“Re-examining the Military Victory as a Strategy for Identity-Based Civil War Termination”

Final Draft: December 10, 2002

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Introduction

The twentieth century saw the world order undergo more major changes in one hundred years than it did in any other period of history. Now, with only a decade having passed since the end of the Cold War era, and the potential of globalization remaining an as-yet fledgling concept, it is hard to say what will come to characterize the ascending age. One major challenge to the shape of the world stage that is certain, however, is the rise of intrastate war. Regardless of the extent to which civil war may affect the security of the international community at large, the spread of intercommunal violence presents unique threats to human security that are not easily ignored. Unlike in international war, the brunt of the civil conflict is borne by a single population that, however divided, must in all likelihood return to living side by side once the war ends. This logistic alone can help to explain why intrastate hostilities have proven themselves so difficult to durably resolve. So what can be done about them? In general, there are two ways that wars end—decisive military victory by one of the warring parties, or by way of a negotiated settlement agreed upon by all. When neither of these can be definitively reached, war persists. Recent studies in civil war literature (Licklider 1995, Walter 2002) tell us that civil conflicts based on identity issues, in particular, are resistant to successful negotiation. In these cases, then, strategic common sense supports saving lives by ending these wars as swiftly as possible through the military victory.

The undertaking of this paper is to take a closer look at the terminations of identity-based civil wars. Specifically, I will analyze the post-war environment of these types of conflicts that end in a decisive military fashion, paying particular attention to the recurrence of violence. A great deal of past literature on civil war terminations infers success by the absence of a return to war—a rigid definition that allows important consequences to be overlooked. Based on the inadequacy of the literature’s attention to the aftermath of military outcomes to identity-based civil wars, I argue that decisive victories are not as viable resolutions as the literature suggests. Although scholars acknowledge the risks of the winner-takes-all solution, they give an overblown impression of its success by focusing on the failures of negotiated settlements. Studies interested in evaluating the most effective methods of ending civil wars must pay proper attention to the shortcomings of all prospective resolutions.

In next sections of this paper I will review historical factors and theoretical literature on civil war terminations, focusing on identity-based wars. Although the “identity” label may mean different things for different scholars, as discussed by Sambanis (2001), for the purposes of this paper I take it to mean civil wars where combatants are divided along ethnic, religious, racial, or linguistic lines, and where the salience of these differences are the driving cause for the conflict, rather than ideological or economic issues. Following that, I will draw from multiple sources of data to study patterns of post-war violence and instability, especially those ignored by conventional analyses. In the fifth section of the
paper I will focus on external intervention into identity-based civil wars, especially given the questionability of promoting decisive victories over negotiated settlements. Lastly, using Kosovo and Rwanda as case studies, I will demonstrate the dangers of one-sided victories in ethnic civil wars, even where they put an end to war-level fighting. In addition, because of the level of controversy surrounding the role of international actors in both these cases, they make practical selections for evaluating the relative merits or failings of intervention strategies. I conclude with suggestions for the direction of future research.

**Historical Background**

Civil war is not a recent phenomenon, but it is a prominent obstacle to the peace and security of today’s world. Although James Fearon and David Laitin (2002) contradict the belief that end of the Cold War caused an upsurge in civil wars, they do track a steady increase spanning back to the end of World War II in their paper “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War.” Taking into account the growth in the number of states during this period, they find an alarming trend whereby the number of new intrastate conflicts arising per year outpaces the number of these wars annually coming to an end. Concurrent with this finding is the recognition that civil wars are expanding in duration, from an average two-year span in 1947 to 15 years in 1999. Although the slope has taken a downturn since its peak in 1994, the number of ongoing civil wars and the percentage of countries experiencing civil war remain drastically higher than they were fifty-seven years ago.

To account for this pattern, Fearon and Laitin argue that more and more wars are taking shape around issues of identity, a cause for mobilization that is much more difficult to relieve than political or economic concerns. Their argument is substantiated by data showing that the number of wars classified as ‘ethnic’ has surpassed all other types for the past twenty years (CIDCM 2002). While not all ethnic conflicts escalate to war, those that do often prove the biggest challenge to peacemakers.

