

Third Party Intervention as Conflict Management: The Case of Africa

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Why does the “international community” intervene in some international or civil conflicts, yet not in others? For example, a “coalition of the willing” has recently intervened in Iraq over the unproven existence of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) but not in North Korea, which admits to having them. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) intervened – without UN approval – in Kosovo, but not in Bosnia between 1991 and 1995. The United Nations sent troops to halt an ethnocide in East Timor but did nothing to prevent one from occurring in Rwanda, even though there were blue helmets already in country! Several sets of questions emerge from these illustrations. First, aside from individual case studies and “lessons learned” issued by various organizations, what can we say empirically about the decision of various actors to intervene – or to not intervene – over longer periods, and comparing various regions? Moreover, what do we know about the characteristics of certain types of conflicts that may “invite” third party interventions more frequently than others?

A second set of questions derive from the first. For example, once the decision to intervene has been made, there is an incredible variety of actions that can be, and have been, undertaken by the various actors of the international community: political or economic sanctions; travel bans for government officials; UN-sponsored fact-finding missions; peacekeepers, etc. What are the most prevalent forms of interventions in international or civil conflicts? What do we know empirically about the preference of some actors for certain types of interventions, as opposed to others?

A final set of questions on the topic of third-party interventions might relate to the outcome and results of these interventions in international or civil conflicts. We would like to know, for example, what were the short and long-term effects of these interventions, and how effective were the interveners in managing conflicts? Is the “international community” doing a good job of living up to its primary goal, as stated in Article 1 of the UN Charter, which is “to maintain international peace and security, and...to take

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effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace”? While we do not consider ourselves to be naïve about these things, little systematic *empirical* research exists on the success and effectiveness of third-party interventions, yet there is much to learn.

The questions outlined above serve as the guiding themes of this paper. I begin by exploring the state of theorizing across the three issue areas outlined in the sets of questions posed earlier and the structure of the paper follows the same order as these questions. After outlining the concepts of intervention and operationalizing a definition of third-party intervention, I review the state of the literature assessing the theoretical and empirical links between the types of conflict and the probability of a third party intervening. This is followed by a review of the types of interventions most prevalent in the international system, followed by an exploration of the literature that assesses the effects of third-party interventions in international or civil conflicts. I then evaluate several propositions pertaining to third-party interventions on a set of international crises that occurred in West Africa during the period 1960 to 2001. This region was selected because of the presence of several potential third party interveners – international organizations such as the UN and ECOWAS; France, the UK and, potentially the USA, and the regional powers, Nigeria and Senegal. I find that at least 11 actors have been involved in West African crises, with varying degrees of success. The conclusion includes a discussion of the relevance of these results in light of current events in Africa, as well as with suggestions for further research.

I wish to mention that this paper is among a set of “first cuts” at presenting research findings of the Canada Research Chair in International Security.² The ultimate aim of the project is to add to our knowledge and capabilities in the area of conflict management in order to enhance global security policy. Indeed, we strongly believe that if the ‘global community’ is eventually to adopt better collective security policies in the 21st Century, this will require better empirical knowledge and models of third-party interventions in conflict management.

TO INTERVENE OR NOT TO INTERVENE: A BIASED CONCEPT

An intervention by a third party occurs within the context of a conflict, crisis or war. Once a conflict breaks out it can be managed in several ways, *e.g.*, by violence, bilateral negotiation or by the involvement of a third party acting as an arbitrator or as a mediator between the parties (see: Bercovitch

² Two versions of the preliminary literature review were presented at conferences in June, 2003: at the Annual Meeting of the *Canadian Political Science Association* in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on 1 June 2003, and on June 26th at the *Central and East European International Studies Association* (CEEISA) meeting in Budapest, Hungary. The genesis of this project was published as Jean-Sébastien Rioux and Sandra Pabón Murcia (2002) “Les interventions des tiers en Amérique latine, 1947-1994.” *Études internationales* 33(1): 5-30. The Canada Research Chair in International Security’s “Third Party Intervention project” is presented at: www.ulaval.ca/chaire/secureite

1991, 17). The role of a third party in non-violent conflict management is directed toward helping the actors in conflict to realize their own interests when various problems threaten to disrupt or downgrade their bargaining relationship (Young 1967). Third parties are useful in the process of conflict abatement, and they can make positive and direct contributions by focusing the parties on a termination agreement, providing an agenda and/or manipulating the timing of the negotiation process. They also can help to overcome constraints faced by the primary parties such as providing rationalizations for the disavowal of previous bargaining positions (face-saving), certifying the benefits of an agreement (guaranteeing), or providing insurance against the risks of the failure of an agreement (leverage) (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 1997, 849). Third parties can also manage a conflict by violent means through militarized intervention, a situation clearly envisaged and occasionally practiced under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

The study of third-party interventions in conflict management is inexorably linked to the study of negotiation, and there is a rich body of literature on negotiation techniques and the role of third parties in conflict management. This literature spans several academic fields of study including, but not limited to, traditional political science & international relations (*e.g.*, Zartman 1978), labor and industrial relations (*e.g.*, Walton & McKersie 1991), and management studies (*e.g.*, Lewicki & Saunders 1996); the literature also spans various methodological approaches such as first-person accounts (*e.g.*, Kissinger 1979; 1982), case studies (*e.g.*, Zartman 1989; 1995), and rational choice-based approaches (*e.g.*, Raiffa 1982). Thus, the issue of third parties and conflict management spans many disciplines and epistemological/methodological approaches, which leads to a certain level of confusion regarding the concepts and definitions to be analyzed.

James Rosenau exposed the confusion in his classic 1969 chapter titled “Intervention as a scientific concept.” Indeed, scientific research in this area was impeded due to the broad meaning of the term ‘intervention.’ Rosenau eloquently argued that it was difficult to develop variables and models, and thus make scientific progress, when the existing literature “is pervaded with discussions of military interventions, propaganda interventions, economic interventions, diplomatic interventions, and ideological interventions, not to mention customs interventions and other highly specific actions through which one state experiences the impact of another” (Rosenau 1969, 344-345). In other words, if any act can be qualified as an intervention, any explanatory model we develop loses its meaning as the concept itself is somewhat meaningless.

Unfortunately, in many ways, Rosenau’s critique is still valid. This is obvious even when one narrows a literature review to the political science & international relations field; an extensive search yields the observation that authors have differing concepts of intervention. For example, Smith understands intervention as a third-party action in the context of alliance (Smith 1996); Weiss (1999)

narrows his view of intervention to UN-sanctioned humanitarian interventions; Carment and Rowlands (1998) write about “biased interventions” in intrastate conflicts; Burton (1986) is concerned with interveners in the mediation and facilitation process of conflict management, while Diehl (1989; 2000) is well-known for his research on UN peacekeeping interventions. A very recent article by Butler (2003, especially pages 228-230) also briefly reviews the ambiguity of the concept of third-party intervention, and himself concentrates on cases of militarized interventions.

As one undertakes an extensive analysis of the ‘intervention literature’, some observed patterns emerge in the concepts and methodology employed by the authors. As a pedagogical/heuristic aid, these emergent common themes can be plotted on a hypothetical “X-Y” axis that situates the literature along two fundamental dimensions that are detected. These dimensions represent:

1. The **epistemological slant** of the researches – formal/universal v. qualitative; and
2. The **ontological vision** of the bargaining process displayed by the researches – whether they focus on the “distributive” or the “integrative” aspects of negotiations.

