Game Theoretic Analysis of Insurgent Attacks, Government Protection, and International Intervention

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ABSTRACT

This article describes how a government failing to protect against insurgents may or may not be rescued by the international community. We find that when intervention is less probable, the insurgent and government fight harder and the insurgent more likely succeeds. Conversely, when intervention is more probable, the insurgent fights less expecting subsequent intervention, and the government protects less expecting international community rescue. Higher contest intensities cause comparably matched players to fight harder. The international community intervenes if its unit intervention cost is low weighted against the benefits of intervention.

KEYWORDS
challenger, conflict, fighting, incumbent, International intervention, protection, terrorism

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Contribution

In national and international affairs, if an insurgent attacks and the government unsuccessfully cannot protect its citizens, the international community may not intervene, or may intervene successfully or unsuccessfully. The international community is defined as an individual foreign government (e.g. US), a combination of foreign governments, or various alliances such as NATO or the UN. Common objectives of international intervention, defined as military intervention, are to stabilize the country, to get access to resources, or ideological, idealistic or humanitarian objectives. For example, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad for the Tuareg people attacked and removed president Amadou Toumani Touré in Mali January 16-March 22, 2012 (Arves, Cunningham, & McCulloch, 2019). The French military and forces from the African Union states intervened successfully January 11-February 8, 2013.

The phenomenon involves three players, i.e. an insurgent, a government, and the international community. To extract the strategic features between the three players, this article develops a rent seeking model where the rent sought by each player is weighted against the player’s unit cost of fighting. Each player seeks a rent relative to its current status quo situation. For example, in Mali the Tuareg people perceived getting limited access to natural resources, public goods, and power, in addition to feeling excluded. Hence, they launched an insurgent attack. The government protected unsuccessfully, losing privileges and power. The international community was accustomed to the stability before the attack and preferred to restore the situation prior to the attack. Weighing the

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economic and humanitarian benefits of intervention against the costs, the international community intervened successfully.

To understand the logic of such situations, this article builds a four-period model of the three players, i.e. the insurgent, the government, and the international community. The research questions are to determine how potential intervention by the international community impacts whether an insurgent attacks, impacts the interaction between the insurgent and the government, and impacts the interaction between the insurgent and the international community if intervention occurs. The international community’s choice of whether to intervene is an exogenous probability, which contrasts with the more common approach of assuming an intervention, and assessing its success versus failure.

The insurgent can be any group opposed to the government, which may or may not incorporate terrorist elements. The insurgent may choose to attack or not in period 1. If attacking, which occurs in period 2, the government may protect successfully or not in period 2. If not protecting successfully, the international community may choose to intervene or not in period 3, and may intervene successfully or not in period 4. The article illustrates linkages between the four periods impacting how the three players interact.

1.2 Literature

The literature on interventions is multifarious since so many approaches are possible, and so many players are generally involved. This section considers some representative literature. Cetinyan (2002) explains within a rationalist approach that weak ethnic groups rebel against their governments as frequently as strong groups. He finds that external intervention is not greater when the state increases its mistreatment of a certain group. Kydd and Straus (2013) evaluate whether third-party intervention deters or encourages perpetrators. They show that neutrality and appropriate institutional design may decrease the negative impact of intervention. Cunningham (2016) finds that the potential for international intervention can deter conflict. Regan (2002) shows that third-party interventions tend to prolong civil conflicts. Thyne (2009) assesses costly and cheap signals from the international community, and applies bargaining theory and rational expectations to determine the impact on civil conflict. Jelnov (2018) shows how a state applying too much violence against an attacking non-state military organization may be punished by the international community for non-proportional use of violence.

Grigoryan (2010) questions the conventional wisdom that violence against minorities decreases through interventions, and also questions that interventions may induce moral hazard among minorities. He suggests that escalation depends on certain distributions of private information about the target state’s brutality and the third party’s motives and resolve. He illustrates with the Yugoslavia conflicts.

Carment and Rowlands (1998) develop a model to determine success and failures of interventions depending on the mission’s intensity, the conflict salience to the intervener, and the opponent’s capabilities and expected gains from continued fighting. Rowlands and Carment (2006) find that an intervention’s success depends on how the intervener allocates resources between the fighting players and influences them militarily, and how the players divide their resources between production and fighting. NATO’s intervention in Kosovo is used as an illustration. Carment and Rowlands (1998, 2004) evaluate whether third parties can cause peace without separation.

Benson, Meirowitz, and Ramsay (2014) find that alliances not internalizing costs of actions that can cause war may cause moral hazard. They further show that moral hazard can minimize conflict risk, deter potential aggressors, and improve security. Allen and Yuen (2014) show how powerful states constrain international bureaucracies, though dependent on the interests of the UN Security Council’s five permanent members. Furthermore, heterogeneous powerful state preferences impact how flexibly bureaucracies maintain peacekeeping. Du Bois and Buts (2019) investigate how a country’s participation in the international coalition against Daesh (ISIS) impacts its number of foreign fighters. Interventions have been further analyzed by Blum (2003), Ege and Makhijani