The history of civil war termination has also undergone recent changes. Although the rise in enduring intrastate war speaks against the success of termination by any means, the increased role of international intervention is an important factor. During the Cold War, unilateral action (most often by the United States or the Soviet Union) was the primary form of intervention, and three-quarters of unilateral involvement in civil wars led to military victory (Wantchekon 1999). Since 1990, however, there has been a dramatic surge in the number of United Nations peacekeeping missions to countries divided by civil war (Regan 2000: 102). While the nature of UN missions can range from solely humanitarian to actual arbitration, their increase implies a shift toward neutrality when working toward peace, and a rise in negotiation attempts.
Theoretical overview

Studies of civil war have generally been subdivided into those attempting to explain the origins of war, those trying to understand that patterns of existing war, and those striving to find effective ways to end war. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on the termination literature. As described by Barbara Walter (2002), the intractability of a civil war is usually attributed to the establishment of some sort of balance, like a military stalemate. Thus, the route to ending war becomes upsetting that balance, either by tipping favor toward one side, or by exploiting the fatigue of both sides to encourage cooperation toward a peaceful end. Either of these options becomes the role of an outside intervener. Scholars like Walter focus on the role third parties play in mediation and arbitration, theorizing that negotiations fail when third-party security guarantees are not credibly enforced. Other schools of thought highlight the importance of the third-party as a military or economic player (Regan 2000). Following through with this idea that external forces are key, the dilemma is which type of settlement interveners should strive for—encouraging the parties to negotiate, or breaking the stalemate by reinforcing one side for victory. And although scholars acknowledge the risks of military victory, the seeming futility of the diplomatic route does not appear to offer an encouraging alternative.

According to Roy Licklider (1995) in “The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars, 1945-1993,” although identity wars are no more or less likely to end in military victory than non-identity wars, only one third of negotiated settlements in identity wars survived past five years. Identity-wars are said to be more fragile because even if a settlement can be reached, it requires much more time and effort to diffuse a divided population’s attachment to ethnic, religious, or racial beliefs than to mitigate incendiary ideological attitudes. According to Chiam Kaufmann (1996), this exacerbates a unique security dilemma because “While ideological wars may also produce intense security dilemmas for faction leaders who can expect to be treated as criminals if their side loses, most ordinary citizens do not face a severe security dilemma because the winning side will accept their allegiance.” This is not the case in identity-based wars, and thus the risks of demobilization are much greater for the population at large.

Given the different role that third party intervention can play in resolving civil wars, civil war literature also delves into the importance of the nature of intervention—not just whether it is negotiation-driven, and therefore usually more neutral, or more victory-driven (biased), but whether it is unilateral or multilateral. More often than not, bias correlates with unilateral action while multilateral action tends toward impartiality. Many scholars (Doyle and

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Sambanis 2000, Wantchekon 1999, Regan 2000) support efforts by international organizations such as the United Nations, saying that the level of multinational consensus and lack of personal policy interest grants it more credibility than efforts by single state actors. On the other hand, critics of present multilateral efforts (Roberts 1996, Downs and Stedman 2002) and proponents of biased or unilateral, intervention (Betts 1996, Carment and Rowlands 1998) call bodies like the United Nations weak because its member states often cannot agree on the level of action to take, and its mandates may prevent it from exercising the type of intervention that may be required to put a stop to the violence.

Methodology

My challenge to current literature on the negotiated settlement versus the military victory is largely methodological. Of course, any data on civil wars is plagued with problems such as selection bias, lack of access, spurious correlations, the withholding of truthful accounts, and arbitrary measurements and labels. Mindful of these restrictions, one criticism is that the literature persists in utilizing data that is out-of-date. A widely used source, Singer and Small’s Correlates of War (COW) project does not even extend past the end of the Cold War. Similarly, Licklider’s key study stops at 1993 and Barbara Walters’s at 1994. All of these datasets, while historically important to the scholarship, exclude the major conflicts that have characterized the past decade, including Rwanda, Chechnya, and the former Yugoslavia. While scholars cannot be expected to continuously update and reevaluate their arguments as the passage of time dictates, conclusions drawn on obsolete studies should be subject to more constant questioning.

Another limitation of the methodology of the literature I have cited is its adherence to certain strict definitions. Convention holds that a civil war is a conflict within the borders of a state where one actor is the state itself, at least one other actor is challenging the state, and where there are at least one thousand battle-related deaths per year (Singer and Small 1982). This definition, however, excludes any instances of lower-level violence, and also may mire the coding of violence that is not visibly battle-related or not committed by a clearly defined combatant group, all of which can give a false impression of the peace of a country, especially following a war’s end. Identity-based wars are especially susceptible to these types of violence.

