

CIVIL WARS AND FOREIGN POWERS

**Outside Intervention
in Intrastate Conflict**

Patrick M. Regan



MICHIGAN

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Ann Arbor

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Preface

The genesis of this book is rather odd. I received a phone call one day asking if I would talk to a community group about the conflict in Bosnia and the role of peacekeeping troops in maintaining stability. Because I knew next to nothing about Bosnia or peacekeeping operations, I initially declined the invitation. But as with any such response I hedged, offering to do my best if nobody else could be found more capable than I. As fate would have it I received a follow-up call suggesting that I was the local expert. I reluctantly agreed and began the process of learning what I could in the next week so that I would at least look respectable.

At the time I was working in New Zealand and the country had just been asked to contribute forces to a multinational effort. The local community group wanted to know what was going on in Bosnia, the prospects for a successful outcome, and the likelihood that some of its soldiers would not return alive—all questions for which I was devoid of coherent answers. The talk was organized around a “sing for your supper” format. I would give a talk; there would be a few questions that I could answer, defer, or avoid; and then supper would come, during which pleasantries would be exchanged, and afterward I could go home. Everything was going as planned, the talk went well, the questions were easy, and the food was coming out of the kitchen. Then, oh no, one more question from the back. And from a dentist.

Part of my analysis concluded that the response by the global community was probably not the most effective or efficient strategy that could have been organized, though I never really accounted for why. The question from the back called me to task. The exchange went something like this:

QUESTIONER: Dr. Regan, if the world's response to the Bosnian conflict is all wrong, could you please tell us what a good response would be, specifically what would work?

RESPONSE: Hmmm. Well, as I think about it. . . . Well, some of the policies, are, shall we say, um, ah . . . Well, for a moment let's think about what is trying to be maximized here. If you think in terms of costs and benefits, then what the world needs to do is make it too costly to continue fighting and very lucrative if they stop. . . .

In essence, I was stuck. I hadn't thought through just what would work under what types of conditions, and standing up there I could recall nothing in the literature that suggested strategies with a high probability of success. I waffled on the answer, ate dinner, and the next morning began a thorough literature review. Nothing systematic showed up, and the best that was offered as a way to think about when interventions should be successful relied on a very small sample of a few salient cases. The project had begun. I felt very strongly that as a social scientist I should have been able to answer that man's question, and I was slightly dismayed that as a discipline we had done little to inform the policy community on these types of issues. The key questions were (1) how do civil conflicts end? and (2) what is the role of outside actors in stopping the fighting between groups in conflict? The answer to the second question is of course part of the answer to the first question, a full explanation of which is far beyond what this book tries to address. I set out to attempt to develop an answer to the second question.

Building a conceptual foundation for the project posed some serious problems. My intellectual interests revolved around understanding how outside actors can influence the course of civil conflicts; I also think that this is at the heart of questions posed by the decision-making community. Focusing on the issues faced by the decision makers seemed to be a fruitful avenue to approach the study, and addressing questions in a manner that would appear intuitive to them would be important. First, adopting a decision-oriented frame of reference would allow concrete answers to the types of questions asked by the dentist. We need to know what works and when, and we need to speak in a language that allows for meaningful inferences and coherent policy advice. Second, I have become convinced that the gulf between social scientists and policymakers is much more a function of style and form than substance and/or disdain. So I set out to frame questions in a manner as I expected them to be asked by a decision maker. I tried to conceptually put myself in the meeting when the president, prime minister, or leader of the junta asked for opinions on what would work. My attempt was to develop policy-relevant generalizations from a rigorous social science method.