These dimensions are represented in Figure 1. Different readers might well have interpreted the literature along different dimensions, but what struck this researcher is graphed in Figure 1. The Y-axis, representing the formal v. qualitative methodological foci found in the literature, which is easily understood. The dimension represented on the X-axis, the ontological view of the bargaining process, signifies whether the authors view negotiations as ‘classical’ bargaining over values or issues (akin to the “zero-sum game” vision of bargaining) – which is *distributive bargaining* (Walton and McKersie 1991, 4). The other end of the spectrum is the *integrative bargaining* view of negotiation as a “variable-sum game”, where the actors are not necessarily in fundamental conflict and engage in joint problem-solving (Walton and McKersie 1991, 5). Examples of the first view (distributive) would include differences over territory in the case of an interstate conflict, or over ethnic discrimination in the case of an internal conflict. Integrative bargaining is akin to economic or political differences resolved by accommodation.

(Figure 1 about here)

To illustrate this typology, some classic texts are mapped on the graph. Quadrant 1 features rational-choice based literature that analyzes bargaining as a strategic game; an example to illustrate this tendency is Morgan’s 1984 article “A Spatial Model of Crisis Bargaining.” Raiffa (1982) would also be comfortable in this category. Quadrant 2 features the “management” approach to bargaining, and we feature Walton and McKersie’s 1991 classic *A Behavioral Theory of Labor Negotiations* as an illustration. Quadrant 3 refers to the classical and biographical, and first-person type texts of diplomats; Kissinger is featured but we could also have put Barston’s (1997) *Modern Diplomacy*. Finally, quadrant 4

regroups works that focus on non-conflictual and context specific problem-solving negotiation. The best example we could think of is Burton's "human needs" approach to conflict resolution.

This neat trick with the literature on negotiation does not, however, answer the fundamental question as to what is a "universal" definition of third-party intervention that can be applied to various international events for the purpose of empirical examination and theory & model-building. A broad definition proposed by Oran Young, however, can serve as a good starting point. Young (1967, 34) defines an intervention as "any action taken by an actor that is not direct party to the crisis, that is designed to reduce or remove one or more of the problems of the bargaining relationship and, therefore, to facilitate the termination of the crisis itself." Linking this broad definition to international relations shows that third party involvement can be of varying levels and take different forms such as:³

- Discussion of the problem in international or bilateral forums;
- Fact-finding, which involves an inquiry by a third party as to the facts surrounding a conflict;
- Good offices, where a third party helps the parties to reinstate direct negotiations, and has minimal involvement in both the content and the process of resolving a dispute (Monroy *et. al.* 1986);
- Condemnation, which includes an implied or explicit demand to desist from hostile activities, and a request for aid to the victims of hostile activity by the third party (Brecher & Wilkenfeld 1997);
- A "call for action" by adversaries includes a call for cease-fire, troops withdrawal, negotiation, and action to facilitate termination by the third party;
- Mediation or conciliation, which involves a third party that actively participates in the settlement process. Mediation is generally constituted by a single third party, while in conciliation there may be a conciliatory commission. In both cases their aim is to propose an acceptable solution for the parties to a conflict (Monroy *et. al.* 1986, 270-71);
- Arbitration, which is a legalistic form of conflict resolution where the contestants select a third party who makes a judgment on the case. There is a formal binding settlement by an arbitration body, thus distinguishing it from mediation and conciliation (Raiffa 1982; Raymond 1994, 28);
- Sanctions, which may include the complete or partial interruption of economic or political relations, and of rail, sea, air, postal, radio and other means of communication, are measures that often do not involve the use of armed force employed to make effective the decisions reached by international organizations (White 1990, 80);
- Peacekeeping or military intervention by emergency military forces, whose primary task is to encourage conformity among the parties to a cease-fire or armistice. Methods include interposition (stationing troops between the forces of the disputants) and surveillance (Baehr & Gordenker 1994, 76-77).⁴

³ Dixon (1996) offers a slightly different listing of third-party management techniques.

⁴ Diehl, Druckman and Wall (1998) offer a taxonomic analysis of peacekeeping operations, listing 12 types of mission categories. Doyle and Sambanis (2000) point out that, however useful this is, modern peacekeeping is complex and multifunctional (the famous "Chapter 6½" missions), and that these types of typologies can only be illustrative, not explanatory in themselves.

As we examine the increasing levels of potential forms of involvement or intervention by third parties listed above, it is also important to keep in mind that an intervention – or lack thereof – is fundamentally a **political decision**. Questions of power; interests; bureaucratic politics; international and domestic politics undoubtedly affect whether leaders chose **to** intervene, or consciously decide to **not** intervene. As Chester A. Crocker put it, “intervention (just like nonintervention) is an inherently political action with inescapable political consequences” (cited in Weiss 1999, 41).

Another clear fact is that conflicts are processes with many phases, such as a beginning, an escalation, a de-escalation and abatement phase; a lot can happen involving many actors in all phases of conflict. As an illustration, Table 1 presents an analytical summary of conflict phases and potential third-party activity and actors within each. With such complexity, studies will rarely comply with the simple dichotomous dimensions presented here as heuristic tools. (At this stage we have not broken down the intervention process by conflict stage, but we are already planning a more thorough literature review and analysis that will do so.)

(Table 1 about here)

Moreover, the political aspect of the intervention decision-making process may blur the distinction between “unbiased” and “biased” third parties. For example, at what point does an intervener become an involved actor (a party to) in a conflict? Does it matter if third parties are biased or not? Regan (2002) argues that interveners definitionally seek to affect the duration of conflicts, which in is in effect a conflict-management function. Indeed, while it may be difficult to measure the interests of third parties we can more easily assess the motives of third party actors. If the purpose of the intervention is to manage a conflict – that is, to affect the process of the conflict in such a way as to hasten its abatement and to save lives – we can evaluate whether the intervention had a “lifesaving” function. Thus, Betts (1994) questions the whole idea of biased *v.* unbiased intervention, arguing that the point of an outside intervention is to manage the conflict, so interventions work best (*i.e.*, end a conflict more efficiently and quickly) when “the intervener takes sides, tilts the local balance of power, and helps one of the rivals to win – that is, [when the intervention] is not impartial” (Betts 1994, 21).

The most recent ambitious project seeking to define when and how interventions should occur is the ICISS (2001) report, *The Responsibility to Protect*. This project stemmed from the various calls-to-action published by the ‘international community’ in the post-Cold War period to improve ‘human security’ measures, particularly to protect the civilians that constituted 90% of the combat casualties in the new forms of civil wars in failed states. Starting with the *Agenda for Peace* (Boutros-Gali 1992) to the *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* (the “Brahimi Report,” 1995) – juxtaposed with the problems outlines in the introduction of this essay – the international community noted its own

failures to act in certain cases and the awful consequences it had on populations around the world. This provided the stimulus for the Canadian government to create the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, ICISS.⁵ This Commission concludes that intervention should occur early rather than late, stressing the prevention of humanitarian crises as a central concept – as opposed to the world’s tendency to react to unfolding catastrophes. It also notes that militarized intervention is sometimes needed when peaceful measures have failed, yet there should be consistency and legitimacy in the process and ‘delivery’ of intervention (ICISS 2001, 69-70). While the reasoning stemming from the analysis is compelling, the ICISS report treats the concept of ‘intervention’ very generally; there is no operationalization of the concept.

Building on previous concepts and definitions (Young 1967, Rosenau 1969, & many others), and having as principal objective the empirical analysis of various interventions for the purpose of better conflict management and policy development, the Canada Research Chair in International Security’s “Third Party Intervention Project” adopts the following definition of intervention:

A third party intervention is a concrete action, be it political, economic or military, undertaken by a governmental or intergovernmental actor of the international system, the purpose of which is principally to affect the direction, duration or outcome of an internal/civil or international conflict. As such, an intervention is (as stated by Rosenau 1969) a response to an ongoing crisis/conflict and has a convention-breaking character (*i.e.*, it is an extraordinary measure).

