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**How Political Violence Ends:
Paths to Conflict Deescalation and Termination**

APSA Task Force on Political Violence and Terrorism, Group 3

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Group 3 of the APSA Task Force on Political Violence and Terrorism was charged with addressing the following questions:

What does the community of scholars in political science know about how violent conflicts end that policy makers and the general public might want to know? What are the pathways out of political violence, and what responses to political violence – by affected states, by rebel groups, and by the international community – encourage the de-escalation (or escalation) of violence and the transition to peace?

Answering these questions is complicated by the fact that political violence can assume a number of different forms – from interstate wars to revolutionary civil wars to secessionist conflicts to terrorism (in its many forms) to communal violence, to riots. There are limits to the extent to which we generalize across forms of political violence concerning what factors contribute to the de-escalation or termination of conflict. With that caveat in mind, the members of Group 3 offer the following summary of what social scientists have identified as the most salient issues concerning how armed conflicts come to an end, what can be done to bring them to an earlier and less destructive conclusion, and what can be done to prevent them from recurring.

I. Patterns of Political Violence

Since the end of World War II, there have been several profound shifts in the pattern of armed conflict occurring in the world. First, civil wars – revolutions, secessionist wars, ethnic conflict, and domestic terrorism – have surpassed interstate wars as the most frequent and deadly form of armed conflict in the world. The *Correlates of War Project* (COW) reports that there were only twenty-three interstate wars between 1945 and 1997, resulting in 3.3 million battle deaths. By contrast, there were more than four times as many civil wars (108), resulting in almost four times as many casualties (11.4 million; Sarkees 2000).¹ While COW includes only major armed conflicts, the Armed Conflict Dataset (ACD) produced by the International Peace Research Institute of Oslo and the Department of Peace and Conflict Resolution at Uppsala University (Sweden) codes major, minor and intermediate conflicts. Of the 231 incidents identified in ACD as occurring between 1946 and 2005, 167 were internal conflicts, 21 were “extrastate” conflicts (mostly anti-colonial wars), while only 43 were interstate conflicts (Gleditsch *et al.* 2002: 620; Harbom, Högbladh and Wallensteen 2006).² Thus, armed conflict since 1945 has been largely a matter of civil war.

Second, whereas interstate wars between the major powers of the international system (Europe, the U.S., Japan, and China) dominated the patterns of conflict for much of the previous three centuries, almost all of the civil wars of the last sixty years have taken place in the Third World

¹ The figures include 104 conflicts in the COW2 Intra-State War data set and four conflicts from the Extra-State data set: Morocco-Western Sahara, China-Tibet, Namibia, India-Hyderabad. The COW data have not been updated past 1997.

² COW includes only conflicts that resulted in at least 1,000 battle deaths, whereas ACD adds those that resulted in as few as 25 battle deaths in a year.

nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Indeed, Europe – the locus of most of the world’s wars for the previous three centuries – was so nearly free of armed conflict that scholars spoke of this era as the “Long Peace”: the longest period in the post-Westphalian era without a war among the European powers (Gaddis 1986). It was not until the collapse of Leninist regimes in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia into their constituent republics between 1989 and 1991 that significant organized armed conflict returned to European soil. Perhaps not surprisingly, almost all of those new wars have also been civil wars. The republics of the former Yugoslavia as well as the former Soviet republics of Georgia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Tajikistan, and Russia itself (the Chechen revolts) all experienced civil wars. Thus, until the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, armed conflict after 1945 had been largely a Third World phenomenon.

A third trend in the patterns of civil war since 1945 is that once a nation suffered one civil war, it was very likely to experience another one. The 108 civil wars in the *Correlates of War* data set occurred in only fifty-four nations. Only twenty-six of those nations experienced one and only one civil war. Ten nations had two civil wars, twelve had three, four had four, and two nations experienced five civil wars. The 124 civil wars listed in Doyle and Sambanis (2000) data set occurred in just 69 nations. Only 36 of those nations had one and only one civil war, while eighteen had two separate conflicts, nine nations had three, five nations had four, and one nation had five. In an updated data set, Sambanis (2004) reports 151 civil wars occurring in 75 nations, with only 36 of those nations experiencing one and only one civil war. Twenty nations had two, nine nations had three, four nations had four, five nations had five, and one nation (Indonesia) had seven civil wars. Thus, for a certain subset of nations, civil war has become a chronic condition.

A fourth, more encouraging trend in the patterns of armed conflict is that since the end of the Cold War, the number of conflicts ongoing in any given year has begun to decline. Using the ACD data, Gleditsch *et al.* (2002: 620) report that the number of conflicts rose steadily throughout the Cold War, peaking in 1992 with 55 ongoing wars. Immediately thereafter, the number of conflicts dropped considerably and has fluctuated between 30 and 35 since 1996. Fearon and Laitin (2003: 77-8) report similar trends, with the number of wars peaking around 1994 and declining thereafter.