My mental games of being the "fly on the wall" during the decision-making process continually had me observing the decision maker pounding the desk demanding an estimate of the likelihood that a certain outcome would result. She never wanted to know about the effect of unit changes in an explanatory variable on unit (or percentage) changes in the outcome variable; she demanded information in a metric that was familiar to her. I had to think in terms of probabilistic outcomes, and these generally (though not universally) require dichotomous options—success or failure, right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable. I settled on the notion of success, largely because success plays out over two arenas of importance to the decision maker. First, success or failure refers to the outcome of the policy itself. If it achieves the desired outcome—or some reasonable proximity thereof—then it could be considered successful. But the success or failure of the policy also has political ramifications. Political fortunes may be tied to the outcome of a given foreign policy, where a failed intervention may come with high political costs and from a successful intervention a leader reaps considerable political rewards. Success for these specific types of foreign policies, I determined, could be thought of in terms of stopping the fighting.

Many—probably most—political leaders contemplating interventions have agendas that are considerably more complex than simply stopping the fighting between groups in a civil conflict. These complex goals cover a wide range of political outcomes. But being that little fly on the wall exposed me to the notion that the overriding goal—and the one common thread among the potential range of alternative goals—was to stop the conflict and ensure region stability. An important follow-up question can then focus on just what we buy with an understanding of the role of interventions in stopping conflicts, and how this contributes to our understanding of the potential for other outcomes to result. Stopping the fighting between groups in conflict is not inconsequential by any means; in fact it may be the most commonly sought outcome from interventions. For policymakers this provides a yardstick from which to judge the prospects for achieving other goals. If you have reasonably solid expectations that you can get the sides to hold their fire for a considerable period of time, then you can probably extract trapped expatriates, resettle refugees, negotiate deals to ensure the viability of economic investments, begin to negotiate terms of a settlement, or deliver on a host of other desired outcomes. Stopping the fighting is very often the first step, and the one that the decision-making community needs to know something about.

Scholars and practitioners of conflict resolution have long argued that the management of conflict requires a unique set of circumstances to achieve a resolution. Some have argued that a precipice or a plateau is necessary, that a conflict needs to be ripe, or that there are phases and certain policies have to be coordinated with the particular phase of the conflict. This work contributes to much of the fine lit-

erature in this field, a considerable part of which also generates a wider audience within the policy community. The precipice or plateau, the ripe conditions, or the right phase may all be tied to the cessation of hostilities. If we know what helps to end the violent phases of civil conflicts, then we can begin to push further and explore the prospects for resolution once we have halted the combat. So there are strong theoretical implications to go along with the policy orientation.

Contemporary examples of where this intervention logic may apply are legion, unfortunately. Nigeria recently intervened to stop the internal strife in Sierra Leone; a collection of European and North American countries considered intervening in the civil war that swept Mr. Mobutu from power in Zaire; the United States intervened in Somalia, Haiti, and Panama in recent years; and a group of countries under the NATO umbrella intervened to stop the fighting in the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. And more recently a number of NATO countries chose to militarily intervene in Kosovo. Much of the public debate about this intervention revolved around whether it could stop the fighting between the Serbs and Albanians. On the other hand, nobody intervened in the cataclysmic slaughter in Rwandan during the early part of 1994 until the French finally mustered the will to send in troops at the final stages of the conflict, and there has not been any observable outside interventions into the Algerian conflict that has taken tens of thousands of lives. Furthermore, the number of interventions that have been successful at stopping the fighting is rather low, while a cursory reading of history might suggest that most have not been terribly effective at achieving a range of alternative goals—unless of course you consider the intervention a goal in itself. Part of the problem, I argue in the chapters to follow, is that decision makers have only a meager grasp of just what will work under a given set of conditions. If they indeed are trying to take steps toward managing conflicts in the global village, then they seem to be operating on a fairly ad hoc basis. The social science community can help on this score, and this is but one attempt. I personally would not advocate making policy *solely* on the basis of the results presented in this research, but I would factor these results into any deliberations over whether and how to intervene.

Many unanswered questions arise out of this work, and I would hope that most become the subject of future research—both by me and others. Understanding how to calibrate the “carrot and the stick” would be useful information, how to effectively time an intervention, whether to intervene gradually or to descend in one swoop, and the effect of short-term management on long-term resolution are all important questions calling for answers. Unfortunately, any one volume cannot do justice to an entire topic. I hope others take up the challenge.

