I. Historical trends in external support in civil wars

NIKLAS KARLÉN[1]

Introduction

Contemporary armed conflicts, such as those in Syria and Ukraine, illustrate that civil wars are rarely just a matter of internal affairs.[2] The categorization of conflicts as 'internal' has long been questioned by scholars and it is now becoming a well-established fact that most conflicts experience some type of external support.[3] External support can be defined as a unilateral intervention by a third-party government (or groups of governments) in an internal armed conflict in favour of either the government or the opposition movement involved in that conflict.[4] Support can include direct participation by military and security personnel as well as more indirect forms of aid, such as the provision of intelligence, logistics, money, sanctuary or training. This definition excludes other forms of third-party intervention, such as mediation or peacekeeping, since the aim of such activities is most often to stop the fighting rather than to help a certain party achieve victory.[5]

States have often tried to influence the outcome of armed conflicts in other states by providing support to governments and opposition movements. At least two-thirds of all intrastate conflicts active since 1975 have experienced some kind of external support from other states (see below). The end of the cold war did not prompt a significant reduction in the provision of external support. On the contrary, the number of conflicts with foreign troop support has risen in recent years as a result of increasing levels of military intervention in the internal conflicts of other states.[6] These international dimensions

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[1] Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University.

[2] This section defines armed conflict as a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year; a civil war is defined as a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 1000 battle-related deaths in one calendar year. The designation of Ukraine as a civil war is contested (see section III in this chapter).

[3] Harbom, L. and Wallensteen, P., 'Armed conflict and its international dimensions, 1946–2004', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 42, no. 5 (Sep. 2005); and Rosenau, J. N. (ed.), *International Aspects of Civil Strife* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, 1964).

[4] Some scholars use the more general term 'third-party interventions', while others refer to these instances of the provision of external support as 'biased interventions' or 'partisan interventions'.

[5] Although multilateral missions with international mandates are excluded from this definition some of the United Nations and other multilateral peace operations increasingly blur this distinction by actively siding with one of the warring parties. Recent examples include the intervention in Libya (2011) and the intervention in Mali (2012). The definition does, however, include international 'coalitions of the willing' in which individual states offer support without a UN mandate.

[6] Pettersson, T. and Wallensteen, P., 'Armed conflicts, 1946–2014', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 52, no. 4 (July 2015), pp. 536–50.

need to be taken into account by policymakers striving to understand contemporary conflicts. This is important as research suggests that the presence of external support affects the dynamics and prospective resolution of armed conflicts. External support often prolongs the fighting, makes the conflict more deadly and decreases the chance that the parties will reach a negotiated settlement.[7] Civilian targeting becomes more prevalent and there is a greater risk that interstate conflicts will be initiated.[8] Violence between various rebel groups tends to increase and the democratization trajectories of post-war countries are negatively affected.[9]

Many contemporary civil wars are illustrative of wider international connections and tensions, as the warring parties on both sides receive extensive support from a number of outside states. Although diaspora communities, wealthy individuals and non-state actors may also provide assistance, the scale and the range of this support cannot currently compete with the vast resources provided by state sponsors. States are by far the most important and active third-party supporters of civil wars.[10]

This section reviews the research on external support in civil wars and discusses how patterns of support have shifted over time. It provides an illustration of how external support has been provided in the past, together with a discussion of general trends. It briefly highlights what is known about the motives behind these types of interventions and explores findings on the effects of external support on armed conflicts. The section ends with some concluding remarks. To complement this historical overview, the chapter introduces two case studies on contemporary armed conflicts: Syria (section II) and Ukraine (section III).

[7] Aydin, A. and Regan, P. M., 'Networks of third-party interveners and civil war duration', *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 18, no. 3 (Sep. 2012), pp. 573–97; Regan, P. M., 'Third-party interventions and the duration of intrastate conflicts', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 46, no. 1 (Feb. 2002), pp. 55–73; Cunningham, D. E., 'Blocking resolution: How external states can prolong civil wars', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 47, no. 2 (Mar. 2010), pp. 115–27; and Lacina, B., 'Explaining the severity of civil wars', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 50, no. 2 (Apr. 2006), pp. 276–89. See also the discussion on the the role of foreign involvement in armed conflict in East Asia in chapter 6, section III, in this volume.