The decline in the number of ongoing wars is not a function of any substantial reduction in the rate at which new civil wars begin. Fearon and Laitin (2003) report that the average annual rate of new civil war onsets (about 2.31) has remained rather constant for much of the last half century. What accounts for the steady increase in the number of ongoing conflicts during the Cold War is that the rate of new conflict onset exceeded the average annual rate at which conflicts ended (1.85), at least until about 1992. The result was a relentless accumulation of ongoing conflicts. The number of ongoing conflicts declined after 1992 as a function of a dramatic increase in the rate at which civil wars ended. By the mid-1990s civil wars were coming to an end at a faster rate than new civil wars were beginning; more civil wars ended than began, during the latter half of the 1990s. The trend has continued into the new millennium: between 2000 and 2005 the number of conflicts that ended exceeded the number of new conflicts that began in each year, resulting in an average net decline of 1.5 conflicts per year. The net effect is that by 2003 there were 40% fewer state-based conflicts underway than in 1992. Moreover, the number of high intensity conflicts (1000+ battle deaths) declined by 80% between 1990 and 2000 (*Human Security Brief*, 2006: 7). Thus, the recent decline

in the number of conflicts ongoing in the international system at any given time is more a function of existing wars being brought to a end than of any significant decline in the rate at which new wars begin.

What accounts for this post-Cold War increase in the rate at which civil wars are brought to a peaceful conclusion? It is largely a function of the international community, through the United Nations and other international organizations, taking a more proactive role in brokering peace agreements between warring parties. Since the end of the Cold War more wars have been brought to a conclusion by negotiated settlement (42) than by military victory (23) (*Human Security Brief* 2006: 19). By contrast, during the Cold War the number of civil wars ending in military victory (by the government or the rebels) was twice as large as the number that were concluded by negotiated settlements. Hartzell (2006) reports that a majority of the civil wars that ended between 1950 and 1990 ended in military victory by either the government or the rebels, but that three-fourths of those that ended in the 1990s did so by means of some sort of negotiated settlement. The trend accelerated in the new millennium: between 2000 and 2005, 17 conflicts ended in a negotiated settlement while only four ended in military victory by the government or the rebels (*Human Security Brief*, 2006: 19). A recent study reports that one-third of the 121 conflicts that were active since the end of the Cold War (1989) have been brought to a conclusion by formal peace agreements between government and rebels (Harbom *et al.* 2006: 622). In short, since 1990 negotiated settlement has surpassed military victory as the modal outcome in civil wars.

It is this fourth trend – how civil wars end – that is the focus of this section of our report. What do we know about how civil wars end? What does the body of social scientific research on the subject of how civil wars end suggest about what the international community can do to reduce the destructiveness of civil wars by bringing more of them an earlier conclusion? And, given the tendency of civil wars to recur, what can the international community do to inoculate a nation against a relapse into armed conflict?

Research on the outcome of civil wars – whether they end in a rebel victory, a government victory, or some sort of negotiated settlement – does suggests that the international community has at its disposal a number of policy tools it can employ to bring civil wars to an earlier and less destructive conclusion. This research also suggests a set of post-civil war reconstruction and institution building strategies that can significantly reduce the likelihood of a nation relapsing into civil war. While post-war reconstruction programs do appear to be costly on face value, compared to what the nations of the world (especially the U.S. and other major powers) spend on their own armed forces, the costs of post-war reconstruction and institution building in nations previously torn by civil war is rather modest and, arguably, cost effective. Thus, a strong case can be made that building a stable peace in the aftermath of civil war is quite feasible and arguably cheaper than fighting a renewed civil war, for both the civil war nation itself and the international community.

II. Predicting the Outcome of Political Violence Rebel Victory, Government Victory, Negotiated Settlement

Civil wars eventually end. Some end in rebel victory, whereby the armed opposition overthrows the incumbent regime and replaces it as the new government (revolutionary civil wars) or secedes

from that government by forming a new nation state out of some portion of the territory over which the defeated government originally presided (secessionist rebellions). Some end in government victories. In some cases the government deals a decisive defeat to the rebels. In others, the rebels simply fade away as their capacity to sustain combat operations wanes, for any number of reasons. Other civil wars end in a negotiated settlement or truce. In the latter, the government and the rebels agree to stop fighting but there is no peace agreement that resolves the issues that motivated the initial rebellion. Both government and rebels remain autonomous from each other and hostile toward each other. Negotiated settlements do go beyond a truce to establish the institutional architecture of a new political order in which the former protagonists coexist by sharing power.

There is a growing body of research on what factors predict whether civil wars end in rebel victory, government victory, or negotiated settlement. Among those predictors are 1) the duration of the conflict, 2) the destructiveness of the conflict, 3) whether the conflict was ethnically based or not. In addition, there is also some evidence that how a civil war ends affects the extent to which that nation is at risk of experiencing a relapse into renewed civil war. We turn now to a survey of those findings.