As with any project such as this, I have incurred debts, at least debts of gratitude. There is a dentist in Christchurch, New Zealand, to whom I owe a beer. Allan Starn, Patrick James, Herb Tillema, Gilbert Loushcer, Roy Licklider, Jacob

Bercovitch, Siddhartha Chib, and Robert Johansen have all commented on various portions of the work. Marc Howard Ross not only read part of the manuscript, he also gave me some good advice, advice for which I think he owes me a beer. He challenged me to make the book accessible and pointed me toward an approach for doing so. I hope I was at least marginally successful, and if so, the shape of the book looks different because of him. The cost, however, was an increased workload, an altered project, and a slightly more difficult life. All of that is worth the beer that he owes me. Will Moore read the manuscript at least twice, and his extensive comments have forced me back to the manuscript more times than he can imagine. His insightful comments have helped me reshape my arguments, clarify my discussions, and more clearly focus my analysis. When Marc Ross gives me that beer, I'll have to turn it over to Will.

There are institutional thanks to be distributed. The Department of Political Science at Penn State University interviewed me for a job, at which my job talk consisted of an early version of chapter 3. As it turns out, it was a much too early version. Probably half of the audience picked up a flaw that went unnoticed by me. I have since corrected the erroneous procedures, and I acknowledge their collective attention. They also did not offer me the job. Much of the research was carried out with funding from the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. The university provided not only a good environment but also funding for research assistants and a six-month sabbatical leave. I spent my leave as a guest of the Joan Kroc Institute for Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, which provided a healthy climate and enough resources to make my time productive. I was able to finish much of the central part of the book while in residence at the Peace Institute. Each of these institutions deserves my warm thanks.

In the end I hope that at least two things happen as a result of this work. First, that we begin to expand the boundaries of research into the causes and correlates of conflict and conflict resolution, paying as much systematic attention to how we stop conflicts as we do to how they start. And, second, that this helps to build one little piece of the bridge that can span the gulf between that part of the academic community that applies quantitative techniques to develop an understanding of the conditions for conflict and its resolution, and the policy-making community trying to formulate strategies and alternatives, all while flying somewhat by the seat of their pants. Alexander George was correct in suggesting that there was space that needed to be bridged, but it is more like a gulf than the "gap" to which he alludes.

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Unilateral Interventions and the Settlement of Conflicts

In 1967 the United States sent military transport planes to Zaire to help ferry Zairean troops to the front lines to put down an antigovernment insurrection. A reading of government documents from that period suggests that U.S. decision makers were uncertain about the appropriate actions and the particular strategy that might work if they chose to intervene (U.S. Department of State 1994). McGeorge Bundy likewise is attributed with assigning an estimate of the likely success of a U.S. intervention into the Vietnam conflict at somewhere between 25 percent and 75 percent. With some regularity decision makers around the globe are contemplating an intervention into a civil conflict. Their motives for intervening are varied, as are most historical interpretations of the outcomes of these interventions. A common thread across most such decisions is the lack of understanding about the conditions for successful interventions into civil conflicts. This book aims to reduce the uncertainty faced by decision makers contemplating an intervention by increasing our understanding of the types of interventions that work best under a given set of conditions.

The settlement of civil conflicts can be a function of each side's ability to manipulate the costs of continued combat. Outside interventions—either military or economic—provide one mechanism for the manipulation of both the costs of continued conflict and the benefits of achieving a settlement. One way to think about this is that if one side can increase the costs to an opponent from continued fighting, they at the same time increase their opponent's incentives to settle the conflict (Pillar 1983). Third parties can and do contribute to this manipulation of the costs and benefits, but there is little systematic knowledge describing the most effective way to do so. Framing the logic from the perspective of the decision maker deliberating over a prospective intervention and using evidence compiled from all civil conflicts in the period from 1945 to 1994, I will demonstrate that there

are systematic patterns between intervention strategies and outcomes. The results of the analysis will increase our theoretical understanding of the role of outside actors in internal conflicts, as well as point to policy-relevant prescriptions.