A good operationalization of this concept will enable researchers to study the same phenomenon. This proposed operationalization is both inclusive (it recognizes that there are many reasons for third parties to intervene in conflicts) and useful because it is concerned only concrete steps undertaken by third parties – actual political or military decisions – which should simplify the data gathering process for empirical evaluations. In summary, the operationalization is action-based; it is not limited to militarized intervention yet neither does it include insignificant forms of interventions such as “calls for action.”⁶

⁵ Indeed, in the words of the ICISS report: “...Rwanda, Kosovo, Bosnia and Somalia – have had a profound effect on how the problem of intervention is viewed, analyzed and characterized” (ICISS 2001, 1).

⁶ I hereby acknowledge a good point brought up by Stephen Saideman during a personal on this issue: words do mean things and are sometimes very important. For example, a strongly worded statement by the United States regarding the Arab-Israeli situation could actually alter the structure of the conflict. We can imagine if G.W. Bush were to strongly condemn an Israeli action – and hence risk domestic political costs from the pro-Israeli lobby – it could alter events in the region. Nevertheless, we contend that operationalizations of variables cannot always take into account all possible values, and that these operational choices cannot always be made on the basis of rare or outlying values. The situation described above is probably an exception and should not dictate the rule.

➤ **Literature in “Group A:” Conflict Types and the Likelihood of Third-Party Interventions**

Having proposed an operationalization of the concept of third party intervention, we now turn to the question as to which types of conflicts have been more likely to “cause” a third party interventions? In other words, which types of conflicts are more strongly – or less strongly – correlated with third-party interventions? Regan (1998, 756) states that “[We] do not have a set of logically consistent and empirically verified conditions that increase the likelihood that outside actors will intervene in internal conflicts,” but several researchers have attempted to find some.

Brecher and Wilkenfeld (1997), for example, examine the relationship between the level of violence experienced in a crisis and the probability of third party involvement using their International Crisis Behavior (ICB) data. They find that the higher the level of violence, the higher the probability of third-party involvement, presumably because the superpowers “managed” their clients so as to not escalate a regional crisis into a Third World War. Smith (1996) also links third party interventions with alliance memberships. Judging by the sudden increase in UN activity since the end of the Cold War, there certainly seems to be a relationship between the structure of the international system and intervention in conflicts.

The link between *issues* and conflict-proneness is well established. Many studies have shown that territorial disputes are those most likely to escalate to war (Holsti 1991, Vasquez 1993; Hensel 1994). Brecher and Wilkenfeld (1997) also link crisis escalation to treats to basic values such as the existence of the political regime and political influence. While several studies that examine empirical linkages between the characteristics of conflicts and third-party interventions have been published (*e.g.*, Regan 1996; 1998), they tend to focus on the decision-making process of the intervener rather than on the conflict issue. This is logical, since the decision-making process will take into account the interests of the interveners – interests which will be affected by the issues at hand! Nevertheless, there is little empirical data focusing exclusively in the relationship between issues and interventions.

The few that exist and the closest to the ‘ideal’ are the studies that examine the relationship between internal and/or ethnic conflicts and outside interventions. Carment and James (1997; 2001) demonstrate that third-party (outside) support for an ethnic group with some form of grievances increases the likelihood of ethnic conflict. Moreover, Carment and James (2000) find that the domestic political structure, as well as the ethnic composition of the state, affects the likelihood of third-party intervention. Specifically, states with dominant ethnic groups and low domestic institutional constraints are more likely to intervene in interstate ethnic conflicts. (Note that the causal path here is reversed; the intervention causes the conflict rather than manages it.) Saideman (2002) links interventions with in-state ‘vulnerability’ and transnational ethnic ties to outside intervention, finding that the strongest link is that

“the more violent a conflict is between an ethnic group and its host state, the more likely the group will receive wide and intense support” (Saideman 2002, 43).

Having surveyed some of the literature in this issue-area, it becomes clear that another graph can be constructed which assesses the literature along two dimensions. The first dimension, much like the preceding one, is also along methodological lines because the literature tends to fall within either the quantitative/empirical models or case studies. The second dimension pertains to the nature of the conflict; We have found that the literature tends to “specialize” either in international (interstate) conflicts or in intrastate (civil) conflicts. These are presented in Figure 2.

(Figure 2 about here)

Therefore, it is not a question of whether third-party interventions are more, or less, likely in intrastate rather than interstate conflicts. It is a matter of identifying the conditions facilitating third-party interventions for each type of conflict. For example, previous research links violence, alliance membership and contiguity with the spread of conflict; this link is in right-hand side in Quadrants 2 and 4. In the intrastate conflict dimension, we therefore expect a linkage between ethnicity and third-party interventions. Research hypotheses must take into account how different forms of conflicts cause different types of interventions.

➤ **Literature in “Group B:” Forms of Third Party Interventions**

Once the decision to intervene has been made, another question of interest is: who were the third party interveners, and what forms did these interventions take? In our research on this issue we found that the literature covered different dimensions, and tended to analyze third party interventions either according to (1) the method of intervention, along “militarized” versus non-militarized dimensions; and (2) the nature of the intervener: whether the intervener was the “international community” (or, as we labeled it for lack of a better term, “UN-centric”), or a unilateral actor, whereby the literature appears “state-centric.” These dimensions are represented in Figure 3.⁷

(Figure 3 about here)

These concepts are not easily reduced to simple dichotomies. Nevertheless, several things appear rather clearly as the literature review progresses. First, it is that third-party interveners are either multinational coalitions or individual states; second, it is that when states intervene unilaterally it is because they are those with interests and power. Almost a generation ago Dunér (1981) found that the superpowers did not use “proxies” to fight their wars in the Third World – at least, not as much as was

⁷ We stress again that the literature could have been categorized in many other dimensions – there are probably as many permutations of this idea as there are readers of this essay! Ideas and comments are welcome.

speculated; they did a lot of the work themselves. Indeed, if we limit the concept of intervention to the operationalization proposed earlier, we eliminate much of the chatter that emanates from the verbal “interveners” and the list of active interveners is reduced to those that can actually affect the course of events in a distant conflict.

In this particular vein, Rioux and Pabón Murcia (2002) analyzed third-party interventions in Latin American international crises. They find that the United States (US) is the most “actively” involved third-party intervener but in many crises it is also a crisis actor (a party to the dispute). The United Nations is the second most active organ, but the least effective in terms of conflict abatement than the Organization of American States (OAS). Moreover, while the vast majority of Latin American states prefer to involve the OAS and manage their conflicts regionally, the Communist states of Cuba and Nicaragua always rejected this body as illegitimate and preferred to involve the UN, where they found allies in the (then) Soviet bloc. Therefore, the forms of third party interventions and the identity of the intervener will be affected by the identity of the belligerents and their political interests and world-view. Once again, we are confronted with this political reality; a global conflict management policy will not advance without first tackling these regional interests and politics.

In extending the same logic to conflicts in West Africa, we could thus hypothesize along the same lines: African states with interests and power would be the most likely to want to affect the duration and outcome of regional conflicts occurring in their ‘back yard’ according to their interests; otherwise, regional organizations would be preferred, since powerful states can still at least influence the decision-making in these organizations. The United Nations would be called upon as either a ‘last resort’ or by regional actors who feel their interests are not adequately represented in the regional bodies. This issue is explored later in the paper.

➤ **Literature in “Group C:” Effects of Third Party Interventions**

In this section the purpose is to evaluate the legacy of third party interventions: what forms of interventions and which third party actors were most and least successful in helping to manage international conflicts? The literature in this problem-area is not as obviously classifiable as the preceding ones, yet some dimensions stand out. A first dimension groups together the literature that focuses on formal or universal laws rather than specific cases of “lessons learned.” This is not an obvious dichotomy but much of the literature seems focused on the same kind of methodological biases as previously described, and thus either evaluates general models that seek to inform policy or on specific cases of interventions.