A. How Civil Wars End Affects How Long They Last, and Vice Versa

Contrary to the “give war a chance” thesis – that the best strategy for ending “brushfire wars” in the Third World is to let them burn themselves out (see Luttwak 1999) – social science research on how civil wars end reveals that protracted civil wars are not likely to end in decisive military victory by one side or the other. Civil wars do not burn themselves out. The longer a civil war lasts, the less likely it is to end in a decisive victory by either side. Military victory by government or rebels usually occurs early in the conflict. Mason *et al.* (1999) found that fifteen of 28 government victories occurred in the first year of the war as did nine of sixteen rebel victories. All but three of the 28 government victories occurred in the first five years of the war as did twelve of the sixteen rebel victories. By contrast, eleven of the thirteen conflicts that ended in negotiated settlements lasted more than five years; indeed, negotiated settlement was by far the most likely outcome for civil wars lasting more than five years (Mason and Fett 1996; Mason, Weingarten and Fett 1999; see also DeRouen and Sobek 2004). According to Fearon (2004: 276) one-quarter of the civil wars that have occurred since 1945 lasted two years or less while another quarter lasted at least twelve years; thirteen lasted twenty years or more. Those that ended quickly almost always terminated in a decisive victory by one side or the other while those of long duration ended in a negotiated settlement or simply dissipated after reaching a protracted stalemate. Fearon (2004: 276) concludes that “*civil wars last a long time when neither side can disarm the other, causing a military stalemate. They are relatively quick when conditions favor a decisive victory*” (emphasis in the original). Analyzing the same data as Fearon, Brandt *et al.* (2005) found that 35 civil wars ended in government victory with an average duration of 6.4 years, twenty ended in rebel victory with an average duration of 7.9 years, and 34 ended in settlements or truces with an average duration of eleven years. After five years, the most likely outcome was for the war to end in a negotiated settlement.

If neither side achieves a decisive victory within the first few years of a civil war, the conflict usually degenerates into a protracted war that may wax and wane in intensity but rarely “burns itself out” or terminates in a decisive victory by either side. Once rebels and government become locked

into a mutually hurting stalemate – a condition whereby neither side is strong enough to defeat the other but each is strong enough to prevent its own defeat (Zartman 1989, 1993) – they cannot fight their way out of the stalemate nor negotiate their way to peace without some form of third party mediation to broker a settlement and enforce its terms. In the absence of effective third party mediation, the conflict simply drags on, bleeding the nation's population and destroying its economy. Both sides continue to fight, not so much in search of the victory that now appears hopelessly elusive but simply to avoid losing. In so doing, the best they can hope for is to improve their bargaining position in any settlement negotiations that might take place in the future. In the absence of third party mediation, protracted wars simply drag on, exacerbating through their destructiveness the very conditions of poverty and peril that make renewed civil war more likely, should the present conflict ever be brought to a conclusion. Examples of near-interminable conflicts are, unfortunately, quite abundant. According to the ACD data, the war between the Kurds and the government of Iraq was ongoing from 1961 until the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, with only 1970-71 marked by the absence of any armed conflict. Civil war has plagued Afghanistan almost continuously since 1978. Burma/Myanmar has had at least eight separate insurgencies ongoing since 1948, some of them continuously for that entire period. In the Philippines, the New People's Army insurgency has lasted since 1969, with only two years (1996 and 1998) recorded as having no conflict. Secessionists on the island of Mindanao (the Moro National Liberation Front, Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and Abu Sayyaf Group) have been in revolt since 1970, with only a two year interlude (1991-1992) marked by the absence of armed conflict. Angola has been embroiled in civil war almost continuously since independence in 1975 and Chad since 1965. Ethiopia experienced at least six separate revolts, with Eritrean secessionist war lasting from 1962 until 1991 and the Tigrean revolt from 1976 to 1991. The Ethiopian wars represent one of the rare exceptions to the norm of long wars not ending in decisive victory: both of its enduring civil wars ended when the government of Ethiopia collapsed in 1991. Far more common is the pattern of a conflict settling into a protracted low level insurgency that drags on with little or no prospects for a decisive outcome unless third parties intervene to broker a peace settlement.

B. Duration Matters

Not only does the duration of a civil war influence how it ends. The steady increase in the duration of civil wars during the Cold War also accounts for the equally steady rise in the number of ongoing conflicts at any given time during that period. On average, civil wars do last longer than interstate wars: the 108 civil wars in the *Correlates of War* lasted an average of 1,665 days, whereas the twenty-three interstate wars lasted an average of only 480 days. As noted earlier, Fearon and Laitin (2003: 77) point out that this feature of civil wars – their duration – accounts for the steady increase in the number of ongoing conflicts during the Cold War. While the rate at which new wars began was fairly steady throughout the Cold War, the fact that civil wars lasted so long meant that new wars began at a faster rate (2.31 per year) than ongoing wars ended (1.85 per year), resulting in a relentless accumulation of ongoing civil wars (Fearon and Laitin 2003: 77).

The long duration of civil wars also accounts for their destructiveness. The rate at which casualties occur is usually lower in civil wars than in interstate wars; interstate wars are, on average, more intensely destructive. However, because civil wars last so much longer, their cumulative death toll usually exceeds that of interstate wars. Thus, the duration of civil wars is a critical influence on both how the war terminates (i.e., whether the rebels win, the government wins, or it ends in a

negotiated settlement), how destructive it is, and how much conflict is ongoing in the international system at any given time.