My argument works from the premise that stopping the fighting between combatants is the main goal of third-party interventions, and although not a goal subscribed to by all intervenors, it appears to be a common objective in the history of international interventions. Identifying the conditions that lead to such an outcome has a range of potential benefits. First and foremost, identifying the strategies for intervening that have a high probability of stopping the fighting serves as a useful yardstick from which to evaluate policies. Second, much of the literature on conflict resolution asserts that military stalemates or an impending victory makes the conditions ripe for diplomatic efforts. A first step to diplomacy, however, may be the cessation of hostilities. And finally, if we develop an understanding of how to stop the fighting in internal conflicts, we open up avenues for research into the steps that can be taken to push beyond the mere settlement of conflicts toward their long-term resolution. In short, we can ask what a short-term respite in the fighting buys us in terms of long-term resolution, the equitable distribution of political and economic resources, and global or regional stability.

Of critical importance to the policy community is an answer to the questions of “when to intervene” and “under what conditions will which type of intervention strategy be most successful.” If policymakers are going to commit the resources of their country in some distant land, they have an abiding interest in picking the right conflict and the correct strategy for intervening. The use of systematic, comprehensive, and rigorous analysis should inform policymakers grappling with the dicey questions of when, where, and how. Currently we lack coherent explanations that can account for the conditions conducive to interventions and the strategies likely to be successful. Without such explanations future policy is likely to remain *ad hoc*.

This book does not discuss issues of whether intervening is an ethical alternative open to members of the world community; others have addressed those issues much more cogently than I could (e.g., Damrosch and Scheffer 1991; Reed and Kaysen 1993). For example, there is considerable debate about the moral implications of outside interventions in internal conflicts and the conditions under which the goals of the intervenor meet such moral criteria. I take this as a completely separate line of inquiry and proceed from the premise that once the ethical concerns have been addressed practical considerations about what works, when, where, and how come to the fore. These two considerations are, of course, related. By almost any normative standard, interventions that exacerbate an existing conflict are bad for the intervenee, the intervenor, and the global community. Even an intervention undertaken with the most humane of intentions can create

a rapidly deteriorating situation when the policy is either ill-conceived or poorly implemented. The U.S.-directed intervention in Somalia is a case in point. The intervention was initially designed to keep the warring clans at bay long enough to avert the famine taking root in the countryside. As the Somalian clans became more emboldened the U.S. forces became more hostile, leading eventually to the complete withdrawal of outside forces under somewhat incriminating circumstances. If this work has a contribution to make, it will be in increasing the likelihood that interventionary policies adopted by members of the global village will be successful at stopping the fighting between internal opposition groups. Hopefully the conditions for success will converge with the conditions that make interventions ethically acceptable and contribute to efforts to achieve a long-term solution to the conflict.

One might ask why this issue is so important to the foreign policy community, or more generally to the body politic. The United States, for instance, has undertaken a number of recent efforts to intervene in ongoing intrastate conflicts; some of those attempts are quite visible to the American public, some are seemingly quite effective, and for others the jury is still out. Both the public and the political leadership want desperately to avoid the debacles, such as in Somalia, while the leadership, at least, strives to minimize the political costs of intervening. If internal conflicts pose a threat to the wider community—not to mention imposing immense burdens on the health and well-being of civilian populations—then the world at large has an interest in the resolution of these conflicts. Outside interventions happen to be one mechanism available with which to contribute to the resolution process. When acting intelligently, the world community has a role to play in trying to stop the fighting in civil conflicts. The conflict in Bosnia makes this clear.