Yet, another dimension that clearly intrigues many authors is the problem of measuring the success/failure of third party interventions in conflicts. Much of the literature can be classified as either having a “failure bias” or an “efficiency bias.” In other words, research seems either focused on either seeking to explain the failures of third-party interventions (often in an attempt to improve decision-making in the future), or on measuring the efficiency of third party interventions; in other words, conditions that would facilitate third-party interventions in a conflict management capacity. (It is interesting to note that the “failure biased” literature seems to correlate with “lessons learned” facet mentioned above). These two dimensions are presented in Figure 4.

(Figure 4 about here)

Consider the following example: the UN intervenes under a Chapter VII mandate to “manage” an interstate war between countries Y and Z. The mandate is the result of a Security Council resolution – hence the result of a political process – and describes what the mission is to achieve. We can outline several ways to measure the success or failure of this intervention:

1. Whether the goals and objectives listed in the resolution have been achieved by the end of the mandate – a **“bureaucratic process”** type of approach to measuring success/failure of the UN mission;
2. How many lives were saved by intervening at time t rather than letting the conflict settle itself – a **“humanitarian approach”**;
3. In a variant of the first two points, can we measure the material and human costs of the intervention (in dollars, UN casualties, and/or civilian casualties) against the benefits achieved by the intervention (number of people fed or protected; conflict abatement; assistance in negotiating an end to the conflict) – a **“utilitarian approach”**;
4. We can measure the duration of the cease-fire, whether the war reignited between the two actors after the UN intervention – a **“protracted conflict management approach”**; and
5. We could evaluate whether the fundamental underlying issues that led to the conflict and the war been resolved – a **“problem-solving approach”**.

Obviously, other methods of evaluation can be found using variants of the points listed above. Yet each method has its strand in the literature. Indeed, the strongest current along the success/failure dimension is the strand in the literature which examines the duration of the peace after a conflict. Diehl, Reifschneider and Hensel (1996), for example, use a ten year rule to assess the effect of UN interventions in recurring conflicts in Latin America; if the conflict has not reignited within that 10-year period the

intervention is deemed a success.⁸ Hampson (1996) argues that a measure of success should take into account the cessation of hostilities as well as the how well the parties respect the settlement (which in many cases is achieved with the help of a third party).

The best peace accords are those in which the parties are jointly satisfied of the outcome and in which both parties find mutual gain. Hampson (1996; 2001) argues that third parties can often be very useful in bringing the parties to seek an accommodation and often have a moral obligation to do so, a view echoed by Licklider (2001). Yet, as Luttwak (2001) argues, the ‘curse’ of third-party interventions is often that it artificially interrupts conflicts that have yet to run their ‘natural course.’ This view was also pointed out by Diehl, Reifschneider and Hensel (1996) specifically regarding UN interventions in Latin America. Furthermore, Carment and Harvey (2001, 128) point out that third party interveners may often have a limited knowledge of the states and issues in which they get involved, and this in turn can lead to inefficient and short peace accords. Regan (2002) finds that third party interventions in general are inefficient and have little or no impact on the expected duration of conflicts.

The five evaluation methods proposed above thus have their advantages and their drawbacks. Method 1, the “bureaucratic processes” approach is easily measured since one needs only to correlate the steps in the mandate with the performance of the mission. The main drawback, however, is that a mandate can be “weak,” inappropriate, or miss the mark entirely. Methods 2 and 3, while interesting, suffer from the problem of counter-factuality: how can we know how many lives were saved as a result of the intervention? What if the intervention actually prolonged a conflict by feeding the members of a rebel group who, after gaining physical strength, return to the bush to fight?

In our minds, Methods 4 and 5 are related and are the most promising. Indeed, if the conflict has not flared after, say, ten years, than we may assume that a good deal has been accomplished in the ‘problem-solving’ area. Moreover, method 4 is easily measured: if Ethiopia and Eritrea coexist without conflict for seven more years⁹, the probability of a conflict recurring after that is much lower. In the section that follows, a research design is proposed to evaluate the causes, methods and effects of third-party interventions in West Africa from 1960 to 2001.

THIRD PARTY INTERVENTIONS IN WEST AFRICAN CRISES

This research is fundamentally about conflict management and collective security; although I did not present any theoretical literature on the subject, I do specifically focus on interventions. Who has a stake in managing regional conflicts? The obvious answer is the United Nations. On a regional level, the

⁸ They find that the UN is not successful in preventing future conflicts because it is a reactive body which is not set up to address the underlying issues.

⁹ The Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed on December 12th, 2000.

states have a stake and an interest to do so. This section addresses the operationalization of a region – in this case, it is West Africa – and discusses the respective roles of regional organizations and powerful states in regional conflict management.

Defining the West African region. A first step is defining our geographical region of interest.¹⁰ It is fundamental that the actors with a stake in managing and intervening in regional conflicts require the opportunity and the willingness to intervene (Most and Starr 1989). Lemke (2002) discusses the issue at length, but the main idea is this: when analyzing empirical data about regional conflicts in regions labeled “Latin America” and “Africa,” we may introduce errors in our models by not taking into account the correct units of observation. In other words, we know that conflict dyads opposing Guatemala and Peru, Mali and Madagascar are highly unlikely, so why lump them in our statistical analyses? Thus, building on Lemke’s (1993) and other researchers’ previous work in defining and refining the concept of “politically relevant dyads” (Maoz and Russett 1993), we introduce a concept of “functional region” to assess the relevant units of interaction.

A functional region is a system or subsystem in which the actors have a perceived and mutual relationship, be it economic, cultural and/or military. Such a mutually perceived relationship creates a shared stake in regional stability.¹¹ We assume several characteristics that define a “regional subsystem,” each may be a sufficient condition for inclusion as a state within a functional regional subsystem:

- Territory contiguity;
- Economic interdependence;
- The presence of a regional organization of which a state is a member; and
- The occurrence of a diplomatic crisis between actors in a region.

These conditions demonstrate that the fundamental characteristics of a region subsystem are proximity and interaction (Lemke 2002). Within this region, actors may possibly mutually invade each other, they interact militarily and experience higher levels of crisis activity. Operationally, these regions correspond with Lemke’s (2002) categories. Following from this, we can identify another further concept: what we might call a “peripheral region,” which denotes a regional system or subsystem *around* the crisis functional region, in which the actors do not engage in most of their crises with the members of the

¹⁰ The discussion that follows may seem redundant in a discussion of this particular region, but the operational definition developed here will serve to delineate functional regions in other parts of the world that are not so obviously delimited.

¹¹ The existential question of regionalism as a basis for collective security will not be addressed. For an excellent critique, see Van der Donckt (n.d.).

functional region, but which has a history of crisis behavior in the region. The members of the West African region are:

- **Core functional regional subsystem:** Gulf of Guinea region, and West Africa (see Lemke 2002): Benin, Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.
- **Peripheral region:** Cap Verde, Chad and Mauritania.

These categories are useful for several reasons. First, they will provide increased context for the analyses. Second, they can act as a kind of independent variable to understand why actors intervene in some crisis regions while not in others, or why certain forms of conflicts occur in some regions rather than others.

Conflict Management in West Africa. The literature on conflict management in West Africa demonstrates three tendencies: authors tend to adopt either “legalist”, “realist” or “humanitarian” approaches in their analyses of conflict management organizations in West Africa, be it the African Union (formerly the Organization for African Unity) or the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), through the military Monitoring Group, ECOMOG, and others.