Duration is also one feature of civil wars that is most amenable to influence by external actors. Indeed, it is safe to say that the international community can have a greater effect on the amount of conflict in the international system – the number of wars ongoing at any given time and the cumulative destructiveness of those wars – by taking steps to shorten existing wars than by trying to develop early warning systems to prevent new civil wars from breaking out in nations that have not experienced a prior conflict. While social science research has identified conditions that make a nation more or less susceptible to civil war onset, whether or not a civil war does break out in an at-risk nation (and if so, when) is, to a large extent, a function of specific time-bound events within that nation (as opposed to structural characteristics of the nation that put it at risk for conflict). These “precipitating events” are not easily predictable nor readily manipulable by the policy instruments available to the international community. While we may be able to identify a set of nations that is at risk for civil war, we cannot predict which subset of those nations will experience the type of event that triggers the onset of civil war, nor can we predict when a triggering event will occur and spark the outbreak of civil war in any given nation in the risk set. The intervention strategies required to inoculate *all* at-risk nations against the outbreak of civil war would require substantial investments of resources in a large number of countries. In some of those countries, the incumbent government would not be amenable to accepting such assistance even if the international community were to offer it because the reforms required to inoculate that nation against civil war would undermine the incumbent elites’ control over political power.

What we are more certain of is that those nations that have had one or more civil wars in the recent past are far more likely to experience a relapse into civil war than any other nation in the risk set is to experience its first civil war. Therefore, a more cost effective conflict prevention strategy would be to target resources on building a durable peace in nations that have recently experienced civil war. This should reduce the rate of new civil war onset to a much greater degree and for less investment than trying to build up the immunity to civil war among all impoverished nations with weak states (i.e., the complete risk set). To date, the wealthier nations of the world have not demonstrated any willingness to commit the level of resources to Third World economic development or Third World state building that would be required to immunize all at risk nations against the outbreak of civil war. Therefore, the more prudent and cost-effective strategy would be to target resources on preventing a relapse into civil war in nations that have recently ended a civil war.

In addition, the international community can reduce the amount of conflict in the world by intervening to bring ongoing civil wars to an earlier conclusion. Once a civil war is underway, there are strategies that the international community and its member states – individually or in a multi-national coalitions – can employ to shorten the war and thereby reduce its cumulative destructiveness. The UN or other international organizations can intervene as neutral mediators to broker a settlement agreement and enforce that agreement with the interjection of peacekeeping forces. Since the end of the Cold War, the international community has employed more aggressive “peacemaking” operations. Peacemaking operations involve combat troops from major powers intervening in a civil war to compel the warring parties to stop fighting. By forcing the combatants

to put down their weapons, peacemaking operations make it possible for the UN to broker a more permanent peace settlement. Peacemaking operations brought conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo to an end, enabling the negotiation of a settlement agreement to the former conflict.

However, not all forms of intervention are equally palliative. First, individual nation states, often with interests of their own at stake in the conflict, have intervened in support of either the rebels or the government in hopes of shortening the war by bringing about a decisive victory by their preferred side. Regan (2002) reports that 101 of the 150 civil wars he documents as occurring between 1945 and 1990 experienced some form of external intervention. The ACD data reports that 32 of the 163 internal wars it documents experienced direct participation by other states (Gleditsch 2002: 620). We turn now to a consideration of how different intervention strategies affect the outcome and duration of civil wars, as well as the prospects for sustaining the peace in a nation after a civil war has been brought to an end.

C. Military Intervention Prolongs Civil Wars:

While internationally sanctioned peacemaking operations may be able to impose peace in civil wars, evidence from empirical studies consistently shows that military intervention *in support of one side or the other* in a civil war usually prolongs the conflict (Balch-Lindsey and Enterline 2000; Regan 2002). In part, this pattern may be the result of Cold War politics. Many civil wars in the Third World became the targets of indirect (and occasionally direct) military intervention by one or both of the superpowers, with one superpower supporting the rebels and the other the government. Cuba dispatched troops to Angola to defend the MPLA government against U.S.-backed UNITA rebels. The Soviet Union intervened in Afghanistan to prevent the overthrow of a pro-Soviet regime there while the U.S. backed the anti-Soviet *mujahideen*. The U.S. intervened in Vietnam to prevent the defeat of the government of South Vietnam by North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front guerrillas, both of whom received material support from the Soviet Union. In such cases, third party intervention amounted to subsidizing one side's military operations in a civil war.

However, intervention in another nation's civil war involves substantial risk to the intervener, often with little direct payoff (Regan 1998). Intervention in another nation's civil war involves direct costs to the intervener, in terms of troops and treasure expended in prosecuting the intervention. Interventions also carry opportunity costs for the intervening nation. Military forces committed to the intervention are military forces not available for other national security needs. Funds expended on financing the intervention are funds not available for other national priorities. Finally, interventions carry political risks for the decision makers who initiate them. Intervention carries the risk of audience costs to leaders, whether they are democratically elected or not. Elected leaders face the risk of being punished by voters at the polls for intervening in another nation's conflict. Authoritarian leaders may be less constrained by electoral risks, but they too face the risk that intervention will generate opposition within their own authoritarian coalition, putting them in jeopardy of removal from office by means other than electoral defeat. Given these risks, nations may be inclined to intervene only in circumstances where failure to intervene might turn out to be even more costly than the risks the nation assumes by intervening. In particular, when a nation's favored party in the civil war faces imminent defeat, it may then become rational for that nation to intervene in order to forestall the defeat its client. Rarely do external powers intervene when their favored side

is on the verge of victory. Why would a leader assume the risks and the costs of intervention when his/her preferred outcome is already imminent? The Cuban intervention in Angola, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, and the U.S. intervention in Vietnam were all motivated by a desire to prevent the battlefield defeat of the intervener's favored side. In each case, the effect of the intervention was (arguably) to prolong a war that might have ended in decisive victory otherwise. For major power interveners, the Cold War geopolitical advantage of staving off the loss of a nation to the rival superpower took precedence over any consideration of the impact that prolonging the conflict would have on the nation in which the war was being fought.