At the time this book was begun, the United States was debating the merits of sending in a military force to act as peacekeepers in the Bosnian conflict. Other interventions—Britain's and France's the most prominent—under the auspices of the United Nations had not proven very effective, nor had either the economic sanctions placed on Serbia and Bosnia, or the U.S. airdrops of food and medical supplies to the "protected enclaves." Given the brief history of the current phase of the conflict—the rape, plunder, pillage, and mass murder carried out by the warring sides—and the long-running historical enmity between the Serbs (largely Orthodox Christian), Croats (largely Catholics), and the Muslims, one must wonder whether outside actors can bring a halt to the carnage. Reflecting the American public's concern with bearing the human costs, the Congress resisted pressures to support the administration. What were the chances that outside actors could play an effective role in this conflict? Is a "big stick" the best way to intervene, or should a "big carrot" be offered instead—or in conjunction with the "stick"? Are these types of conflicts resolvable through outside interventions, or

will they reach quicker, more-lasting resolutions without third parties taking an active role? As the book neared completion the jury was still out in Bosnia. The United States, along with other countries, sent in 20,000 troops, and the global community pledged hundreds of millions of dollars in redevelopment assistance. By early 1998 the fighting remained largely in abeyance, and efforts were being made to resolve the conflict. Time will tell whether the respite from the fighting can be translated into long-standing peaceful coexistence, if not cooperation. As this book now goes to press the military intervention in Kosovo has just ended and discussions about whether or not to intervene in East Timor have begun. The outcome of the Kosovo intervention is still not clear. And the anticipated effect of economic sanctions or a military force in East Timor are uncertain.

Whether or not the characteristics of the conflict or the strategy for intervening is in any way related to the outcome of the policy is the crux of the issue under scrutiny here. This book proposes that interventions should best be thought of in terms of decisions to intervene, for which the subsequent success or failure is a function of the context of the conflict and the strategy adopted by the intervenor. When the expectations are such that the rewards are slight and the costs prohibitive, then we should not expect to see many interventions. And as I will discuss shortly, the decision to intervene is laden with political costs that go far beyond the resources expended. The structure of a particular cost function for a decision to intervene will help determine if an interventionary policy will be adopted, and if so, what the strategy for intervening will look like.

Making the Decision to Intervene

Why states decide to unilaterally intervene in civil conflicts remains an elusive question. Although most would agree that a set of conditions compels interventions—or at least makes them increasingly likely—what those conditions are is a matter of debate. Some scholars see international politics and the superpower rivalry as the main explanation for interventions (Bull 1984; Feste 1992; Morgenthau 1967); others look for explanations rooted in domestic and organizational politics (Yarmolinsky 1968), cultural affinities between the people in the target and intervening countries (Carment and James 1995a; Davis and Moore 1997), or the moral commitments of an intervening state (Blechman 1995).

The question of whether it is international or domestic politics that drives the decision to intervene is, as I see it, somewhat diversionary. Surely the decision involves many factors, encompassing a range of domestic and international considerations. But more important, interventions are undertaken when there is a reasonable expectation that the goals are achievable given the strategy for intervening and the conditions of the conflict. Rarely would one expect political leaders to

choose to intervene under circumstances where they expected the intervention to fail. An intervention may be unsuccessful for domestic or international reasons, just as it may be undertaken for either reason.

If we accept the notion that decision making forms the basis for understanding interventions into intrastate conflicts, and that structural characteristics and attributes of the conflict contribute to the decisional calculus, then decision-theoretic approaches can be particularly useful in formulating hypotheses about when and if we might expect interventions, at least those undertaken unilaterally. Decision-theoretic analyses rely on the notion that the costs and benefits of alternatives and outcomes are evaluated, that they are judged in relation to expectations that a given alternative will achieve the desired outcome, and that the decision rule dictates that the strategy with the highest expected net benefit will be adopted (Bueno de Mesquita 1985). Although at times these assumptions might strain intuitive conceptions of decision making within the context of civil conflicts, they can offer a benchmark from which to judge empirical results. My use of a rational choice framework is not designed to allow me to present a formalized mathematical depiction of the decision process from which an equilibrium outcome can be deduced, but rather to set up a conceptual blueprint that will allow us to think coherently about the decision process and the inputs that shape the outcomes. To some degree this sets up the conceptual straw person who makes decisions based on certain well-defined criteria. The results of the analysis can be judged relative to the efficacy of our hypothetical decision maker. Inferences can then be drawn intelligently and accordingly.