[8] Salehyan, I., Siroky, D. and Wood, R. M., 'External rebel sponsorship and civilian abuse: A principal–agent analysis of wartime atrocities', *International Organization*, vol. 68, no. 3 (June 2014), pp. 633–61; and Gleditsch, K. S., Salehyan, I. and Schultz, K., 'Fighting at home, fighting abroad: How civil wars lead to international disputes', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 52, no. 4 (Aug. 2008), pp. 479–506.

[9] Fjelde, H. and Nilsson, D., 'Rebels against rebels: Explaining violence between rebel groups', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 56, no. 4 (Aug. 2012), pp. 604–28; and Colaresi, M., 'With friends like these, who needs democracy? The effect of transnational support from rivals on post-conflict democratization', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 51, no. 1 (Jan. 2014), pp. 65–79.

[10] Byman, D. et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* (RAND: Santa Monica, CA, 2001).

Historical trends in external support: an overview

External support in civil wars is nothing new. Nor is it limited to the cold war superpower rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States. Examples are abundant. Germany and Italy aided the nationalists during the 1936–39 Spanish Civil War with air raids, equipment and weapons.[11] The opposing sides in the 1946–49 Greek Civil War received support from a number of external countries, including Albania, Bulgaria and the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which aided the opposition; and the United Kingdom and the USA, which backed the existing Greek Government.[12] The 1975–90 Lebanese Civil War became internationalized following forceful interventions by Israel and Syria.[13] The Government of El Salvador had strong backing from the USA in its war against the rebel group the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) during the 1980–92 Salvadoran Civil War. The USA provided both economic and military assistance to aid the Salvadoran Government's counterinsurgency efforts.[14] The Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone received training in Libya and material support from neighbouring Liberia during the 1991–2002 Sierra Leone Civil War.[15] France provided logistics as well as reconnaissance intelligence to the Chadian Government in its conflict with insurgent groups during the 2005–10 Chadian Civil War.[16] During the 2011 Libyan Civil War, at least 18 states provided external support.[17] Qatar, for example, distributed weapons, including assault rifles and anti-tank missiles, to the opposition movements in Libya. Qatar also provided basic infantry training to Libyan rebels and Qatari special forces were seen on the front line towards the end of the 2011 conflict.[18]

The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) has systematically collected data on external support in all armed conflicts between 1975 and 2009.[19] The main sources of information are media and non-governmental organization

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[11] Coverdale, J. F., *Italian Intervention in the Spanish Civil War* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, 2015).

[12] Nachmani, A., 'Civil war and foreign intervention in Greece, 1946–49', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 25, no. 4 (Oct. 1990), pp. 489–522.

[13] Rasler, K., 'Internationalized civil war: A dynamic analysis of the Syrian intervention in Lebanon', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 27, no. 3 (Sep. 1983), pp. 421–56.

[14] Wood, E. J., *Insurgent Collective Action and Civil War in El Salvador* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2003).

[15] Humphreys, M. and Weinstein, J. M., 'Who fights? The determinants of participation in civil war', *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 52, no. 2 (Apr. 2008), pp. 436–55.

[16] Massey, S. and May, R., 'Commentary: The crisis in Chad', *African Affairs*, vol. 105, no. 420 (July 2006), pp. 443–49.

[17] Daalder, I. H. and Stavridis, J. G., 'NATO's success in Libya', *New York Times*, 30 Oct. 2011.

[18] Roberts, D., 'Behind Qatar's intervention in Libya', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 28, no. 9 (Sep. 2011), p. 28.