Intervention in the form of the direct introduction of armed forces into another nation's civil war is rare. More common are the indirect forms of intervention, such as supplying one side or the other with military and economic assistance. Such measures tend to prolong the war because they amount to subsidizing one side's ability to sustain combat operations. Unlike interstate wars, the protagonists in a civil war draw on the same economy and the same population to sustain their war-making capacity. In the absence of external subsidies, we might expect these conflicts to come to an earlier end, as the competition between adversaries for resources and recruits eventually drains the nation's capacity to sustain two or more military organizations committed to destroying each other and far less concerned with collateral damage.

The effect of external subsidies on the duration of civil wars can be seen in the dramatic increase in the rate at which civil wars began coming to an end once the Cold War ended. The end of the Cold War brought an end to superpower subsidies of civil wars in the Third World. Once the geopolitical calculus of Cold War rivalries dissolved, major powers had little if any further incentive to subsidize one side or the other in Third World civil conflicts. Once those subsidies were withdrawn, many of those conflicts were brought to a conclusion soon thereafter. Without an external power to subsidize their war effort, both governments and rebels suddenly found themselves unable to sustain their combat operations. At the same time, the UN, now free from the constraints of Cold War standoffs in the Security Council, was able to assume a more proactive role in offering to mediate settlement negotiations to end these wars. The Contra War in Nicaragua, the civil war in El Salvador, conflicts in Namibia and Mozambique, to name but a few, all came to an end in part because foreign powers stopped subsidizing the conflict and the UN stepped in to broker a settlement.

III. Negotiated Settlements to Civil Wars

If the post-Cold War decline in the number of ongoing conflicts is largely a matter of existing conflicts being brought to a conclusion through negotiated settlements, then it would seem appropriate to review what social science research has revealed about what conditions makes a settlement possible and what conditions help to sustain the peace once a negotiated settlement is in place. As we discussed earlier, the longer a civil war lasts, the more "ripe" it is for resolution through negotiated settlement. But not all protracted civil wars are resolved by negotiated settlement; some simply continue unabated as protracted conflicts (see Crocker, Hampson and Aall 2005; Zartman 2005).

A. Getting to an Agreement: Mediation and Spoiler Problems

However ripe for resolution a protracted conflict may become, reaching a settlement agreement usually requires third party intervention and mediation (Walter 1997, 1999, 2002; Svensson 2007). The protagonists are more likely to agree to negotiate, more likely to reach an agreement and more likely to abide by the agreement when third parties serve as mediators and make a commitment to enforce the terms of the agreement. In the absence of such commitments, protagonists are confronted with a dilemma in which both sides will benefit if they cooperate, but each will benefit even more by cheating on the agreement while their rival continues to abide by its terms (Walter 2002). Third party enforcement guarantees, usually in the form of peacekeeping operations, can resolve this dilemma and thereby give both sides the assurances they need to make disarming and demobilizing their military forces an acceptable step toward peace.

The UN has served as the mediator in a number of civil wars, and its record of success since the end of the Cold War is quite remarkable (Svensson 2007). In general, mediation is more likely to work if the mediator is perceived by both sides as being neutral and having no interests of its own at stake in the conflict. This feature accounts in part for the preference for the UN over major powers as a mediator in civil wars. Major powers or regional powers are often seen by the protagonists in a civil war as having their own interests at stake and, therefore, are more interested in serving those interests than in brokering an agreement that will serve the interests of the protagonists themselves.

Getting the protagonists to the negotiating table in the first place is a major hurdle on the route to bringing about a sustainable peace. Rarely are the two sides in a civil war unitary actors. Governments involved in civil wars includes factions of hardliners and moderates, distinguished from each other by the extent of their willingness to negotiate with the rebels and by their control over coercive resources. Likewise, rebel forces typically consist of coalitions of several armed groups that sometime share few interests beyond their opposition to the incumbent regime. Cunningham (2006: 877) notes that 90 of the 288 internal conflicts in the Uppsala-PRIO Armed Conflict Data involved two or more rebel combat organizations active at the same time. Some conflicts involved more than ten. The various factions on both sides differ in their willingness to negotiate with their rivals and to make concessions for the purpose of ending the conflict. Divisions among rebel factions can be further exacerbated by ethnic divisions between their respective constituencies.

Faced with the task of brokering an agreement between the two sets of protagonists (and the factions within each set of protagonists), it is not surprising that third party mediation of conflicts is an all too rare event. The payoffs for the mediator are usually not substantial nor immediate in material terms, and the risks of failure are significant. Given the divisions within each set of protagonists, mediators are constantly confronted with the problem of spoilers. Even if they can get most of the factions on each side to agree to a settlement, factions on either side that do not accept the terms of the agreement can play the role of spoiler by re-igniting conflict and thereby effectively exercising a veto over any settlement agreement.