Authors in the “legalist” tradition (*e.g.*, Ayissi 1994; 2001; Kwesi Aning 2000) focus on the institutional evolution and legal arrangements of the regional and sub-regional organizations. Implicit in their argumentation and analysis is that the success or failure of these third-party organizations in conflict management is dependent upon the structure adopted by the institutions. The current debate on the AU’s Protocol on Politics, Defense and Security (and powers of the AU’s Peace and Security Commissioner), as well as the operationalization of the very recent Mutual Defense Pact signed by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on 26 August 2003 would fall under this category. The legal structure and power afforded these organizations will affect their operational capacity to act in a conflict management role.

Second, there is a “realist” school of thought. In this school, authors demonstrate two sub-tendencies. Some (*e.g.*, Somerville 1990) argue that third-party interventions by outside actors are determined by the structure of the international system and predicated on colonial or Cold War issues. Other authors focus on the quest for power exhibited by certain African leaders as an explanation of third party involvements (Adebajo 2002a, 2002b; Alao, Mackinlay and Olonisakin 1999). Thus, analyses are illuminated by the realities on the ground, especially in the Great Lakes / DRC region.

Finally, the “humanitarian” school is particularly important in the literature on third-party involvement in African conflicts. This literature focuses, among other things, on the externalities caused

by the civil wars that ravage Africa, such as refugees, famine, epidemics and other elements of humanitarian catastrophes referred to as 'complex humanitarian emergencies' (Holzgrefe and Keohane 2003; Kuperman 2003). Interestingly, while the dilemmas and challenges for the international community responding to complex emergencies are well argued, analysis on the causes of the conflicts giving rise to the complex humanitarian emergencies are ancillary.

The main regional organization, the Organization for African Unity (now the African Union - AU) has a *de jure* conflict management role, favoring – unsurprisingly – peaceful conflict resolution. In 1993, it formally obtained UN support for the development of a *Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution*. The mechanism functions on the basis of consent and cooperation of parties involved in the conflict and as such maintains AU principles for peaceful settlement of disputes (Van der Donckt 1995). The 1994 slaughter in Rwanda, however, prompted some AU member countries to push for the organization to take a more active role in peacekeeping. There has since been talk of the establishment of standby military contingents, financed in large part by the European Union, which could be used by the UN and African Union in times of crises (Thomas 1995). Yet, as Muyangua and Vogt (n.d.) note:

The performance of the OAU Mechanism since its creation reveals that while the organization has become involved in issues that previously would have been considered as purely "internal" matters (issues related to intra-state conflict, unconstitutional changes of government, and elections), the experience of the last seven years also reveals that the Mechanism continues to be hampered in its actions by key provisions in the OAU charter. Specifically, some member states still continue to view sovereignty as sacrosanct and, by so doing, place severe constraints on the OAU's scope of action and room for maneuver.

West Africa has had a sub-regional organization, ECOWAS, since 1975. The 15 member states created this organization in order to promote a more integrated economic market (the goal is a free trade area by 2005), but a conflict management function was added when ECOWAS responded to the civil war in Liberia by creating ECOMOG in 1990 – the ECOWAS Monitoring Group. While in principle a non-standing military force, since the Liberian civil war ECOMOG has also been redeployed to Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. It has since formed the basis of a regional conflict peacekeeping mechanism, becoming involved in the civil conflict in Ivory Coast in 2002 and, more recently, has returned to Liberia.

There are many other regional groups in West Africa with a vocation of promoting regional cooperation¹²; there also are two states that, in comparison to their neighbors, are relatively powerful and have shown strong interest in regional political affairs: Senegal and, especially, Nigeria. All these actors

¹² We've counted over a dozen, including organizations such as the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Mano River Union.

have the potential to intervene and are included in the analysis that follows. Moreover, they not only have the potential to intervene in any phase of conflict (see Table 1), but they also can become involved separately, together, and at difference times, as illustrated in Figure 6 in a “path of involvement.”

(Figure 6 about here)

Data, variables and operationalizations. To evaluate the effects of third-party interventions in West African conflicts we utilize data from the International Crisis Behavior (ICB) project on involvement and effectiveness of the UN, AU and regional organizations in African crises from 1960 to 2001 (Brecher & Wilkenfeld 2003). Brecher and Wilkenfeld (1997, 4-5) define international crisis as a situation characterized by two necessary and sufficient conditions: “(1) a change in type and/or an increase in intensity of disruptive, that is, hostile verbal or physical, interactions between two or more states, with a heightened probability of military hostilities; that in turn, (2) destabilizes their relationship and challenges the structure of an international system (emphasis in the original).” Each international crisis in the dataset set has a trigger, a response date where other states took action in response to a trigger, and an end date with the form of outcome. Additionally, one of the advantages of this dataset over others is the inclusion of case studies to accompany the data, complete with bibliography. An international crisis can be caused by a domestic event, such as a civil war, so long as these hostilities cause an actor to perceive the conditions previously mentioned. Finally, an international crisis is caused by an issue that creates conflict, be it social, economic or military (Brecher & Wilkenfeld 1997, 49). It also contains a lot of information on third parties.

Indeed, of the 18 crises in West Africa (as defined in our “functional subregion” operationalization) the case selection criteria (as determined by our operationalization of “third party intervention”) stipulate that we analyze crises in which third parties played a concrete and active part in the crisis. We are left with 11 international crises, listed in table 2.

(Table 2 about here)

Unfortunately, the dataset employed here fails to capture certain high profile events due to the temporal domain, but the major conflicts are there, namely Liberia and Sierra Leone.

ANALYSIS OF WEST AFRICAN CRISES

Table 2 shows the eleven cases of West African crises that experienced third-party interventions as operationalized for this project. Due to time and space constraints for this iteration of the Third Party Intervention project we could only undertake the analysis related to what we called ‘Group C’ (see page 10 above): we analyze, in this paper, the effects of third-party interventions.

The descriptive statistics show that the UN and the OAU were called to intervene as ‘first intervener’ in three (3) crises each. When the UN was called first, it had an important effect for the abatement of the crisis once, in 1970. When the OAU was called first, it never had an important effect for the abatement of the crisis. As previously stated, ECOWAS (through ECOMOG) intervened in the crises in Liberia/Sierra Leone in the early 1990s and it had an important effect – recall that ECOMOG is highly influenced by Nigeria. Powerful states intervened in three crises: Senegal twice and France once. In every case, we identified a substantial effect for the abatement of the crisis. The brief conclusion we can call here is that interveners with regional interests and relative power are more efficient in conflict management roles.

In examining the ‘path of involvement’ of these third-party actors, we can see that there is little effect accomplished by the second and third-level interveners. It appears that if and when the first-level interveners fail to play an effective role, other actors may be called in but these have little effect. We hypothesize that conflicts which cannot be managed by first-level interveners probably are not “ripe for resolution” (Zartman 1989), and second-level interveners are only called in to legitimize the notion that a diplomatic solution is being sought. (In worst cases, perhaps the first-level interveners are only ‘passing the buck’ to second-level interveners.) We note also that these second-level interveners tend to be neighboring states (with the exception of the USA, called in 1991 during the Liberia/Sierra Leone crisis). These also tend to me mediation and/or facilitation efforts. The exception to this general rule was the mediation role played by the Arab League in the 1986 Togo crisis.

It appears that while many see the United Nations as a legitimizing body, it may not have the conflict abatement role needed in some situations. The link between conflict and third-party involvement seems strongest along three axes: the traditional alliance link (conflict involvement and intervention *via* alliances); through ethnic ties; and due to internationally recognized humanitarian catastrophes accompanying civil wars in ‘failed states’. As interstate wars become rarer, the ethnic dimension will remain important (or even increase in importance). International “humanitarian” interventions, while a promising objective after UNSC 688 (1991) and a string of interventions in the following few years, fell out of favor after Mogadishu and the (in)famous US Presidential Directive 25 that severely constrained American humanitarian activity since then. While not obvious in the current analysis, which does not code humanitarian catastrophes *per se*, recent events support this observation, particularly in Africa.