[19] For a presentation of the data see Högbladh, S., Pettersson, T. and Themnér, L., 'External support in armed conflict 1975–2009: Presenting new data', paper presented at the 52nd Annual International Studies Association Convention, Montreal, Canada, 16–19 Mar. 2011. For more detailed
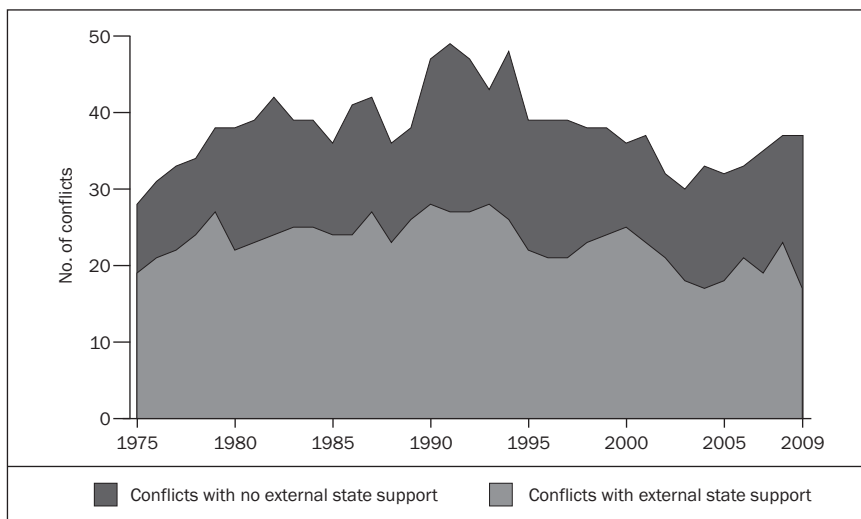
Figure 4.1. Number of conflicts with and without external state support, 1975–2009

Source: UCDP External Support Data. See Högbladh, S., Pettersson, T. and Themnér, L. 'External support in armed conflict 1975–2009: presenting new data', Paper presented at the 52nd Annual International Studies Association Convention, Montreal, Canada, 16–19 Mar. 2011.

reports, together with academic publications and documentation from the United Nations. Only support that is intentionally given to aid a party in the conflict is considered.[20] Approximately two-thirds of all intrastate armed conflicts recorded between 1975 and 2009 involved outside states providing support to either the government or the opposition.[21] As can be seen in figure 4.1, this is a rather stable trend. The number of conflicts receiving external support has stayed at around the same level since 1975. Fluctuations have mainly followed the pattern of the overall level of intrastate conflicts. External support was slightly more prevalent during the cold war but it is not limited to that particular period.[22]

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information on the coding decisions see Croicu, M. et al., 'UCDP external support project primary warring party dataset codebook', version 1-2011.

[20] In total, 10 separate categories of external support are included in the data. The 10 categories are troops, access to military/intelligence infrastructure, access to territory, weapons, material/logistics, training/expertise, funding/economic support, intelligence material, other forms of support and support where the content is not known.

[21] This is a low estimate as it only includes instances of confirmed support and excludes cases of alleged support that cannot be fully substantiated. Also note that while the external support discussed in this section is limited to support provided by foreign states (in line with most studies on the topic), the full dataset includes other actors, such as rebel groups and regional organizations, as potential providers.

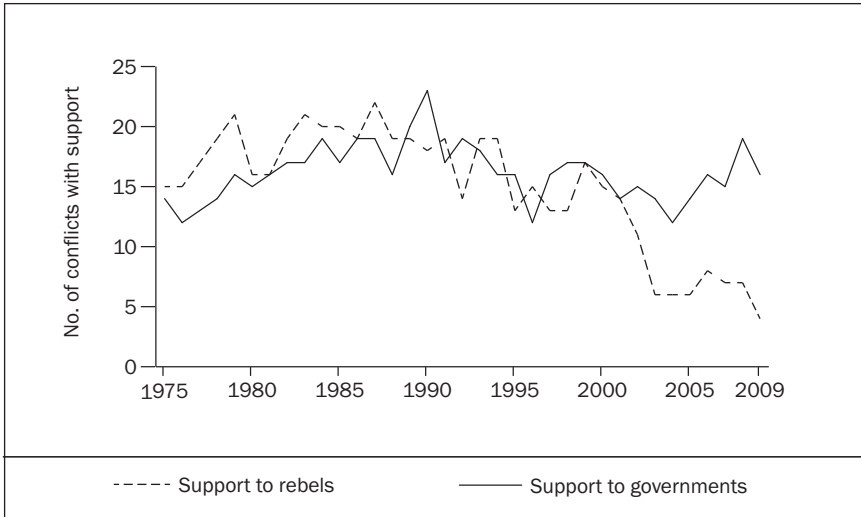[22] Note, however, that external troop support has increased in recent years as shown in figure 4.3.

Figure 4.2. External state support by recipient, 1975–2009

Source: UCDP External Support Data. See Högbladh, S., Pettersson, T. and Themnér, L., 'External support in armed conflict, 1975–2009: presenting new data', Paper presented at the 52nd Annual International Studies Association Convention, Montreal, 16–19 Mar. 2011.