Similarly, the commonly used threshold for the success of a settlement is whether or not war recurs within five years. Although it is generally held that war recurrence is more likely immediately following a settlement than as time passes, this definition allows resolutions to be coded as successful when this may not be the case. According to this coding, renewed fighting after five years is labeled a new conflict, even if the parties and the underlying issues are the same. Equally, violence may have been continuous between these two wars, but did not reach
figures above one thousand deaths during that period. The assessment of intervention efforts as successes or failures proves quite subjective throughout the literature. Regan (2000), for instance, conducts his studies under the assumption that the goal of interveners is strictly to bring a cessation to the fighting. I am more inclined toward Downs and Stedman’s requirement that that the war end “on a self-enforcing basis so that the implementers can go home without fear of the war rekindling” (Downs and Stedman 2002: 50), although they warn against speculative judgment of trying to compare the results of an intervention against what might have happened had no intervention occurred.

For my own statistics I have chosen to use datasets with more recent case lists and lower thresholds. My principle source, the Uppsala University/PRIO project entitled “Armed Conflict 1946–2001,” records cases of intrastate violence with as few as twenty-five annual deaths. Like the former studies, however, its organizational requisites also exclude deaths that are not the direct result of combat. To supplement, I also refer to the Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM) project.

The Consequences of the Military Victory

According to Licklider’s data (1995), which is based on the COW study, not a single political or economic civil war broke out again after it had reached a resolution, either military or negotiated. In contrast, two-thirds of identity civil wars resumed after a negotiated settlement. For cases of identity wars that ended in military victory, one-fifth saw a recurrence. Yet according to the Uppsala and CIDCM datasets, half of those cases where Licklider reported no war following military victory did not report peace. Although violence may not have reached war-levels, low or medium-grade violence persisted in Burundi, Indonesia, Iran, Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, Zaire/Congo/DRC, and Palestine following the respective ends to their wars. In many cases, too, where later wars are coded by Licklider as “new” due to the passage of more than five years or a change in the composition of the warring parties, such as in Iraq, Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda, the underlying ethnic or religious hostilities remained the same as in the previous war, indicating that the tensions precipitating the escalation of violence had not been resolved.

Low-grade violence, however, is not the only oft-disregarded potential consequence of military victory. As Licklider readily acknowledges, a worrisome risk of victory is the occurrence of post-war genocide and or politicide. According to his data, while reports of genocide never followed negotiated settlement, they did follow seven percent of non-identity wars and nineteen percent of identity wars. Although nineteen percent is far from a majority, due to the chronological limits of Licklider’s genocide data (or rather his citations of Barbara Harff’s), his findings do not even include the key atrocities in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. Although future research may be able to determine
the conditions under which genocide is likely to occur, it is still a very alarming prospect that must be taken into account when gauging the effectiveness of a military victory.

Another probable outcome of military victory in identity-based civil wars is a refugee crisis. Although refugee flows can be a result of populations simply escaping the war during its duration, the victory of one side can deter refugees of the defeated identity from returning. In addition, members of the defeated identity group may choose to leave the country after the war’s end for fear of persecution, or may be forcefully displaced by the victorious party. Refugee flows and internally displaced populations are both severe humanitarian concerns for post-war peacebuilding. Although the conventional logic of success maintains that peace has been achieved if the overpowered side is too crippled to resume fighting, unrest will persist among the devastated. The effects of refugee flows can also be disastrous to the region as diasporas grow in neighboring countries, spreading instability beyond the borders of the warring state. According to the World Refugee Survey, the total number of refugees and internally displaced persons in 2001 stemming from the countries that Licklider coded as having successful military victories as of 1993 was well into the millions. While I am not suggesting that the presence of a refugee crisis is strictly a result of an oppressive one-sided victory, for refugee flows can also be comprised of those fleeing the poor economic circumstances often created by war, it nonetheless demonstrates that states where refugee crises are present are far from finding a stable peace.