The successful interveners are those actors with interests and power. When the P-5 can work together, the UN is the vehicle of choice to “legitimize” interventions – either through an actual UN mission or, as seems to be the case more often nowadays, to authorize an intervention by a “coalition of the willing” (NATO, ECOWAS, Operation Artemis, etc.). The most recent example of this precise

situation occurred as this paper was being written. On May 30th, 2003 the United Nations Security Council, frustrated by the incapacity of MONUC¹³ to quell fighting around Bunia in the DRC, authorized the French-led Interim Emergency Multinational Force in Ituri province under a Chapter VII mandate (UN/SC/RES 1484 [2003]). UNSC 1484 is a very strongly worded mandate, in which the UN “[a]uthorizes the Member States participating in the Interim Emergency Multinational Force in Bunia to take **all necessary measures** to fulfill its mandate” (UN/SC/RES 1484 [2003], para. 4; emphasis added). “Operation Artemis,” as the Interim Emergency Force was called, was tasked to accomplish all the following with only 1,500 troops in only three months:

...contribute to the stabilization of the security conditions and the improvement of the humanitarian situation in Bunia, to ensure the protection of the airport, the internally displaced persons in the camps in Bunia and, if the situation requires it, to contribute to the safety of the civilian population, United Nations personnel and the humanitarian presence in the town (UN/SC/RES 1484 [2003], para. 1).

It turns out that by September 1st, the area appeared stable enough for the UN to adopt UN/SC/RES 1493 (2003) re-authorizing MONUC for another ten months, until July 2004 and almost doubling the number of troops. I should note, however, that the will of some nations to send additional troops may have more to do with the positive news stemming from the new power-sharing government; if combat were still fierce throughout the DRC – and fighting has not ended in Fataki, according to MONUC¹⁴ – would so many countries be willing to send soldiers in harm’s way? Recent news reports indicate that civilians are afraid for the future now that the European force is leaving and do not trust UN forces to protect them (AFP 2003).

As for the effects of third-party interventions, it appears that, consistent with previous research, “unilateral” or biased interventions are more effective than UN-sponsored intervention due to the increased efficiency of the former.¹⁵ Moreover, we also believe this to be the case due to the artificial attention paid by the UN to “neutrality” and “impartiality”, coupled with the lack of military structure of the global organization. Previous research has demonstrated that although the UN was involved more frequently in crises in Latin America during the period 1947-1994 than the OAS, for example, it was less effective as a crisis management actor than either the US or the OAS (Rioux and Pabón Murcia 2002). This analysis demonstrated important effects from ECOWAS and Senegal.

¹³ The French acronym for the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (*Mission de l’Organisation des Nations Unies au Congo*).

¹⁴ The European forces taking part of Operation Artemis were not mandated to operate outside Bunia, however.

¹⁵ Effective, that is, in a conflict management role. Also, by efficient, we simply mean the speed at which an organization can respond.

CONCLUSION: THE EVIDENCE SO FAR AND A RESEARCH AGENDA

In light of the recent urgent calls for international interventions to help stop conflicts around the world (see: Associate Press 2003), it is opportune to ask ourselves: what do we know about third party interventions? Are they effective and efficient conflict management tools? Many fundamental questions remain, and while many of the modest empirical findings will be re-evaluated on other regions in Africa and around the world, the main task in the next 18 months is to increase the scope of the data. As previously discussed, the ICB data are an excellent resource for the study of many events in international relations, but the focus of the dataset being so closely attuned to state decision-making processes, it tends to miss the humanitarian interventions so prevalent in the headlines. The main axes of research for the Canada Research Chair in International Security in the coming months will be to re-evaluate hypotheses using the newly released International Crisis Behavior dataset (version 4, released in February 2003),¹⁶ in addition to data on civil conflicts. Research will continue along these axes:

1. Which conflicts are most (and least) associated with third-party interventions, and why? We will examine factors associated with the onset of interventions.
2. What forms do these interventions take? We will examine the different intergovernmental and state actors that regularly intervene (including, but not limited to, the UN, NATO, the regional powers).
 - This will include analyses of decision-making processes, since we have established that to intervene is a fundamentally political decision; as such, some assistants will also undertake the collection of data and case studies to examine “counterfactual” cases of *decisions to not intervene*.
 - A “process” analysis also will examine the paths of involvement in cases where several actors intervene in conflicts.
3. Finally, what are the effects of third party interventions, including their successes and failures?
 - It is important to distinguish among the various measures of success and failure, and to properly identify the elements of an index of success;

The ultimate aim of the project is to better our understanding of the processes and results of third-party interventions in order to yield better intervention policies, a goal which seeks to find better conflict management solutions in a conflict-prone international system.

¹⁶ Brecher, Michael, and Jonathan Wilkenfeld. 2003. *International Crisis Behavior (ICB) Project Dataset*. Available through ICPSR and through the ICB’s official Website: <http://www.icbnet.org/>

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Figure 1

Observed Dimensions in the Bargaining/Negotiation Literature: Concepts & Definitions