Other aspects of external support do vary over time. Figure 4.2 shows that a strategic shift in the type of recipient has occurred in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the USA of 11 September 2001. Since this time, very few rebel groups have received support, while there has been a sharp increase in support to governments. One potential explanation for this trend is that the terrorist attacks on the USA and the subsequent 'global war on terrorism' led to an international environment in which rebel groups were increasingly labelled terrorist organizations. This probably made it costlier for states in terms of damage to their international reputation to offer support to such groups at a time when many other states were increasing their counterter-rorism efforts. The flipside of this is that it became increasingly legitimate to assist other states in their fight against 'terrorism'. During the cold war, support to rebel movements was more common and the general trend was for both sides to a conflict to receive external support. Decisions to provide support do not take place in a vacuum and the choice to intervene is often reflective of earlier actions taken by other states. Hence, it is more appropri-ate to think about interventions as a complex web of relationships between internal and external actors.[23]

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[23] Balch-Lindsay, D. and Enterline, A. J., 'Killing time: The world politics of civil war duration, 1820–1992', *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 4 (Dec. 2000), pp. 615–42.
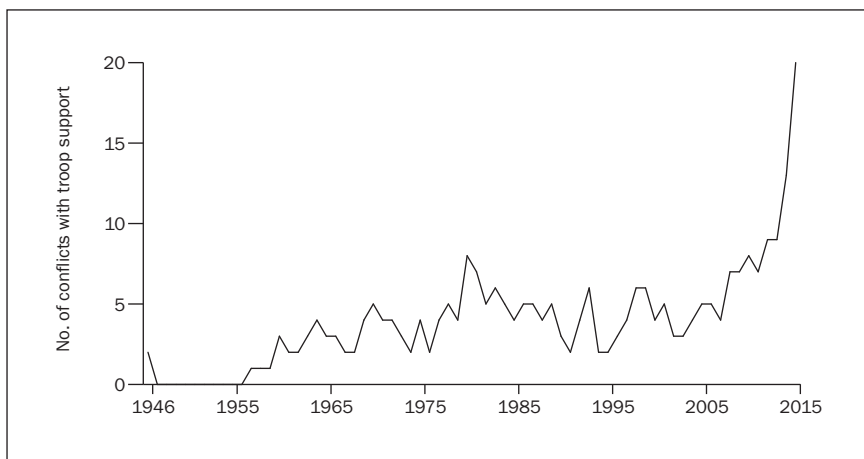
Figure 4.3. Number of conflicts with external troop support from states, 1946–2015

Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset v. 4-2015, 1946–2014. See Gleditsch, N. P. et al., 'Armed conflict 1946–2001: a new dataset', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 39, no. 5 (Sep. 2002).

In regional terms, external support has been most prevalent in Africa. The main reason for this is simply that the majority of armed conflicts in the period 1975–2009 took place in sub-Saharan Africa. In relative terms, however, support has been more common in the Middle East as most of the conflicts there involved foreign states. The rationale behind this might be the strategic significance of the region. Geographically, the region forms an important bridge between Europe, Africa and Asia. It is also the location of a number of important trade routes and half the world's oil reserves. Moreover, it is possible that the region's accumulated history of past interventions increases the likelihood of new ones.

The most common form of external support is the provision of armaments. Weapon supplies from foreign states to one or both belligerents occurred in 54 per cent of all conflict years between 1975 and 2009.[24] This was followed by training (50 per cent) and materiel/logistics support (46 per cent). In most cases, different forms of support were provided at the same time.

The provision of military personnel—one of the most intrusive forms of external support—appears to have been on an upward trend since 2011 (as shown in figure 4.3).[25] Increased interconnectedness and mobility due to globalization, in combination with more interventionist foreign policy actions taken by states, might partly account for this upward trend. Tensions

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[24] On international arms transfers in 2015 see chapter 15 in this volume.
[25] This upward trend is not just attributable to an increase in the number of conflicts in recent years as the proportion of armed conflicts with external support displays the same general trend.

between Russia and the USA are currently at an all-time high since the end of the cold war. However, it is too early to determine whether the rise in the provision of military personnel is a short-term spike or indicative of a more long-term trend.

Why do states provide external support?

