but in the opposite direction than expected – conflicts are less likely to end when they have more battle-deaths. Models 1–3 show that wars last longer in democracies. This counterintuitive finding confirms that identified in previous studies (Cunningham, 2006; Cunningham, Gleditsch & Salehyan, 2009), but is one for which there is no clear theoretical explanation. Further exploration of the relationship between regime type and the duration of civil war is needed in order to understand this correlation.

In Models 4 through 6, I add additional control variables to the previous tests. The variables included are the natural log of the civil war state's population,[18] a measure of whether the conflict is a governmental or territorial conflict,[19] the natural log of the country's gross domestic product per capita,[20] the level of ethnolinguistic fractionalization in the civil war state,[21] the proportion of neighboring countries that are democracies,[22] and a dichotomous variable indicating whether the conflict year took place during the Cold War. These variables control for factors that have been identified in the literature as influencing the duration of civil war. Again, as in the core models, both measures of independent agendas are negative, and this time both are statistically significant. In these models, the measures of independence have substantially larger coefficients and the non-independent measure again fails to achieve statistical significance. These results show that the relationship between independent intervention and longer civil wars is robust to (and actually strengthened by) the inclusion of variables controlling for additional factors which influence duration.

The measures of lootable resources, battle-deaths, and democracy have similar effects in Models 4–6 as in the 'core' models. Of the other variables included, only the measure of

[13] See Box-Steffensmeier & Jones (2004) for descriptions of hazard models and their applicability to social science.

[14] Because the analyses here include time-varying covariates, the individual row observations in the data matrix cannot be considered independent of one another. To address this problem, I use robust standard errors based on the generalization of the Sandwich estimator developed by Lin & Wei (1989).

[15] This variable, obtained from Buhaug, Gates & Lujala (2002), measures whether there are any lootable resources – including diamonds, gems, and various drugs – in the conflict zone.

[16] This variable is from Lacina & Gleditsch (2005).

[17] I created this variable based on the 'Polity2' variable from the Polity IV dataset. It is coded 1 if the civil war state had a score of 7 or greater on the Polity scale, and 0 otherwise.

[18] This variable is from Gleditsch (2002).

[19] This variable is a measure of the 'incompatibility' from the Armed Conflict Dataset obtained from Gates & Strand (2004).

[20] This variable is from Gleditsch (2002).

[21] This variable is from Fearon (2003).

[22] This variable is from Gleditsch & Ward (2006).

Table I. Cox proportional hazards models of civil war duration

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*	*Model 6*	*Model 7*
Clearly independent interventions	−0.752* (0.531)			−2.024** (1.035)			
Quasi- independent interventions		−0.304 (0.289)			−0.822** (0.429)		
Non-independent interventions			0.132 (0.258)			0.078 (0.288)	
Any intervention							−0.428* (0.283)
Lootable resources	−0.279** (0.15)	−0.302** (0.149)	−0.303** (0.149)	−0.413** (0.188)	−0.448** (0.187)	−0.462** (0.188)	−0.452** (0.189)
Logged battle-deaths	−0.179** (0.041)	−0.179** (0.041)	−0.189** (0.04)	−0.212** (0.052)	−0.211** (0.053)	−0.23** (0.051)	−0.216** (0.053)
Democracy	−0.689** (0.17)	−0.683** (0.171)	−0.668** (0.171)	−0.611** (0.231)	−0.604** (0.234)	−0.617** (0.234)	−0.59** (0.239)
Log population				−0.045 (0.068)	−0.036 (0.067)	−0.017 (0.069)	−0.044 (0.07)
Incompatibility				0.57** (0.192)	0.561** (0.191)	0.555** (0.188)	0.556** (0.192)
Log GDPpc				−0.026 (0.104)	−0.027 (0.104)	−0.024 (0.103)	−0.025 (0.105)
ELF				−0.058 (0.399)	−0.103 (0.394)	−0.149 (0.392)	−0.102 (0.395)
Proportion of neighboring democracies				0.329 (0.399)	0.301 (0.398)	0.325 (0.402)	0.297 (0.402)
Cold War dummy				−0.129 (0.183)	−0.126 (0.186)	−0.156 (0.185)	−0.132 (0.187)
Subjects	256	256	256	202	202	202	202
Failures	224	224	224	168	168	168	168
Observations	1465	1465	1465	1223	1223	1223	1223
Wald Chi-square	40.89	37.54	37.99	53.10	52.99	48.55	51.79
Log pseudo-likelihood	−1023.313	−1024.191	−1024.598	−713.391	−715.531	−717.459	−716.491

Reported are coefficients with robust standard errors in parentheses.
*significant at 0.1 level, **significant at .05 level, one-tailed tests.

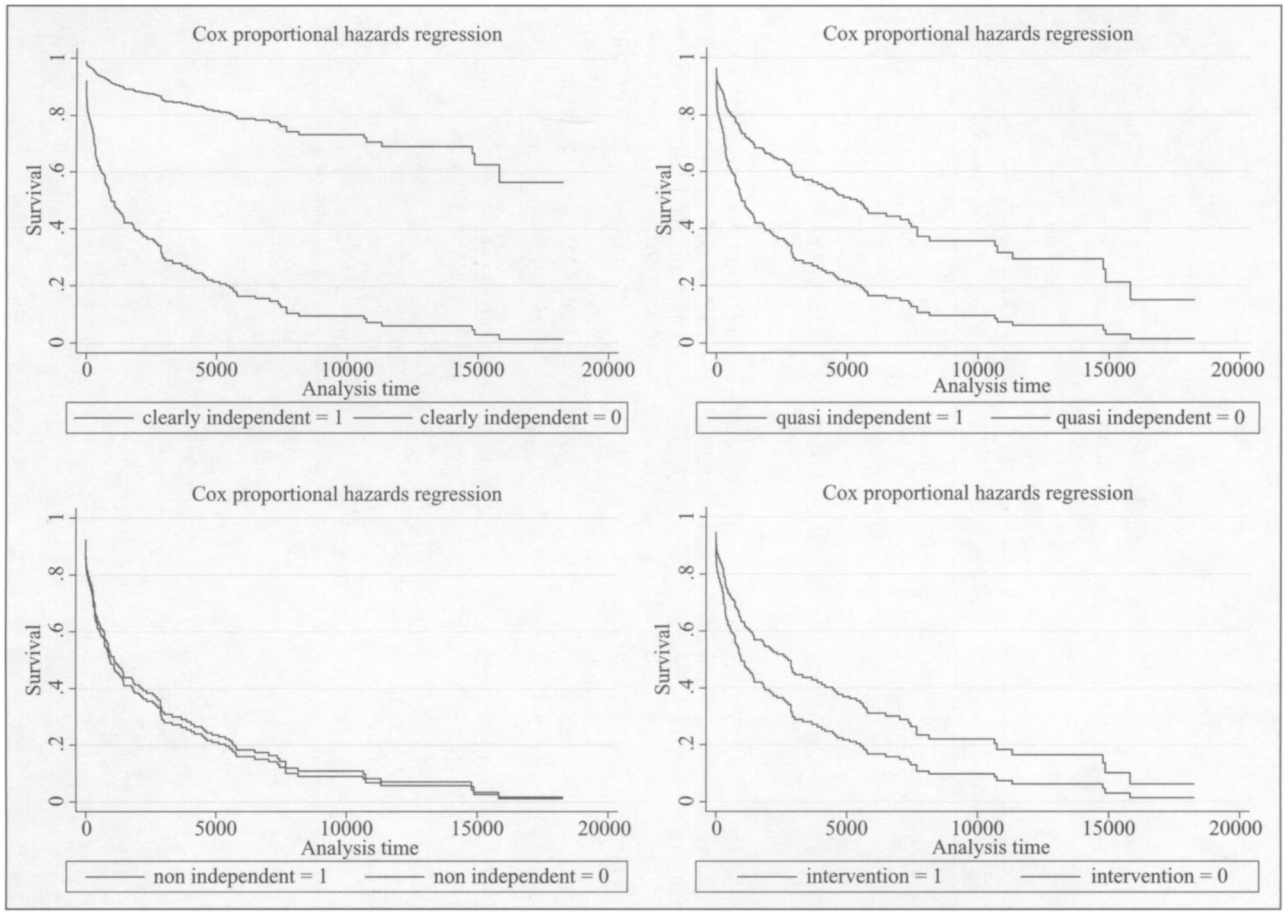

Figure 1. Survival functions for conflicts with and without interventions

conflict incompatibility is significant, showing that territorial conflicts last longer than those over government. The measures of population, GDP, ethnic fractionalization,[23] the proportion of neighboring democracies, and whether the conflict took place during the Cold War do not have a statistically significant effect on the duration of civil war.

In Model 7, I rerun the analysis with a variable measuring whether there was any external intervention in the conflict. There is an established finding in the literature that military interventions prolong civil wars,[24] and the results here are consistent with that finding (although only significant at the 0.1 level). Notice, however, that the coefficient on the intervention variable is substantially smaller than for the measures of independent interventions. This finding shows that while interventions in general prolong civil wars, independent interventions have a substantially greater impact on the duration of conflict.