Yet another frequent sacrifice of the military victory is durable democratization. Victors who have successfully crushed the opposing ethnic, religious, or racial group naturally have little incentive to include that division of the population in the governance of the post-war state. In the event that the minority identity wins the victory, elections will still be discouraged if they will hand power back to the majority. One would imagine that an outside intervener could serve as an enforcer of a post-war democratic regime, but Leonard Wantchekon (1999) finds in his paper “Multilateral Intervention Facilitates Post Civil War Democratization” that biased unilateral military action is actually negatively correlated with an increase in democracy. And in fact, according to the Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM), eight of the nineteen states in which Licklider reported no recurrence of war after a military victory experienced an adverse regime change, defined as “major and abrupt shifts away from more open, electoral systems to more closed, authoritarian systems.” It is unclear how many post-victory states reported no change in its regime-type. The data Wantchekon uses, both the COW and Licklider’s, limits his study to intervention where the actor commits at least one thousand troops, when there are many other ways to encourage a victory, such as supplying arms. Nonetheless, where unilateral actors pursuing their own agendas can be persuaded by the warring party to ‘turn the other cheek,’ or where limited resources prevent the unilateral actor from seeing the post-war transition through, legitimate democratization is not likely to be a result of the military victory.
So what is it about identity-based wars in particular that makes the military end as risky as the negotiated one, and therefore unable to be considered a more secure alternative? Primarily, the civilian susceptibility to violence that is so much more prevalent in civil wars than in interstate wars is particularly true in identity conflicts. This is due to the fact that polarization in identity-wars is more widespread—civilians are likely to feel very strongly about the irresolvability of identity issues and be more willing to actively take a side because of mobilization efforts by elites to harden those identities. In other types of wars where resources play a primary role, such as in Colombia, the control of mobile sources of capital like cocaine renders popular support relatively inconsequential to the ability to successfully fight one’s cause. The leadership of warring parties in wars where identity is the primary motivation to fight, however, must rely on the backing of the population to give strength and legitimacy to their struggle (Lake and Rothchild 1996).

When the war ends, the risks for civilians in post-victory environments of identity-based wars are higher than in post-settlement environments because the recurrence of war after a failed negotiated settlement refers to the reengagement of the combatant groups, rather than repercussions specifically directed at the regular population. As Kaufmann (1996) and Byman (2002) point out, ethnic identities, particularly when they have been hardened by war, are not readily converted or shed, especially in the eyes of the enemy. Because the loyalties toward one’s own identity group and the fears and perceptions of the enemy identity that fueled the war are not diffused when one side wins, the victorious side is unlikely to accept the defeated, and the risks cited above (non-war violence, genocide, population displacement) are especially probable. Also, as ethnicity, race, and religion are more visibly perceivable than ideology, it is easier aim remaining hostilities at identifiable civilian targets. It is highly unlikely that any of these risks would be assuaged without some kind of external guarantor of security.

**Implications for Intervention**

If, as I have argued, military victory may not be the more stable alternative to negotiated settlements that it seems to be, and if the third-party actor plays critical role in fostering peace through either strategy, the implications thereof call into question intervention aimed at ending the war through decisive military means. To intervene on behalf of a victory means to intervene in support of a victor, and due to the distinctive nature of the security dilemma in identity-based wars, I contend that biased intervention strategies in such cases will be ineffective for lasting peace. Corollary to this, because unitary actors are more likely to take sides than multi-state efforts, and due to specific constraints on unitary actors, I argue that multilateral interventions with proper levels of credibility and
commitment will have the greatest chance of successfully resolving identity-based civil wars.

The risks of bias in intervention in identity-based wars are foremost due to the heightened security dilemma and levels of post-war uncertainty that are unique to these types of wars. Prior to any resolution, biased intervention, although it may have the goal of stopping the fighting, could in fact lead to an escalation of war if the opposing side increases its own arms to protect against the prospect of its potential defeat and enlists counter-intervention support (Carment and Rowlands 2001). For the post-resolution environment, in intrastate wars over specific stakes, a decisive outcome typically resolves the question that caused the war—who should control a resource, what type of government should exist, etc. The result of a military victory in an identity war, however, often amounts to domination, and the fears and beliefs that led to the war remain in place. For the defeated, the future is much more tenuous in identity-based wars, fostering great post-war instability. In Rwanda, for example, after the victory of the RPF, thousands of civilian Hutus swarmed into refugee camps for fear of how the new government might retaliate against them for the genocide of the Tutsi population. Lastly, bias may prove ineffective if international law protecting the sovereignty of states hinders an intervener’s ability to offer direct military support to the opposition, rather than siding with the government (Regan 2000, 76).

The question of unilateral versus multilateral intervention is best addressed by the level of time and commitment required to foster peace in identity-based wars. In Keeping the Peace: Lasting Solutions to Ethnic Conflicts (2002), Daniel Byman shows that military intervention strategies have much higher costs and greater risks in these types of intrastate conflicts. In terms of consumption of resources, Byman states, “Because it is hard to distinguish combatants from noncombatants and because security sensitivity is particularly acute in communal conflicts, large numbers of troops are required to maintain peace when communal tension is high” (Byman 2002: 183). The time commitment is equally great because the persistence of security fears following the end of the war necessitates lengthy supervision to contain lingering hostilities. Peace among a divided society relies on breaking down the perceptions of the indivisibility of identity issues and dissolving the hatreds that have hardened as a result of the war, neither of which happens overnight. Unilateral intervention efforts are inherently less able than multilateral efforts to commit these obligatory levels of time, troops, and money because 1) unitary states only have a finite quantity of resources they can divert to external operations, and 2) a unitary state’s involvement in an outside civil war can only last so long as it has the approval of the domestic population. When a consumptive foreign policy endeavor loses its popularity, the leaders of the intervening state are unlikely to risk losing their own constituent support and will withdraw whether or not peace has been achieved. As Patrick Regan (2000) notes:

When the United States intervened in Haiti in 1995, for instance, the president publicly proclaimed that the troops would go in, do their job, and get out in a
matter of weeks. Had they stayed for a considerably longer period of time
President Clinton would have begun to feel the political heat from the increased
risk. However, even though the United States was constrained politically, the
UN was able to deploy a peacekeeping mission to carry out the rebuilding tasks
that the United States could not undertake. (Regan 2000: 105)

Intervention of any type will not create lasting peace if the goal is simply
to stop the fighting and not to see a transition through. Military victories, though
they may destroy the enemy’s capacity for fighting, do not appease the causes of
the conflict and can allow violence and human rights violations to continue
against the defenseless much more so than a negotiated settlement would allow.

Counterarguments and the Negotiated Settlement

But are impartial multilateral efforts driving negotiated settlements really
the better strategy given their fragile record? As Timothy Sisk points out in his
paper (2001), “Peacemaking in Civil Wars: Obstacles, Options, and
Opportunities,” although many of the attempts fail, there has been an increase in
successful negotiations since the end of the Cold War due to the rising trend in
favor of this approach to civil war termination. Nonetheless, major obstacles
seem to plague the effectiveness of the negotiated settlement in identity-based
wars. As I have already identified, the perception of stakes in identity issues, and
the extremism often associated with identity-based war will render parties less
willing to negotiate. In addition, the intensification of uncertainty and the security
dilemma in these conflicts are large deterrents to laying down arms. Another
important factor can be the existence of large ethnic diasporas that continue to
fund the fighting by their side while living abroad.

Yet of equal importance to understanding what conditions impede
successful settlements is identifying what conditions promote it. Multiple
analyses assert that the single most important condition in bringing a durable
negotiated end to a war is the credible commitment of the third-party intervener
(Walter 2002, Hartzell et. al 2002, Byman 2000). If the conflict is “ripe for
resolution,” and the warring parties are willing to cooperate toward a negotiated
end, the key to the signing and implementation of that agreement is the auspice of
an external actor that is 1) acceptable to both sides, suggesting impartiality, and 2)
powerful and willing enough to enforce the measures of the agreement, not
merely to promise to do so.

One counterargument considers the role of bias. In “Understanding
Success and Failure of International Mediation,” (1996) Marieke Kleiboer
presumes that an international actor need not be impartial so long as it has
leverage over both parties. Leverage can take the form of rewarding or punishing
sanctions (carrots and sticks), the promise or withholding of aid, or other types of
political pressure. I maintain, however, that when war incentives are based on
intangible and indivisible stakes such as identity, economic or political leverage
will hold little sway among the extremists who are contributing most to the intractability of the conflict. Even if moderates among the combatants are receptive to such leverage, hardliner factions have a high likelihood of continuing to perceive the intervener with too much mistrust for it to be completely effective. Others may argue that bias, even multilateral bias, is warranted in cases of severe aggression, such as Milosevic’s Serbia. However intervention need not exercise bias when simply coming between warring parties, and must save the question of tribunals versus amnesty for the negotiating table. Lastly, bias against extremists in negotiation arrangements can backfire if the extremist group is spurred to act as a spoiler, as with the Hutu Power after the Arusha Accords.

Additional counterarguments might express doubt that parties will be able to compromise as negotiation requires, but I am operating under the assumption that warring parties who reach the negotiation table do so with the intention of finding a jointly appealing way to end the war, even if that negotiation ultimately falls through. In cases of failed negotiation, as empirical evidence shows, it is the weakness of the enforcer that makes the difference. Of course, the nature of the negotiated settlement plays a critical role, and debates persist in the literature over what types of arrangements are best: partition, autonomy, power-sharing, etc. I will not postulate here as to the best design, as it depends very greatly on the nature of the specific conflict. More generally, though, when dealing with protracted wars, interveners must expect to devote true time and effort to the peace-building process, especially when tasks include diffusing identity loyalties and transforming them into civic loyalties. Therefore, the key to addressing the fragility of negotiated settlements is to improve them, not to avoid them by adhering the misleading success of military victories.

Case Study: Kosovo

One of the most recent and most disputed military interventions is the 1999 NATO operation in Kosovo, the ethnic Albanian-occupied territory within Serbia. Serbia gained full control of the disputed area after WWII, and refused it the status of a full republic in the Yugoslavian Federation though granting it autonomy in 1974. In 1989, however, Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic rescinded that autonomy, purportedly out of fears that the Serbian population was becoming even more of a minority in the region. After the collapse of Yugoslavia and during the Bosnian and Croatian wars for independence, Kosovo remained part of Serbia, but resisted its rule by exercising de facto sovereignty. Although the international community resisted the idea of Kosovo secession, fearing it would only exacerbate regional instability, Milosevic’s continued aggression

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against the people of the province, including their forceful displacement, called into question whether humanitarian intervention was in order.

The NATO-led bombing campaign of Serbia and Montenegro in 1999 was met with much resistance, including from members within its own organization. Although multinational, it was a biased effort spearheaded by the United States. U.S. Ambassador J.R. Bullington described the campaign immediately following its end as “a shining example of a military victory that was a total failure” (Bullington 1999). For although the operation eventually got Serbia to withdraw, it also incited Serbian forces to immediately retaliate by increasing the severity of the ethnic cleansing of Kosovar Albanians. As a result, massive numbers of Kosovo refugees also streamed into neighboring countries, threatening the stability of the Balkans in a way that the international community had been trying to avoid. The consequences for the general Serbian population were also major. Within Serbia, the pressures of the war on Milosevic caused him to suppress democracy even further. Many regular Serbian civilians also suffered from the NATO bombings, and even more at the hands of the KLA, who, after Milosevic’s retreat, began their own ethnic cleansing of Kosovo Serbs—a poor precedent to be set by humanitarian intervention.

Thus, although it is impossible to say what would have happened if more diplomatic means of dealing with Milosevic were used, it is decidedly arguable that NATO’s biased campaign, enacted without the consent of the international community, had a detrimental affect on the situation. Of course labels of success or failure can be quite subjective, and some would argue that NATO’s actions had a positive and justified impact on the region by preventing the almost assured destruction of the KLA and further repression of Kosovar Albanians (Carment and Rowlands 2001). Yet because Kosovo remains part of Serbia despite NATO’s helping its independence movement to defeat Milosevic, and because it is highly questionable that the region, like Bosnia, has been prepared to sustain any peace on its own were the present external occupation to withdraw, the NATO-led victory cannot be considered to have facilitated a stable and lasting resolution to the conflict at large.

Case Study: Rwanda

Another appalling case in recent memory, Rwanda’s history of violence and instability is multifaceted, dating back to its decolonization period following the death of its Tutsi king in 1959. In 1963 the small African country fought its first civil war, with Hutu insurgents gaining a military victory and establishing a Hutu-controlled republic under United Nations auspices. Roy Licklider (1995) codes this decisive outcome as a success, due to the fact that the country did not see another full-scale war for nearly thirty years. Yet peace and security did not characterize this period for the defeated population. Although it is unclear how many died in the 1963 war, over one hundreds thousand Tutsis fled to the
neighboring countries of Burundi and Uganda, to be followed by hundreds more throughout the 1960s and 1970s as non-war-level killings of Tutsi Rwandans continued (Stettenheim 2000). In addition to this low-grade violence in Rwanda, the refugee crisis created major problems across the Ugandan and Burundi borders. Because these grievances resulting from the first war lingered, a second war broke out in 1990 when the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a guerilla army comprised mostly of displaced Tutsis living in Uganda, invaded with the intention of reforming the Rwandan government and allowing the repatriation of refugees.

What followed were a number of successive failures in efforts to resolve the conflict and bring peace to all of Rwanda’s peoples. In 1993, a negotiated settlement, the Arusha Accords, was signed under the facilitation of the Organization for African Unity (OAU). As Barbara Walter (2002) states, with an agreement in place and a pledge of enforcement by the United Nations, peace was very promising, yet less than a year later war had resumed at even more intense levels and some 800,000 to 1,000,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus had fallen victim to a swift and brutal genocide. Although additional factors contributed as well, scholarly assessments, including the 1996 Steering Committee of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda report, heavily fault bias in the Arusha Accords in encouraging the extremist Hutu Power movement to spoil the implementation of the agreement, and fault the meager commitment of the United Nations in failing to prevent the genocide from taking place.

Initially, the war seemed to come to an end when the RPF achieved a decisive victory and took over control of Rwanda later in 1994. Biased support by France had failed to protect the Hutu government from being overcome. The RPF win, once achieved, also failed to usher in true peace and security. Masses of Tutsi refugees were exchanged for masses of Hutus fleeing from both their own accountability in the genocide and the potential retaliation of the new government. And although a humanitarian UN mission remains, Hutu and Tutsi violence persists as the ousted Hutu government continues to rise up against the new regime, with casualties wavering in an out of war-levels.

Theories abound as to why the international community’s response to the situation in Rwanda was so disastrously inadequate. Some postulate that it is because Rwanda lacks strategic interest for the major world powers, and so does not appear on influential foreign policy agendas. Others suggest that it was out of cowardice due to the killings of Belgian peacekeepers in Rwanda, and other peacekeepers in similar efforts in countries like Somalia. Nonetheless, as officials both involved with the conflict and commissioned to investigate the conflict assert, “Had the UN provided the mandate and the resources it promised, and the political will to accept even a small number of casualties, the terms of the Arusha accords probably would have been implemented and the killing deterred” (Walter 2002: 157). Beyond illustrating the consequences of military victories, the case of Rwanda shows that impartial, multilateral intervention efforts are indeed promising, and that their susceptibility to failure lies not as much in the inherent
difficulty of the ethnic war, but in their own reluctance to be credible and committed.

**Conclusion**

In this paper I have used statistical data and case analyses to discredit the idea that the military victory is a more stable solution in identity-based civil wars given the fragility of negotiated settlements. I am optimistic that the past shortcomings of negotiation attempts can be overcome by credible, unbiased, multilateral interventions that are not restrained by the pessimism of past failures, especially when those failed efforts may have been self-defeating due to risk-averse levels of time and resource commitment. Military intervention for actors, especially unilateral ones, can be just as costly as the failure of negotiated settlements, both for the actor and the inhabitants of the war-torn state. The post-Cold War trend toward negotiations is a step in the right direction because intervention into identity-based conflicts should focus on facilitating peace, tolerance, and democracy for all identity-groups involved in the conflict, rather than creating a trade-off between domination and a short-term end to fighting.

Newer datasets such as the Uppsala and CIDCM research refine studies on civil wars by allowing less severe, but equally indicative, patterns of violence to help us interpret the nature of identity-based conflicts. Future methodology that investigates low-grade violence, genocide, refugees, and post-victory democratization may help clarify the conditions under which these consequences persist, better illuminating the risks of decisive victory strategies. If the perils of all resolution options were made more apparent, international interveners may discover more reason to confidently pursue negotiations. More recent empirical study with more flexible thresholds should show that the humanitarian consequences of negotiated settlement are small enough that they may be better alternatives to decisive outcomes even given their current tenuousness.

Also, if the world is indeed shifting toward humanitarian intervention, its current restrictions need to be lifted. Another suggestion for study is a comparison of the commitments of external actors into recent civil wars, listing and examining the types of intervention (number of actors, biased or unbiased) as well as the terms of policy, money, and time allocated to resolving the problem, then comparing success rates. Such a study could make clearer the empirical thresholds for success, rather than just the theoretical conditions. If it is found that no existing organizations are up to the challenge, then perhaps the creation of a new international body with the sole mandate of mediating conflict, enforcing the terms of arbitration, and seeing peace-building through its end is in order. Perhaps the time has come to prioritize long-term human welfare and security over personal policy interests. They say that “every war must come to an end,” and the combatants, scholars, and policy-makers of the world must hold in mind this optimism if they are to champion peace at all.
Bibliography


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