For a state to intervene in a civil war in another state it must have both the opportunity and the willingness to do so.[26] Opportunity is often related to geographical proximity and to whether the state has sufficient capabilities to involve itself in another state's conflict. This means that external support is most commonly provided by great powers, such as the USA and Russia, and/or neighbouring states.[27] The top ten supporters of parties engaged in civil war between 1975 and 2009 were: the USA, the Soviet Union/Russia, China, Cuba, France, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Libya, Sudan and the UK.[28] Great powers usually have a wide-ranging foreign policy agenda and the resources required to intervene. Proximity to the conflict zone often makes it far easier for neighbouring states to offer support, such as safe havens or training, across the border. In addition, neighbouring states often have a strong interest in the conflict, as they are likely to be more directly affected by its outcome as well as potential spillover effects.

States also need incentives to intervene. While humanitarian reasons can be important, there are often strategic motivations behind decisions to intervene. States might want to weaken an adversary, limit conflict diffusion, increase their regional influence or offer support to a kin group.[29] Recent studies confirm that access to strategic resources seems to be a key influence for many interveners. For instance, the likelihood of intervention increases when the state affected by civil war has large oil reserves and the external state has a high demand for oil.[30] Moreover, if the opposition movement has

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[26] Siverson, R. M. and Starr, H., *The Diffusion of War: A Study of Opportunity and Willingness* (University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, MI, 1991).

[27] Great powers are commonly recognized as having the ability and expertise to exert influence on a global or regional scale. While some states are widely considered to be great powers, there is no agreed list of them.

[28] This is an ordered ranking with the USA being the most frequent intervener during this time period. The ranking is based on the frequency of support actions and the number of different actors supported. It does not take into account the amount of support provided.

[29] Byman, D., *Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism* (Cambridge University Press: New York, 2007); Kathman, J. D., 'Civil war diffusion and regional motivations for intervention', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 55, no. 6 (Dec. 2011), pp. 847–76; and Saideman, S. M., 'Discrimination in international relations: Analyzing external support for ethnic groups', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 39, no. 1 (Jan. 2002), pp. 27–50.

[30] Bove, V., Gleditsch, K. S. and Sekeris, P. G., '"Oil above water": Economic interdependence and third-party intervention', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (Jan. 2015).

access to extractable resources, such as diamonds, it is more likely to attract support from a foreign state.[31]

Many of the former colonial powers also maintain a strong interest in the affairs of their former colonies, thereby increasing the likelihood of intervention in some circumstances (e.g. intervention by France in francophone African states).[32] Certain states host foreign military bases, which can facilitate intervention and reduce the costs involved. In addition, historical ties can contribute to a shared identity between the supported party and the intervener.[33]

While the motivations noted above may form part of the framework for a decision to intervene, the dominant explanation as to why states get involved in the civil wars of other states stresses the importance of interstate rivalries.[34] This means that pairs or groups of states that have a long history of enmity between them tend to back opposing sides to a conflict. This is the central logic behind the notion of 'proxy wars', which is a conflict between two states where neither state directly engages the other. External support to a certain actor can be a low-cost foreign policy tool to weaken a perceived enemy.[35] In essence, external support works as a form of conflict delegation. Empowering others can be used as a substitute for or a complement to the direct use of military force. This enables states to forgo costly military campaigns that would risk the lives of their own citizens.[36]

How does external support affect armed conflict?

External support in a civil war shapes the conflict in various ways. First, armed conflicts with external support tend to last longer, especially when both sides receive outside support.[37] This creates a 'balance of power' in which neither party is capable of successfully bringing the conflict to an end. As resources are plentiful, the parties can frequently rearm and thus they

[31] Findley, M. G. and Marineau, J. F., 'Lootable resources and third-party intervention into civil wars', *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, vol. 32, no. 5 (Nov. 2015), pp. 465–86.

[32] Gregory, S., 'The French military in Africa: Past and present', *African Affairs*, vol. 99, no. 396 (July 2000), pp. 435–48.

[33] For an overview of some of the major external actors in sub-Saharan Africa see Ismail, O. and Sköns, E. (eds), SIPRI, *Security Activities of External Actors in Africa* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2014).

[34] Maoz, Z. and San-Akca, B., 'Rivalry and state support of non-state armed groups (NAGs), 1946–2001', *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 56, no. 4 (Dec. 2012), pp. 720–34; and Salehyan, I., Gleditsch, K. S. and Cunningham, D. E., 'Explaining external support for insurgent groups', *International Organization*, vol. 65, no. 4 (Oct. 2011), pp. 709–44.

[35] Exceptions to this are some of the large-scale military interventions involving military and security personnel that turned out to be very costly in terms of lives as well as financially, such as the US interventions in Viet Nam, Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Russian intervention in Afghanistan.

[36] Salehyan, I., 'The delegation of war to rebel organizations', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 54, no. 3 (June 2010), pp. 493–515.

[37] Aydin and Regan (note 7), pp. 573–97; and Regan (note 7), pp. 55–73.

never reach a mutually hurting stalemate. However, some research indicates that external military support to just one of the conflict actors might increase the likelihood of victory for that particular actor and thus shorten the duration of the conflict. External support to the rebel side generally increases the likelihood of victory while it appears that support to the government side is only effective when the fighting capacity of the rebel forces either matches or exceeds that of the state. External support is thus only useful for governments when the main obstacle to victory is a lack of military capacity.[38]

Second, armed conflicts with external support are less likely to reach a negotiated settlement.[39] External supporters may enter a conflict with completely different agendas from the conflict parties and thus expand the number of disagreements that need to be settled. The challenges associated with achieving a negotiated settlement tend to grow in complexity as the number of actors who have the power to block or stall the process increases. The more actors involved, the more complicated the bargaining environment becomes, as each actor has a stake in the negotiations. In addition, some types of support might serve to increase uncertainty about the parties' capabilities and thus complicate the bargaining process even further. A recent study on conflict termination indicates that conflicts are less likely to end if opposition movements receive highly fungible external support such as money or guns. This leads to greater insecurity that can hinder agreement on a settlement.[40]

Third, armed conflicts with external support are often more deadly.[41] Battle-related deaths generally increase as additional resources are made available to the warring parties. External states might make heavy weaponry accessible to the belligerents that they would not otherwise have access to. This enables the conflict parties to inflict far greater damage. Furthermore, armed conflicts in which the opposition receives external support are commonly more disposed to civilian targeting. Resources provided by external state sponsors can make rebel movements less dependent on their local constituency. Access to external resources may reduce the incentives to win the hearts and minds of civilians since the rebels are likely to be less dependent on the local population for resources that could help sustain the fighting. Thus, the presence of external support to the rebel side of a conflict has the potential to increase the likelihood of civilian targeting and casualties.[42]

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[38] Sullivan, P. L. and Karreth, J., 'The conditional impact of military intervention on internal armed conflict outcomes', *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, vol. 32, no. 3 (July 2015), pp. 269–88.

[39] Cunningham (note 7), pp. 115–27; and Cunningham, D. E., *Barriers to Peace in Civil War* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2011).

[40] Sawyer, K., Cunningham, K. G. and Reed, W., 'The role of external support in civil war termination', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (Sep. 2015).

[41] Lacina (note 7), pp. 276–89; and Rasler (note 13), pp. 421–56.

[42] Salehyan, Siroky and Wood (note 8), pp. 633–61.

Fourth, armed conflicts with external support are more likely to escalate into international conflicts and disputes.[43] When a state becomes involved in a civil war on the rebel side this may heighten tensions between the state supporter and the government of the state affected by civil war, particularly where the supporting state is also a neighbouring state. In such situations, the state affected by civil war may seek to externalize the conflict by directing military force outwards in retaliation against a neighbouring state for supporting opposition movements and/or conducting cross-border counterinsurgency operations within the conflict-affected state's territory. Civil wars can create new sources of interstate tension, and external support to rebel organizations can be both a substitute and a trigger for the direct use of force between states.

Fifth, post-war countries in which the new government received external support during the war tend to have less stable democratization trajectories.[44] Groups that come to control the government after conflict are vulnerable to political attacks on their patriotism and judgment if they assume office with the help of a former interstate enemy. Democratic transitions will normally only be successfully initiated when the side in power after the conflict has a high probability of winning the subsequent election. Rebel groups or governments that allied with external states face the possibility of a post-conflict crisis of legitimacy in the eyes of the public, since they may be viewed as being little more than a puppet state controlled by the external supporter. The process of democratization—which often involves increased transparency, a free press and free and fair elections—is likely to contribute to such tactical alliances becoming publicly known. This may make democracy a less attractive option for groups that have allied with external supporters and provide incentives to hinder a transition to democracy in order to stay in power.