Thus, controlling spoilers is a major challenge to any mediation effort. Strategies to contain spoilers vary, in part with the type of spoiler (see Stedman 1997). Some spoilers accept the idea of a negotiated settlement but will act as spoilers if the terms are unacceptable. Such groups can be

induced to join the agreement with further concessions. Extreme spoilers do not accept the legitimacy of a settlement, presumably because they estimate that they can eventually achieve victory. One strategy for dealing with such groups is to isolate them by brokering an agreement with the other factions on that side and thereby building a large enough coalition behind the peace agreement that the spoiler can be defeated. It is also reasonable to assume that the civilian constituencies of most factions on both sides prefer peace to continued conflict (there is a war weariness effect in civil wars). Therefore, to the extent that mediators can forge an agreement that isolates the spoiler not only from its former enemies but also its former allies, it is possible to “win the hearts and minds” of the spoiler’s civilian constituents by persuading them to support the peace agreement and withdraw their support (active and tacit) from the spoiler’s combat operations. In so doing, the spoiler can be defeated by denying them the civilian support base needed to sustain their operations.

B. The Terms of the Settlement: Dimensions of Power-Sharing

The terms of a settlement agreement can affect the prospects for the settlement holding long enough for a viable post-conflict political order to evolve. One stream of research suggests that the more extensive the forms of power-sharing incorporated into a settlement agreement, – i.e., military, political, territorial, and economic power-sharing arrangements – the more likely that settlement agreement is to hold (Hartzell and Hoddie 2003). Power-sharing institutions are designed to give both sets of protagonists sufficient presence and representation in key policy-making institutions that each side can prevent the other from monopolizing control over those institutions and using that power to achieve by institutional means what they could not achieve on the battlefield: the subordination (or annihilation) of their rival.

Military power-sharing arrangements usually involve disarming and demobilizing forces on both sides and their reintegration into a single national army. The terms of military power-sharing usually involve some formula for guaranteeing that both rebels and government forces will each be guaranteed a minimum share of the total number of troops and of the officer corps in a new, integrated national army. This provides both sides with some assurance that their former rival will not be able to monopolize control of the new army and use it against their former enemies. Where military power-sharing arrangements are not included in the peace agreement, or where the peace agreement allows government and rebels to preserve their own separate security forces, the relapse into civil war becomes more likely.

The demand for economic power sharing arrangements in settlement agreements is usually motivated by the concern that if one side in the civil war gains disproportionate control over the nation’s economic wealth after the war ends, they will be able to use those assets to finance rearming for the purpose of annihilating their now-disarmed opponent. Even beyond security concerns, protagonists in peace negotiations may fear that if their rival is able to gain monopoly control over key economic assets, that party may be able to use those resources to subordinate their rival economically (Hartzell 2006: 45) Accordingly, groups will seek economic power sharing arrangements that “have the state displace or place limits on market competition, directing the flow of resources through economic public policies and/or administrative allocations to assist economically disadvantaged groups” (Hartzell 2006: 46).

Territorial power sharing involves decentralizing state power to regional units through federal arrangements or other forms of regional autonomy. This form of power sharing is especially relevant to securing a peace agreement in civil wars marked by geographically concentrated ethnic groups. Hartzell argues that territorial power sharing can lessen security fears and thereby make a peace agreement more acceptable to one or more parties in the negotiations. First, territorial power sharing provides some assurance that one group will not be able to seize monopoly control over the institutions of the state and use those to subordinate other groups under its authority. Groups retain some autonomy within their own territory, and that autonomy is formalized through the creation of the institutions of regional government. Thus, “territorial autonomy can serve to restrict authority at the political center by shifting decision-making power to subunits of the state” (Hartzell 2006: 44-45).

C. Peacekeeping Works:

Once the protagonists agree to a peace settlement, one form of international intervention that does have a palliative effect on civil war is the use of multi-national peacekeeping forces. The most effective way to bring to an end those conflicts that have settled into a deadly but interminable mutually hurting stalemate is for the international community to intervene as a neutral arbitrator, broker a peace agreement and enforce it with peacekeepers. Protagonists in a stalemated civil war may agree that they would be better off agreeing to a settlement, but neither can afford to commit to disarming and demobilizing without some sort of third-party security guarantee (Walter 2002). The introduction of peacekeeping forces can shorten the duration of civil wars by providing both sides with the security guarantees needed for them to be able to commit to disarming and demobilizing. Without those guarantees, the conflict is likely to continue (Enterline and Kang 2002).

By shortening the duration of civil wars, the introduction of peacekeeping forces also reduces the cumulative destructiveness of each conflict. As noted earlier, bringing civil wars to an earlier conclusion is critical to reducing their destructiveness because that destructiveness is more a function of how long civil wars last than of how intense they are. In almost all cases where peacekeepers were introduced into civil wars, this occurred after the conflict had been ongoing for some time and, therefore, was unlikely to end in a decisive military victory by either side. In the absence of peacekeeping forces and third party mediation, the conflict would, in all likelihood, have lapsed into an interminable mutually hurting stalemate.

A further benefit of peacekeeping forces is that their presence reduces the likelihood that the nation will experience a relapse into civil war. Peace agreements that are supported with peacekeeping forces are more likely to endure than those that rely on the former protagonists to sustain the peace on their own. The duration of the peace after a civil war is prolonged by the presence of peacekeeping forces, and this effect lasts even after the peacekeepers have departed (Fortna 2004). This peacekeeping effect is even more durable when the mission involves enough troops to deter an early resumption of conflict by one or both of the protagonists. And it is more likely to endure following missions that go beyond simply policing a truce to include assistance in building the institutions of a new post-conflict government, financial and technical support of economic reconstruction, monitoring elections for the new government, and providing assistance in demobilizing the troops of the former combatants and organizing and training a new unified national army and police force (see Diehl 2006).