To further illustrate the effect of the different types of interventions, Figure 1 shows the predicted survival functions of civil wars based on Models 4–7, comparing those conflicts with and without intervention. The survival function gives the percentage of civil wars surviving beyond a certain point in time, measured in days.

Figure 1 shows that independent interventions have a substantial effect on how long civil wars last. Wars with a clearly independent intervention have an approximately 80% chance of surviving to 5,000 days (about 14 years), as compared to 50% for wars with a quasi-independent intervention, almost 40% of wars with any intervention, and 20% of wars with no intervention. Additionally, the presence of a non-independent agenda has almost no effect on the duration of war, since the predicted survival functions for wars with and without non-independent interventions are virtually indistinguishable.

The analyses in Table I and Figure 1 suggest that the finding in the literature that external military interventions prolong conflict is primarily driven by the presence of a subset

[23] The literature on ethnicity and civil war suggests the relationship between fractionalization and conflict may be u-shaped. I reran Models 4 through 6 with the measure of ELF and its squared term. The effect of the measures of independence did not change.

[24] This result has been found in Balch-Lindsay & Enterline (2000), Regan (2002), Elbadawi & Sambanis (2000), and Regan & Aydin (2006).

of these interventions in which the intervener has an independent agenda. This analysis provides strong support for the theoretical argument developed in this article.

Conclusion

Despite the connotations of the term 'civil war', it has been well established that external states have a profound effect on the duration of these conflicts. In particular, it has been shown that external military interventions prolong civil wars. Several theoretical explanations for this effect have been developed; however, our understanding of the impact of intervention on civil war has been limited because we have not examined the full range of roles that external states can play.

In this article, I have identified one factor that has a major effect on the duration of civil wars: whether external states intervene in civil war to pursue an independent agenda or to help the conflict end. The empirical results demonstrate that interventions with independent agendas lead to substantially longer conflicts, and that in fact this subset of interventions is a major driving factor behind the general relationship between military interventions and longer civil wars.

The results of this study have implications for policymakers interested in resolving civil wars. Two primary implications stand out. First, because these interventions can be a major barrier to the resolution of these conflicts, the international community should examine external interventions into civil war closely. If external states are intervening in this fashion, international pressure to force them to withdraw is important because in its absence it is difficult to convince these states to leave. International criticism of external military interventions in civil wars tends to be muted, and the lack of direct pressure lowers the chances that states will leave short of achieving their full objectives.

Second, if the international community cannot induce external states to leave civil wars through pressure, it may be necessary to use sequenced negotiations to resolve the separate dimensions of these wars. Assistant Secretary of State Crocker recognized this necessity when he determined that the internal conflict in Angola could not be addressed until the external dimension was resolved. However, in recent civil wars with high degrees of external involvement such as those in Sierra Leone, the international community has shown a reluctance to address the external dimension. This study shows that failing to address this dimension can significantly lower the probability of resolving these conflicts and lead to substantially longer civil wars.

Replication data

The data used in this article, as well as a codebook and do-file for replicating the analysis, can be found at http://www.prio.no/jpr/datasets. The statistical analyses were conducted using Intercooled Stata 10.0.

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Appendix A.

Non-independent Interventions

Conflict	*Conflict dates*	*Intervener*	*Side*
Cuba vs. National Revolutionary Council	15–19 Apr 1961	USA	Rebels
Muscat and Oman vs. State of Oman	1 July–31 Aug 1957	UK	Government
Malaysia vs. Communist Party of Malaysia	31 Aug 1957–31 July 1960	UK	Government
Gabon vs. Military Faction	18 Feb 1964	France	Government
Sudan vs. Darfur Groups	9 Apr 2003-	Chad	Government
Uganda vs. Military Faction/UNLA	23 Mar 1974–31 Dec 1991	Libya	Government
Oman vs. PFLOAG	9 June 1965–31 Jan 1976	Iran	Government
Oman vs. PFLOAG	9 June 1965–31 Jan 1976	Jordan	Government
Oman vs. PFLOAG	9 June 1965–31 Jan 1976	South Yemen	Rebels
Oman vs. PFLOAG	9 June 1965–31 Jan 1976	UK	Government
Angola vs. UNITA	11 Oct 1975–22 Feb 2002	Cuba	Government
Angola vs. UNITA	11 Oct 1975–22 Feb 2002	Namibia	Government
Angola vs. UNITA	11 Oct 1975–22 Feb 2002	Zaire	Rebels
Ethiopia (Ogaden)	1 Sept 1976–20 Jan 1984	Cuba	Government
Mozambique vs. Renamo	1 Nov 1976–4 Oct 1992	Zimbabwe	Government
Gambia vs. SRLP	30 July 1981–6 Aug 1981	Senegal	Government
Rwanda vs. RPF	1 Oct 1990-	Zaire	Government
Sierra Leone vs. RUF	3 Mar 1991–10 Nov 2000	UK	Government
Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	1 Dec 1991–27 July 1994	Armenia	Rebels
Tajikistan vs. UTO	10 May 1992–31 Dec 1998	Russia	Government
Tajikistan vs. UTO	10 May 1992–31 Dec 1998	Uzbekistan	Government
Bosnia-Herzegovina vs. Croats	1 Apr 1993–18 Mar 1994	Croatia	Rebels
Congo vs. rebels	3 Nov 1993–17 Mar 2003	Chad	Government
Guinea-Bissau vs. Military Faction	7 June 1998–7 May 1999	Guinea	Government
Guinea-Bissau vs. Military Faction	7 June 1998–7 May 1999	Senegal	Government