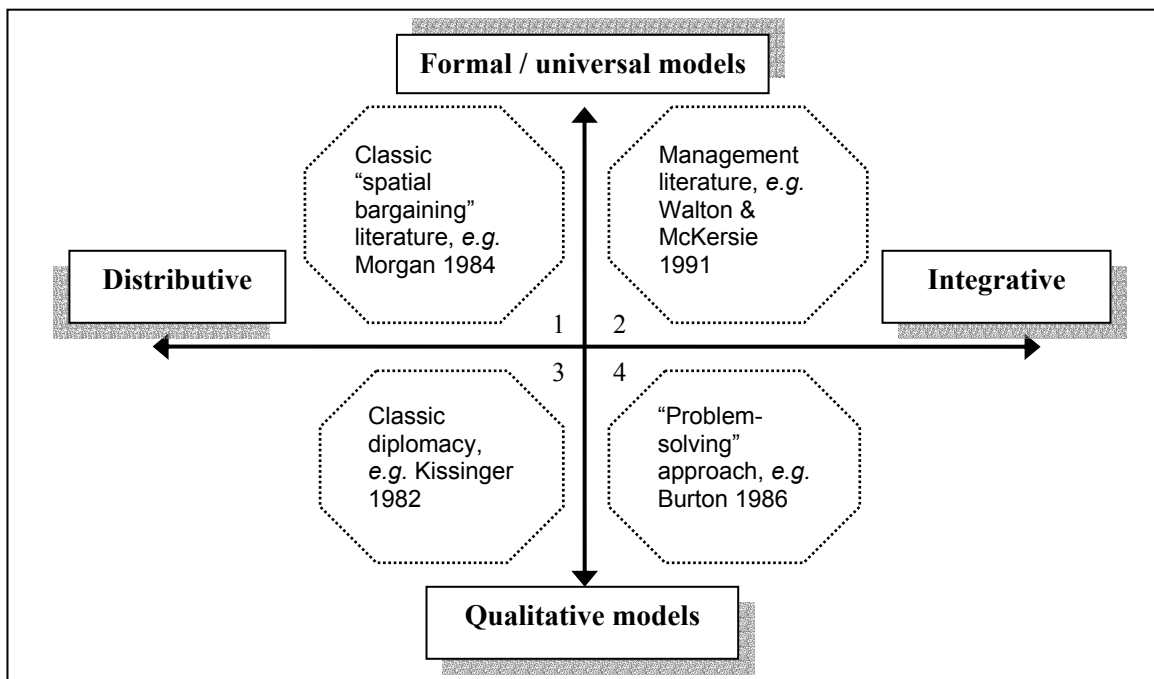


Figure 2

Observed Dimensions in the Intervention Literature: Conflicts and Interventions

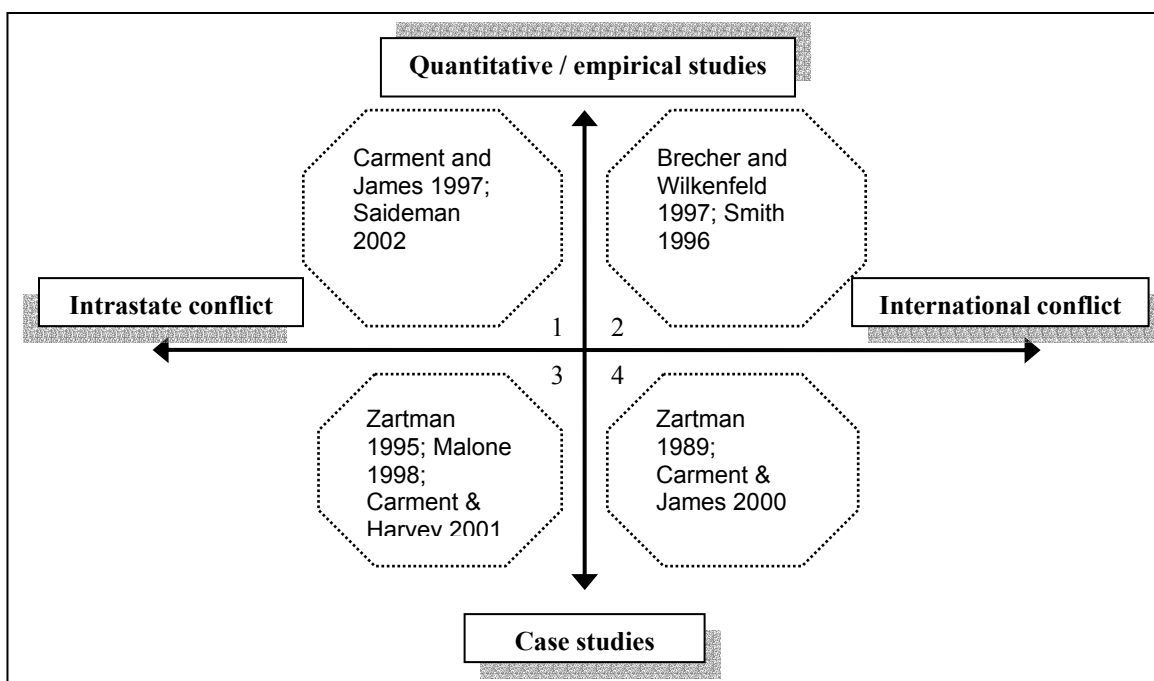


Figure 3

Observed Dimensions in the Intervention Literature: Forms of Third Party Interventions

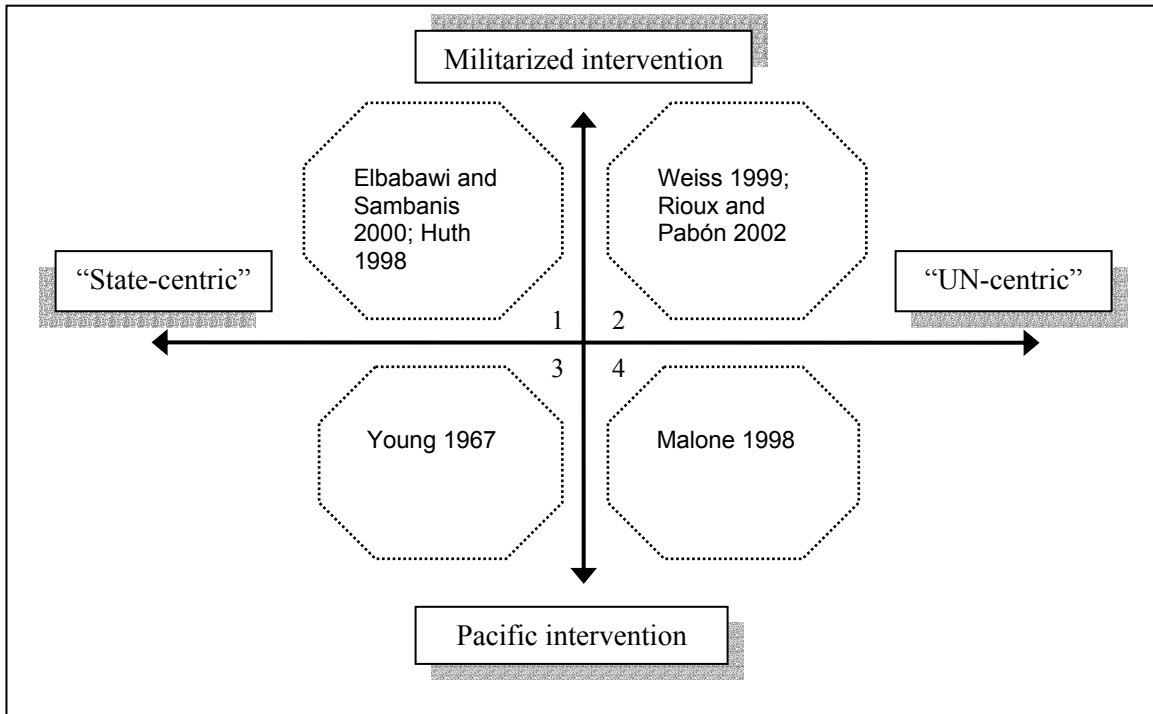


Figure 4

Observed Dimensions in the Intervention Literature: Effects of Third Party Interventions