Sixth, some research suggests that external support contributes to the onset of armed conflict.[45] States can provide resources to the parties that are crucial in the beginning of an armed struggle. Such resources may include military training, weapons and safe havens in which initial mobilization can occur. Rebels often receive training in other countries and the presence of such support can increase both the capacity and the resolve of the group. Several case studies suggest that external support contributes to the onset of armed conflict, but there is no conclusive evidence on a global scale. This is

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[43] Gleditsch, Salehyan and Schultz (note 8), pp. 479–506.

[44] Colaresi (note 9), pp. 65–79.

[45] Brown, M. E. (ed.), *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict* (MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1996); and Sambanis, N., 'Using case studies to expand economic models of civil war', *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 2, no. 2 (June 2004), pp. 259–79.

because the available large-scale datasets do not yet include the years leading up to the onset of conflict.[46]

Seventh, external support increases the likelihood of fighting between rebel groups.[47] Groups that receive support from a foreign state have a higher likelihood of engaging in inter-rebel violence. An outside state might consciously offer resources to certain rebel groups in order to outmanoeuvre other groups that are deemed threatening to that state's political aims. In order to understand violence between different groups it might thus be necessary to widen the focus and look at the strategic interests of state supporters.

Limiting the negative impact of external support

The research findings listed above suggest that more consideration needs to be given to limiting the negative impacts of external support in intrastate conflicts. Three avenues for future research appear especially promising. First, although some of the motives for external support are known, relatively little is known about when and why such support is terminated. Given the extensive number of negative consequences associated with external support provision this seems to be one of the most policy-relevant questions on which to focus. Research could explore why some state sponsors choose to withdraw their support while others are more persistent with their backing. While there are some studies on the effect of sanctions and arms embargoes on state sponsors, these only address part of this question.

Second, since previous studies have largely centred on external troop support (military interventions), there is a need to widen the focus to include other forms of support. This seems particularly relevant given that recent studies indicate that different forms of support generate different effects.[48] While the provision of armaments may shape conflict dynamics in certain ways, the impact of military training might be completely different. Until recently, researchers lacked the disaggregated and time-varying data necessary to explore this variation further on a global scale.[49]

Third, there is a need to delve deeper into the motives and characteristics of the states that offer external support. Although some of this information is known, more detail on the decision-making processes would help to clarify several unanswered questions. Why do some groups within a state receive support while others do not? How is a state's decision to intervene influenced by the actions taken by the warring parties, or other states, international organizations and non-state actors? To this end, some scholars

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[46] Two of the most widely used large-scale datasets are the UCDP External Support Data; and Patrick Regan's Intervention Data.
[47] Fjelde and Nilsson (note 9), pp. 604–28.
[48] Sawyer, Cunningham and Reed (note 40).
[49] This information is now available with the UCDP External Support Data (note 46).

have started to adopt actor-centric approaches that, instead of focusing on the characteristics of the civil war, emphasize the agency and motives of the actors involved.[50]

Conclusions

Outside intervention is an important feature of most of the civil wars taking place in the world today. External support and proxy wars are not phenomena limited to the cold war era. Troop support or 'boots on the ground' have become increasingly common in recent years. The data presented in this section indicates that military interventions in the internal conflicts of other states have more than doubled since September 2001. Research findings show that civil wars with external support are generally longer, more deadly and harder to resolve than those without support.

There is a need to move beyond the rigid distinction between intrastate and interstate conflicts. Sometimes these labels conceal more than they clarify. In order to fully grasp the dynamics of conflict it is necessary to acknowledge the importance of outside actors and how they come to shape those dynamics. Only looking at factors within a state limits the scope of research and neglects the crucial importance of the external environment.

Future research should more explicitly recognize how external states exacerbate or alleviate conflict by further disentangling the different goals and motivations of interveners. More attention needs to be paid to the questions of how support is terminated and how different kinds of support generate different effects. What is already known about the effects of external support in civil wars needs to inform policy analyses so that governments and institutions are better able to create policies that limit the negative impact of external support and contribute to successful and long-lasting solutions to armed conflicts.

[50] Findley, M. G. and Teo, T. K., 'Rethinking third-party interventions into civil wars: An actor-centric approach', *Journal of Politics*, vol. 68, no. 4 (Nov. 2006), pp. 828–37.