Since the end of the Cold War, UN peacekeeping forces have been employed over forty times to enforce the peace following a civil war. They have also been employed to impose a peace where the protagonists could not be persuaded to put down their arms and come to the negotiating table, as in Bosnia and Kosovo. The UN's record of success in the realm of post-civil war peacekeeping is quite remarkable. However, it seldom captures the attention of the general public because the very success of peacekeeping operations means that the mass media pack up their cameras and move on to the next conflict hot spot. Cambodia experienced at least three separate civil wars between 1967 and 1998 that resulted in over one million deaths (out of a population of about six million). Since UN peacekeepers were introduced in 1992, there has been only one minor resumption of armed conflict, and the maintenance of peace has made it possible for new democratic institutions to consolidate to a degree unimaginable in the 1980s. Likewise, UN peacekeeping operations in Central America sustained negotiated settlements to civil wars in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, making it possible for those nations to embark upon the path to peaceful democratic development. Operations in Mozambique and Namibian have so far enabled those nations to sustain the peace and achieve levels of post-war economic growth that are unmatched by most of their neighbors in sub-Saharan Africa.

The use of UN peacekeeping forces to bring about and end to civil war and to sustain the peace thereafter is, arguably, quite cost effective for the international community as well. Since its creation in 1944, the UN has deployed sixty peacekeeping operations in various conflicts throughout the world. Forty-five of these have been deployed since 1985. The total cost of all sixty peacekeeping operations is \$60 billion dollars.³ By comparison, the U.S. has spent over five times that amount in four years of fighting in Iraq.

IV. Sustaining the Peace After Civil War

Once a civil war has been brought to a peaceful conclusion, what factors influence whether the peace will endure or the nation will experience a relapse into civil war? We address this question in the analysis that follows. Models of civil war *onset* have specified a set of national attributes that render a nation more or less susceptible to the *initial* outbreak of civil war. Among these are the level of economic development (Collier and Hoeffler 1998, 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Sambanis 2004), the extent of democracy-autocracy (Hegre *et al.* 2001; Henderson and Singer 2000; Krain and Meyer 1997), and the degree of ethnic fractionalization or polarization (Reynol-Querol 2002; Sambanis 2001). Intuitively, we might expect some of these same factors to condition both the probability of civil war resuming and the duration of the peace following civil war termination. Research on civil war *duration* and *outcomes* suggests that characteristics of the now-ended civil war itself affect both the duration and the outcome of the conflict, independent of the national attributes that made the nation susceptible to civil war onset in the first place. Those attributes of the previous civil war also condition the post-civil war environment in ways that make the recurrence of civil war more or less likely. As such, they should also influence the duration of the peace following the termination of that civil war. Among these factors are the outcome of the previous civil war (i.e., whether it ended in a rebel victory, a government victory, or a negotiated

³ See the UN Peacekeeping web site: <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/bnote.htm>

settlement; see Licklider 1995; Mason and Fett 1996; Mason, Weingarten, and Fett 1999), the terms of the settlement agreement (if that is how the war ended; see Hartzell 1999; Hartzell, Hoddie and Rothchild 2001; Harzell and Hoddie 2003), the presence or absence of multinational peacekeeping forces (Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Walter 2002; Fortna 2004), as well as the destructiveness and duration of the conflict (Walter 2004).

A. Does Democracy Sustain the Peace?

At the core of most power sharing arrangements is political democracy. A settlement agreement that includes the installation of democratic institutions provides the protagonists with incentives to stop fighting. Democracy provides former enemies and their respective constituents with an alternative to violence as a means to secure redress of their grievances. Elected leaders have an electoral incentive to address those grievances with accommodative policies, and they risk electoral costs if they respond to group demands with repression. Indeed, there is some evidence that establishing democracy can sustain the peace even in the absence of international peacekeeping forces (Peceny and Stanley 2001).

However, the evidence on the effect of democracy on the durability of the peace following civil war is not consistent. Doyle and Sambanis (2000) found some support for the proposition that both post-conflict democracies and the peace following a civil war were more likely to survive if peacekeeping forces were introduced following the termination of the civil war. Walter (2004) found that when a full democracy was established in the aftermath of a civil war, the odds of a nation experiencing a new civil war (i.e., one involving new rebel groups) was less than one-half of one percent, compared to 2.5 percent for nondemocracies. However, she found no relationship between democracy and the likelihood of a relapse into war between the same factions that had fought the now-ended civil war. Quinn, Mason and Gurses (2007) found that post-civil war democracies are no more or less likely than nondemocracies to experience a resumption of civil war.