Decision makers contemplating interventions must ask three basic questions: (1) how likely is it that the intervention will alter the course of the conflict? (2) will there be support from their international and domestic constituencies? and (3) what strategy for intervention is best suited to the particular conflict? Answers to these questions will determine if, when, and how a leader will choose to intervene. I posit at the outset that interventions will take place when (a) there is a reasonable expectation for success, (b) the projected time horizon for achieving the outcome is short, and (c) domestic opposition is minimal (see Blechman 1995; Daalder 1996). One of the main problems decision makers face is that they simply have little *ex ante* knowledge about the most successful strategies for intervening. In effect, answers to questions 1 and 2 are incomplete and ad hoc, leading to considerable uncertainty regarding the evaluation of point a. The chapters to follow outline the theoretical logic that guides the decision process and then use data on 138 intrastate conflicts in the post-World War II era to test ideas about the conditions under which states intervene, and the conditions under which those interventions are likely to be successful.

The data for this analysis will be culled only from *intrastate*, or civil, conflicts. This is a departure in many ways from the broader body of research into the causes

or correlates of third-party interventions in that it excludes cases of *interstate* conflict. It is a quite common occurrence for one state to intervene in an ongoing conflict between two sovereign countries, or between a sovereign country and an irredentist group across an international border (see Pearson and Baumann 1993; Tillema 1989). Interventionary behavior, furthermore, is often taken to form the basis for understanding the expansion or diffusion of war, and to some extent the willingness to intervene in an international conflict is implicit in alliance membership (Levy 1981; Siverson and King 1979; Siverson and Starr 1991; Smith 1996). The emphasis here, however, is on strictly internal conflicts, those that originate within the borders of a country and largely remain isolated as such. The reasons for this are fairly straightforward: (1) there is to date very little systematic work on third-party interventions into intrastate conflicts, (2) these types of conflicts appear to be increasing in number and geographic diversity, and (3) the decision to intervene seems to pose particularly thorny issues for the political leadership. International law—if not norms—proscribes interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states, except under a narrow range of circumstances, so interventions are almost always shrouded in some form of official rationale or normative justifications. The relative paucity of systematic research into interventions in civil conflicts can be tied largely to the overarching emphasis on and threat of international conflict. With the end of the cold war, ideas about threats to security and international stability have shifted somewhat, and civil conflicts are much more central to foreign policy making communities.

Conceptual Issues and Definitions

Forms of Intervention

Third-party interventions can take on many forms. The focus of this work is on two specific instruments of interventions that are used with some regularity: military and economic. This emphasis comes at the exclusion of diplomatic instruments that can be brought to bear on conflicting parties, such as the use of good offices, mediation, arbitration, and international forums. Conceptual differences exist that warrant the exclusion of diplomacy—at least at this juncture—and a brief word seems in order. Diplomatic interventions generally have lower costs than more-intrusive forms of interventions, they pose lower levels of risk, and the decisional calculus required to commit to a diplomatic intervention is different from that required when military or economic instruments are considered. Diplomatic interventions are generally targeted at solidifying the status quo, whereas other forms of intervention often attempt to alter the status quo on the ground. U.S.

deliberations over policies toward the Bosnian civil war reflect this difference between diplomatic and other forms of intervention. For example, the United States organized a forum for the warring parties of the former Yugoslavia to attempt to reach a peace accord, with the United States playing an active role in brokering an acceptable outcome. In this effort there was little political risk from failure, though much to be gained from a successful outcome. Under such circumstances, if it was successful, a major foreign policy achievement would be proclaimed; if the forum broke up without a resolution, it would have been portrayed as a noble attempt in spite of the recalcitrance of the implacable participants. In any event the public did not debate the merits or costs of hosting the peace negotiations. At the same time, however, the U.S. Congress seriously debated the prospects of sending 20,000 U.S. troops to Bosnia in an attempt to enforce any peace agreement reached at the bargaining table. Needless to say, some of the characteristics of a conflict associated with successful military and/or economic interventions are probably similar to those associated with success at the diplomatic table, though this will remain an empirical question to be addressed through further research.