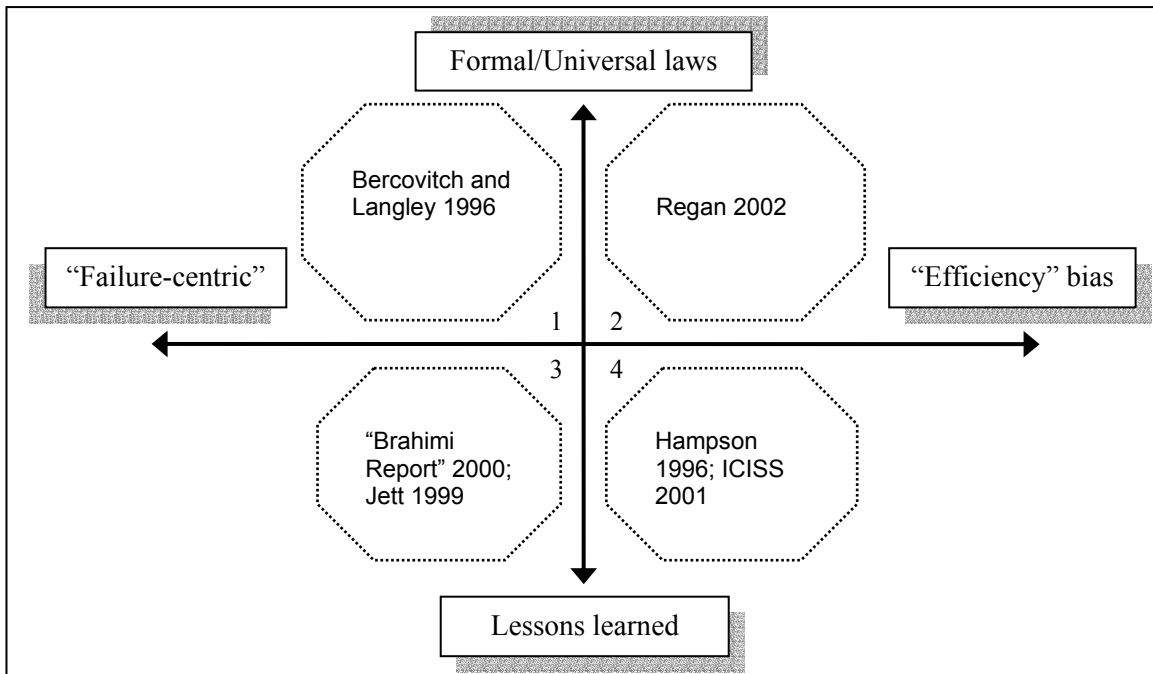


Figure 6

The Path of Involvement Model

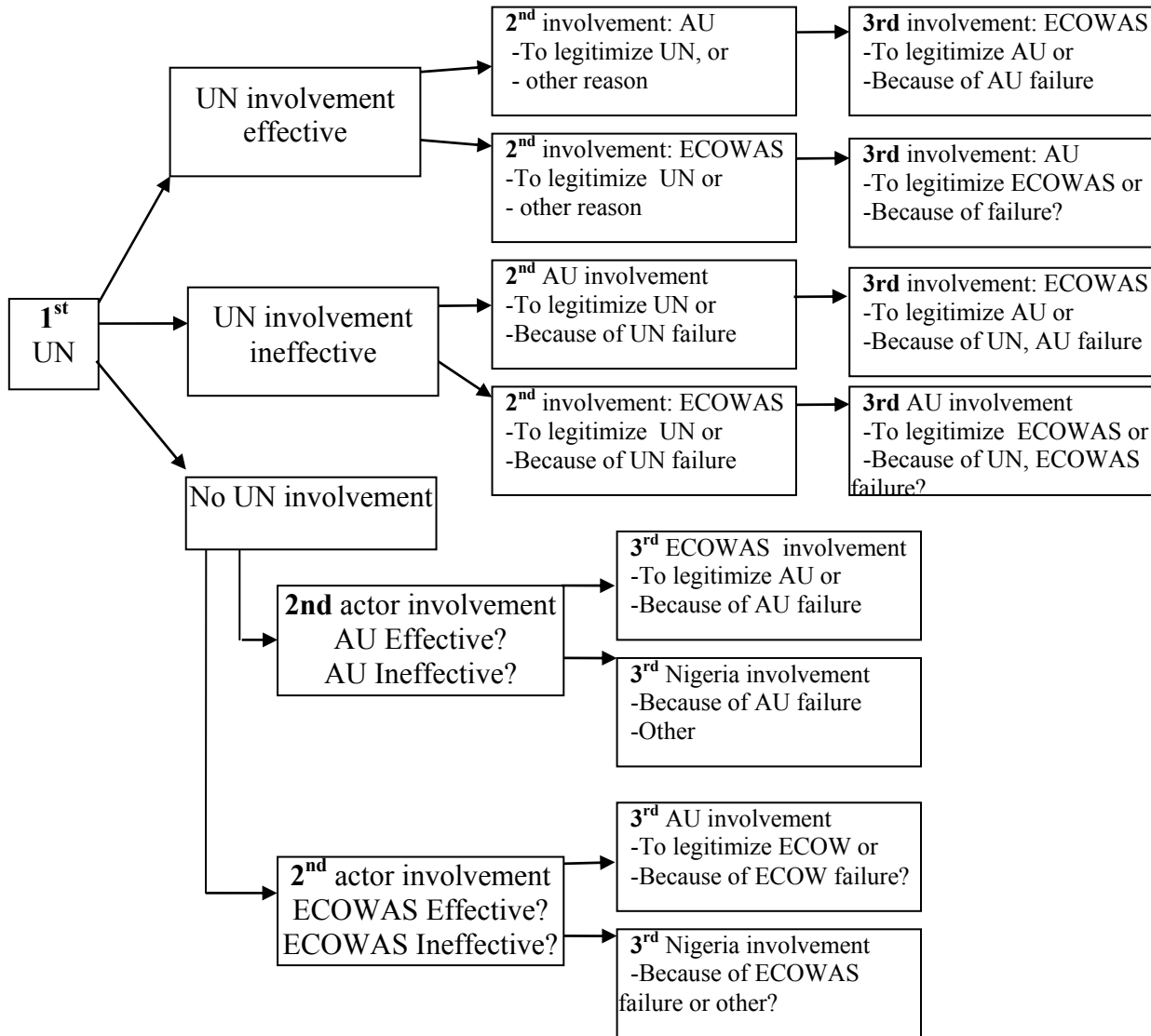


TABLE 1

ANALYTICAL TABLE OF THE PHASES OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT BY THIRD PARTIES¹⁷

CRISIS PHASE	CONFLICT PHASE (RYAN 1998)	CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PHASE	TYPE OF MANAGEMENT (RYAN 1998)	POTENTIAL 3P INTERVENERS	ACTIVITIES OF THIRD PARTIES	EFFECT/FACTORS INFLUENCING THE P(SUCCESS)
Pre-crisis	<i>Conflict formation</i>	Prevention	<i>Early warning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UN ▪ AU ▪ ECOWAS ▪ others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preventive diplomacy ▪ Facilitation ▪ Mediation 	<i>1. Type of conflict</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interstate ▪ Intrastate ▪ P.C., etc.
Crisis	<i>Conflict escalation</i>	Management	<i>Crisis intervention</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UN ▪ ECOMOG ▪ SADC ▪ others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coercion ▪ Interposition ▪ Mediation 	<i>2. Type of intervener</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Who ▪ Neutrality / impartiality ▪ leverage (capacity & resources) ▪ Legitimacy
	<i>Conflict endurance</i>		<i>Empowerment & mediation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UN ▪ ECOMOG ▪ others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coercion ▪ Interposition ▪ Mediation 	
Post-crisis	<i>Conflict improvement</i>	Termination	<i>Negotiation/problem solving</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UN ▪ AU ▪ ECOMOG ▪ others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Peacekeeping ▪ Peacemaking ▪ Mediation 	<i>3. Belligerents</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will to fight ▪ Balance of power ▪ “ripeness” / hurting stalemate
	<i>Conflict transformation</i>	Resolution	<i>New institutions & projects</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UN ▪ AU ▪ ECOWAS ▪ others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Peacekeeping ▪ Peacemaking ▪ Peacebuilding 	
	Transformation					

¹⁷ Partially adapted and inspired by Ryan 1998.

TABLE 2: West African international crises with third-party involvement and effectiveness, 1960-2002

<i>Crisis</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>1st involved – effect</i>		<i>2nd involved – effect</i>		<i>3rd involved-effect</i>		<i>4th involved-effect</i>	
Mali Federation	1960	UN	No effect	USSR					
Dahomey\Niger	1963	Union Africaine et Malgache Called by RO	Marginal	Gabon, Upper Volta, Togo Called by external parties	Marginal	Nigeria Called by external parties	Marginal		
Conakry Raid	1970	UN Called by government (Guinea)	Important	US	No effect	OUA Called by external parties	No effect		
Libyan intervention in the Gambia	1970	Senegal Called by government (Gambia)	Important						
Cameroon\Nigeria I	1981	OAU Called by government	No effect	Kenya Called by external parties	No effect				
Coup attempt in the Gambia	1981	Senegal Called by government	Important						
Burkina Faso\ Mali Border	1985	OAU Called by RO	No effect	ECOWAS (ANAD) Called by RO	Important				
Attempted Coup in Togo	1986	France Called by government (Togo)	Marginal	Zaire Called by government (Togo)	No effect	OUA Called by RO	Marginal	Arab League	Important
Mauritania\Senegal	1989	UN Called by UN	No effect	OUA	No effect				
Liberia\Sierra Leone	1991	ECOWAS (ECOMOG) Called by RO	Important	US Called by government (Sierra Leone)	No effect				
Cameroon\ Nigeria III	1993	OAU Called by government (Cameroon)	No effect	Togo Called by external parties	No effect				