The weak empirical support for the pacifying effects of post-conflict democracy may be a function of the vulnerability of *new* democracies to civil war (Hegre *et al.* 2001). Almost all post-civil war democracies are, almost by definition, new democracies. As such, post-civil war democracy remains fragile. Roland Paris (1997, 2004) cautions us that democracy is based on the principle of competition and, in the immediate aftermath of a civil war, electoral competition can open old wounds, especially since the most likely basis for party formation is around the same organizations that were killing each other with considerable enthusiasm during the civil war. Recent experience with civil war is not conducive to the level of trust required for good faith bargaining across party lines. Nor is it conducive to the willingness of losers in democratic elections to accept defeat and assume the role of loyal opposition. In new post-civil war democracies parties that lose elections have reason to fear that the victors will use the powers of office to attack them and diminish, through extra-constitutional means, the opposition's prospects for prevailing in future elections.

Finally, democracy does not spring naturally from the rubble of civil war. And new democracies do not always survive. Indeed, the post-civil war environment often exhibits many of the characteristics that research has shown to be inhospitable to the survival of democracy. Przeworski *et al.* (1997) have shown that the probability of a new democracy surviving declines with increasing

poverty, decreasing levels of aggregate economic development, and high rates of inflation, all of which often characterize post-civil war environments. The most successful post-civil war democracies are those that have been bolstered by internationally sponsored (and financed) institution building efforts that moderate these corrosive trends in the economy and give democracy a chance to survive.

B. Does Economic Development Sustain the Peace?

Just as poverty and underdevelopment are powerful predictors of civil war onset, so post-civil war economic development enhances the prospect that the peace will endure. Where the economy affords citizens an opportunity for a decent standard of living, they have little incentive to support a resumption of armed conflict, with all the risks that choice would entail. Post-civil war economic development raises the opportunity costs of conflict and, thereby, makes it less likely to resume (Collier and Hoeffler 1998, 2004).

Economic development may be more critical to sustaining the peace in nations that have just ended a civil war than in impoverished nations that have not experienced a civil war. But building a prosperous post-conflict economy is no easy task, to say the least. We know that nations that experienced civil war were already characterized by relatively low levels of economic development before the war began. The war itself destroys substantial portions of the nation's human capital and economic infrastructure. It also disrupts normal economic production and commerce, leaving the post-civil war environment even weaker economically and, therefore, more susceptible to the resumption of civil war than it would be to an initial civil war onset, had had there been on previous civil war. Collier (2000:2) notes:

First, unless the country was very unlucky, it presumably had risk factors which made it atypically prone to conflict and these are likely to have persisted. Secondly, the conflict is likely to have caused some of these underlying factors, such as per capita income, to deteriorate. Third, the conflict will have changed the consequences of a given set of pre-conflict risk factors: some risk factors have different affects post-conflict than pre-conflict. Fourth, it will have generated grievances which themselves temporarily increase the risk of conflict.

Given these circumstances, the international community can substantially reduce the prospects for a relapse into civil war by investing in post-civil war economic development. While the costs of such efforts may be substantial (and they will vary considerably from case to case), it is reasonable to expect that the amount required will be less than the financial costs of a renewed war. The ONUCA operation in Central America that enforced the peace following the Contra War in Nicaragua cost \$92.4 million. The UN operation in El Salvador (ONUSAL) cost another \$107 million. The total cost of the Central American peacebuilding operations is substantially less than the economic losses those nations suffered as a direct consequence of their civil wars. Peacebuilding also cost substantially less than what the U.S. spent in military aid to defend the government of El Salvador and to aid the Contra rebels in their attempt to overthrow the government of Nicaragua. Peacekeeping operations in Mozambique and Namibia cost \$492.6 million and \$368 million respectively. None of these nations has experienced a resumption of civil war. Therefore, a strong case can be made that it is cost effective for the international community to invest in post-civil war

reconstruction. Otherwise, the resumption of civil war becomes more likely and at a much greater cost – in human and material terms – to all involved.

V. Conclusion

Social science research on how civil wars end suggests some policy tools that the international community can employ to reduce the number of on-going civil wars in the world, shorten their duration, lessen their destructiveness and make nations that have experienced one civil war less likely to experience a relapse into renewed conflict. First, contrary to Luttwak's "give war a chance" thesis, civil wars that do not end early do not usually result in a decisive victory for one side or the other. Instead, they simply settle into an interminable stalemate. The most feasible way to bring such conflicts to a peaceful conclusion is for the international community (through some agency) to broker a negotiated settlement and support it with peacekeeping forces and with post-conflict peacebuilding.

That research suggests that peacekeeping works. The promise of peacekeepers makes the protagonists more willing to negotiate and more willing to accept and abide by a settlement agreement. In this manner, peacekeeping operation make the peace more durable; they reduce the risk of renewed conflict. Moreover, peacekeeping forces are relatively cheap, compared to the costs of renewed war to the civil war nation itself, to its neighbors, and to the international community generally.

Third, post-conflict peacebuilding programs to rehabilitate the economy and build the institutions of a democratic government also contribute to a more sustainable peace. However, new democracies generally are fragile and prone to failure, and the experience of a previous civil war renders a post-civil war democracy even more vulnerable to failure would be the case had that new democratic regime been installed in a nation that had not experienced a civil war. Thus, bringing civil wars to an earlier conclusion and sustaining the peace thereafter requires a commitment of material resources but the willingness to sustain the peacebuilding mission until the new institutions have time to establish their effectiveness and legitimacy in the eyes of the population. While such missions are costly, they are arguably less costly than a resumption of armed conflict

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