(continued)

Appendix A. (continued)

Conflict	*Conflict dates*	*Intervener*	*Side*
Lesotho vs. Military Faction	4 Sept–14 Oct 1998	Botswana	Government
Lesotho vs. Military Faction	4 Sept–14 Oct 1998	South Africa	Government
Uzbekistan vs. IMU	16 Feb 1999–30 Sept 2004	Kyrgyzstan	Government
Central African Republic vs. Military Faction	28 May 2001–15 Mar 2003	Libya	Government

Clearly Independent Interventions

Conflict	*Conflict dates*	*Intervener*	*Side*
Lebanon vs. rebels	13 Apr 1975–10 Dec 1990	Israel	Rebels
Laos vs. Pathet Lao	12 Nov 1959–22 Feb 1973	North Vietnam	Rebels
Laos vs. Pathet Lao	12 Nov 1959–22 Feb 1973	USA	Government
DRC vs. rebels	17 Oct 1996–31 Dec 2003	Angola	Rebels
DRC vs. rebels	17 Oct 1996–31 Dec 2003	Rwanda	Rebels
DRC vs. rebels	17 Oct 1996–31 Dec 2003	Uganda	Rebels
Chad vs. rebels	1 Nov 1965–30 Sept 2002	Libya	Rebels
Uganda vs. Military Faction/UNLA	23 Mar 1974–31 Dec 1991	Tanzania	Rebels
Angola vs. UNITA	11 Oct 1975–22 Feb 2002	South Africa	Rebels
Morocco vs. Polisario	20 Jan 1975–15 Aug 1991	Mauritania	Government
Afghistan (Taliban)	27 Apr 1978-	USA-led coalition	Rebels, Government
Congo vs. rebels	3 Nov 1993–17 Mar 2003	Angola	Government

Quasi-independent interventions

Conflict	*Conflict dates*	*Intervener*	*Side*
Iran vs. Kurdistan	1 Jan 1946–17 Dec 1946	USSR	Rebels
Iran vs. Azerbaijan	1 Jan 1946–17 Dec 1946	USSR	Rebels
Republic of Korea vs. Leftists	15 Aug 1948–25 June 1950	USA	Government
Yemen vs. Royalists	26 Sept 1962–15 Mar 1970	Egypt	Government
Vietnam vs. FNL	1 Apr 1955–31 Dec 1962	USA	Government
Iraq vs. Rebels	1 May 2003-	USA-led coalition	Government
Lebanon vs. Rebels	13 Apr 1975–10 Dec 1990	Syria	Rebels
Laos vs. Pathet Lao	12 Nov 1959–22 Feb 1973	South Vietnam	Government
Laos vs. Pathet Lao	12 Nov 1959–22 Feb 1973	Thailand	Government
DRC vs. Rebels	17 Oct 1996–31 Dec 2002	Chad	Government
DRC vs. Rebels	17 Oct 1996–31 Dec 2002	Namibia	Government
DRC vs. Rebels	17 Oct 1996–31 Dec 2002	Zimbabwe	Government
Cambodia vs. Khmer Rouge	2 Apr 1967–17 Apr 1975, 3 Dec 1978–27 Feb 1998	North Vietnam	Rebels, Government
Cambodia vs. Khmer Rouge	2 Apr 1967–17 Apr 1975	South Vietnam	Government
Cambodia vs. Khmer Rouge	2 Apr 1967–17 Apr 1975	USA	Government
Afghanistan vs. Mujahaiden	27 Apr 1978-	USSR	Government
Bosnia-Herzegovina vs. Serbs	7 Apr 1992–14 Dec 1995	Yugoslavia	Rebels
Croatia vs. Serbs	1 Jan 1992–14 Dec 1995	Yugoslavia	Rebels
Yugoslavia (Kosovo)	22 Apr 1996–3 June 1999	NATO	Rebels