The three questions and criteria mentioned earlier are not as central to the decision to engage in diplomatic efforts, largely because the decision maker incurs lower costs and can walk away from unsuccessful efforts without being unduly scarred by the process. Military or economic interventions pose an entirely different problem, primarily because they are an attempt to change the balance of power within the civil conflict itself (Freedman 1994, 9). By interjecting military equipment or troops in support of one side in the conflict, the relative capabilities of the combatants are altered—this is generally the intention of the intervenor. Economic instruments—either sanctions or rewards—can serve a similar purpose. Witness the military sanctions against the Bosnian government throughout 1993 to 1995, and the economic sanctions placed on Serbia in an effort to curtail their support of the Bosnian Serb forces. U.S. policy in Iraq, under the auspices of the United Nations (UN), are another clear example of an intervention shifting the balance of capabilities between combatants. The Kurdish opposition groups are able to organize largely because of the “no fly zones” imposed on Iraq. The cruise missile attack by the United States in 1996, and the widening of the no fly zone, in response to Iraqi attempts to move into Kurdish regions drastically constrains Iraq’s ability to prosecute the struggle against the Kurds. Implicit in any effort to alter the balance of power between combatants is the notion that by creating an equality of capabilities (or a disparity) the supported side has the ability to either fight to a stalemate or compel the other side to acquiesce.

Any type of intervention comes with risks, costs, and potential benefits to the political leadership in the intervening country. The tangible costs are generally a

function of the human and material resources expended in pursuit of the foreign policy goal, but these costs translate into political costs as a function of the success or failure of the policy. It is these political costs that are most salient to the policy community, and they are a product of (1) the interest of a domestic constituency in a particular conflict and (2) the outcome of an intervention.

For instance, Carment et al. (1997) argue that a strong ethnic affinity between the people in the warring country and those in a potential intervening country is a necessary condition for intervention. This suggests that there are not only costs to intervening but also costs to *not* intervening under some circumstances. On the other hand, the evening news showing pictures of the bodies of soldiers being dragged through the streets makes the policy look like a failure and incurs a large cost in terms of public support. Somalia in 1994 epitomized this situation, and it was shortly thereafter that the United States withdrew its forces. Not all intervening countries, however, are subject to the political scrutiny so prevalent in liberal democratic states, though to some extent all political leaders face questions of legitimacy based on the character of their domestic and international policies.¹ According to Carment and James (1995a; Carment et al. 1997), the institutional framework within which decisions are made can also influence the costs of intervening, with low institutional constraints and high ethnic affinities leading to greater pressures to intervene. The key to minimizing the costs to the political leadership is to advance a policy that (1) has a high probability of success, (2) adopts the appropriate instruments for the task at hand, and (3) requires a minimum of exposure to both opposing forces and domestic pressure. Adopting a policy with regard to the civil conflict that has a high probability of being “successful” minimizes the political costs to the leadership. Conversely, in some instances the policy choice that affords the greatest expected net benefit is to not intervene.

Knowing when to select alternatives other than intervention may be just as important to the decision maker as it is to know how to intervene successfully once the decision to intervene has been made. Since unsuccessful policies will generally incur greater political costs than successful ones, the basis for forming expectations is crucial. According to Neustadt and May (1986), generalizations made from history should play a central role in current deliberations, but although analogies to “most similar cases” can form a useful guide, history points to the need for a more systematic foundation for drawing expectations. Regardless of the form of the evidence we use to draw inferences about behavior, clear conceptual and operational definitions are required.

¹ The former Soviet Union, for example, came under increasing pressure from the general public as the conflict in Afghanistan waged on. Peace groups formed, composed of mothers of soldiers, former soldiers, and members of the sympathetic public. One of President Gorbachev's first substantial foreign policy initiatives was to pull the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan.