

EXTERNAL INTERVENTION AND CIVIL WAR DURATION: ANALYZING THE EFFECTS OF INTERVENTION STRATEGIES IN SRI LANKA

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Introduction

The recent proliferation of empirical research on the topic of role of outside intervention and civil war duration has meant to suggest a common and consistent pattern of findings that intervention in general tends to prolong the expected duration of civil conflicts regardless of the form and strategy adopted by intervener (Regan 2000; Elbadawi and Sambanis 2000). At the same time, management of internal conflicts has become increasingly important since the end of the cold war (Regan 2002). The civil war in Sri Lanka has experienced series of outside interventions aimed at its management throughout the twenty two years of its history. However, as the literature on the Sri Lankan case suggests, cumulative outcome of such interventions have yielded mix of outcome that constitute to be short and long duration of civil war by the empirical studies (Rupasinghe 2000; Keerawella 1995; Rao 1988).

This contrast of picture captured by the two literatures suggests the possible existence of factorial and methodological differences between the two literatures that fail to capture a complete picture of the factors influencing the intended outcome of an intervention. Also, it requires for a systematic examination of effects of intervention in the duration of civil war in Sri Lanka based on an analytical and explanatory framework which allows for a systematic and adequate treatment of factors that tend to have potential effect on the outcome of intervention.

Methodology

In doing so, this project selected five cases of instance of intervention in Sri Lankan conflict based on form of intervention, type of strategy and period by rigorously reviewing the available literature on the subject. The review suggested two differing but interrelated questions.

First, what kind of correlation does exist between intervention strategy and the course of a conflict? Second, what are the factors that influence expected outcome of an intervention? Based on these questions, four assumptions were drawn in line with the argumentation of empirical scholarship. While the first one focuses on how the subjective factors such as nature of relationship, and resolve and objectives of between intervener and protagonists affect the intended outcome the Indian intervention, the rest of them focus on how different form and sequence of intervention strategy influence the expected duration of the conflict.

To test the assumptions, a qualitative analytical framework based on major empirical arguments was developed so that it facilitates for possible near replication of analytical and interpretative style of the empirical models that are mainly based on quantitative analytical framework.

Discussion and Conclusion

Results derived from this analysis show dichotomous findings that that intervention strategy and course of a conflict are positively correlated, and the extent of this correlation is conditioned to the function of the subjective factors, which, while supporting the empirical argument that interventions in general and strategies in particular influence the expected duration of a civil war, it casts skepticism and criticism on the conclusion that intervention leads to longer civil war. The arguments and findings presented here make an important contribution to the existing scholarship by providing new insight on the role of subjective factors and the strategy in determining the extent of outcome of intervention. The summary can be as follows:

- There exists strong positive correlation between intervention strategies and the conflict duration.
- Intervention in general prolongs the expected duration of the conflict in Sri Lanka regardless of form, strategy and sequence of execution.
- The nature and extent of such correlation is conditioned to the function of certain subjective factors such as relationship between the intervener and the combatants, and resolve of combatants.

It is evident that there exists significant convergence and divergence of findings and understanding over the role and effect of outside intervention in influencing the expected duration of civil war in general and in Sri Lankan contexts.

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