Conflict escalation during neutral and biased humanitarian military interventions

Luqman Saeed

Luqman Saeed is a Lecturer of Economics in the Department of Accounting, Finance and Economics at the University of Ulster, Belfast, Northern Ireland. He can be reached at l.saeed@ulster.ac.uk.

Abstract

This article considers the effects of humanitarian military interventions (HMIs) on conflict in the countries in which they have been used. Theoretically, neutral HMIs, in which interveners target all violent actors, are expected to have a pacifying effect on conflict intensity by increasing the cost of violence for all parties—while biased HMIs can escalate conflict intensity, by reducing the cost of violence and so encouraging the supported parties to become more violent. The empirical results show that neutral HMIs do seem to lead to lower conflict intensity in the targeted countries, relative to other conflict-affected countries. Anti-rebels HMIs are observed to escalate conflict both in the short and the long run, while the evidence for anti-government HMIs is mixed.

H umanitarian military interventions (HMIs) have been argued by both politicians and scholars to be an effective political strategy to end violent conflicts, establish peace, and protect civilians' lives.[1] The case for intervention is made by highlighting several infamous episodes of mass atrocities in countries such as Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Libya. They argue that these conflicts would not have been resolved or would have worsened without determined military action. The deployment of military force is argued to have acted as a deterrent and have compelled perpetrators of atrocities to opt for a negotiated solution to the conflict, or at the very least, to reduce conflict intensity from its pre-intervention level.[2] In contrast, anti-interventionists have argued that HMIs are counterproductive and can escalate violent conflicts. They can lead to nationalist backlashes against foreign occupation and insurmountable logistical challenges in foreign lands that can drag foreign militaries into "endless wars".[3]

Between these two there is an approach that distinguishes neutral interventions from biased interventions. Both powerful and weak actors involved in the conflict are modeled as political actors, with the payoff from engaging in violent conflict assumed to depend on the cost of violence and the likelihood of three outcomes which are victory, defeat, and settlement. The success of military interventions depends on lowering the expected payoff and likelihood of victory of the belligerents.[4] Biased interventions can fuel conflict by decreasing the cost of violence and increasing the probability of victory for the supported party, leading to "perverse" incentives for the supported party to escalate

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1 Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, a passionate advocate for humanitarian military interventions, said in his speech delivered at Sedgefield (U.K.) in 2004 "The best defense of our security lies in the spread of our values". Alluding to the kind of values which he thought must be promoted and which, in his opinion, should lead to political stability and economic prosperity, he further added that "citizens who are free, well-educated and prosperous tend to be responsible, to feel solidarity with a society in which they have a stake; so do nations that are free, democratic and benefiting from economic progress, tend to be stable and solid partners in the advance of humankind." Articulating his defense of military interventions on humanitarian grounds he observed "And we do not accept in a community that others have a right to oppress and brutalize their people. We value the freedom and dignity of the human race and each individual in it." See full text of the speech at https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2004/mar/05/iraq.iraq .
2 Smith (1994); Perriello (2012).
3 Reisman (2004); Snow (2015).
4 Bove (2011).

the fighting.[5] In contrast, neutral interventions where military action is taken against all belligerents can increase the cost of violence for all parties, and so have a pacifying effect. This perspective mainly accounts for how the intervener's political commitments (neutral or biased), manifested in military action, shape incentives for conflict parties to continue engaging in violence. In the case of other types of intervention, for instance, diplomatic interventions, these same commitments might lead to different outcomes. For example, it has been

Humanitarian military interventions (HMIs) are launched on the pretext of pacifying violent conflicts. However, HMIs in which intervener(s) act discriminately against the conflict actors (whether rebels or government) are likely to be counter-productive and escalate conflict. Biased interventions can fuel conflict by decreasing the cost of violence and increasing the probability of victory for the supported party—thereby invigorating it to escalate its violence. Neutral interventions, however, appear effective in reducing violence.

argued that mediation by a highly biased power can enforce conflict resolution by revealing a credible threat of military intervention in case the negotiations fail.[6]

This article empirically analyzes the effects of neutral and biased HMIs on conflict escalation. It follows Gromes and Dembinski's[7] definition of humanitarian military interventions as military intervention in which a state or group of states threaten or deploy military force to save individuals, from national backgrounds other than of their own, from violent emergencies. It also employs their newly digitized database—which includes both unilateral and multilateral interventions. Acknowledging that no HMI can be exclusive of other non-humanitarian objectives, they identify a humanitarian motive by "asking whether decision-makers expressly claim the objective of stopping or reducing violence within the target country." [8]

Further, this article tests the hypotheses that neutral HMIs have a pacifying effect on conflict and that biased HMIs (anti-government/anti-rebels) aggravate the conflict (using a large panel database covering 1946–2019). The database covers all episodes of HMIs during the post-second world war period which were launched to address ongoing violent emergencies[9]. Unlike previous databases on military interventions, it excludes cases of humanitarian relief efforts[10], strictly focuses on humanitarian interventions that are launched to stop atrocities, and also covers a longer period than existing studies.[11]

There is mixed empirical evidence on the effects of military interventions on conflict. While some studies have observed biased military interventions lead to negative effects on civilian security[12] (the likelihood of civil war termination[13] and extrajudicial killings[14]), others have found neutral interventions ineffective in stopping politicides, genocides, and mass atrocities.[15] One of the drawbacks that the existing literature suffers from, and which may to an extent explain contradictory results, is that it aggregates different types of military interventions which may have different effects on conflict. While some studies do distinguish between different types of military interventions based

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[5] For instance, the level of atrocities committed by the national army of the Democratic Republic of Congo increased after the United Nation's Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) intervened in the country and allied with the army to fight against armed militias (United Nations Security Council, 2017)

[6] Favretto (2009).

[7] Gromes and Dembinski (2019)

[8] See the codebook of Gromes and Dembinski's (2019) Humanitarian military interventions dataset, p. 7. Link: http://www.humanitarian-military-interventions.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/PRIF-data-set-HMI-codebook-v1-14.pdf .

[9] Violent emergency is defined as an armed conflict between the government and non-state actors or one-sided violence which result in 25 or more deaths in a year time.

[10] These include the deployment of military force in foreign territories to assist in relief efforts following natural disasters.

[11] For instance, Kisangani and Pickering, (2008) and Sullivan and Koch, (2009) databases end in 2005 and 2003 respectively

[12] Wood, Kathman and Gent (2012).

[13] Kim (2012); Sawyer, Cunningham and Reed (2015).

[14] Peksen (2012).

[15] Krain (2005); Conley and Hazlett (2020)

on motives (humanitarian/non-humanitarian) and political position (biased/neutral) of the intervener—but even that does not sufficiently cleanse the noise from the data. For instance, the majority of the existing literature uses older military intervention databases[16] which employ a very wide definition of humanitarian military interventions (e.g., including evacuation missions along with full blown military assaults). The older databases also suffer from temporal limitations and end in the mid-2000s. To address these, this article

Table 1: Types of humanitarian military interventions 1945–2019

Type	Quantity	Period (years)	Years per intervention
Neutral	20	75	3.75
Anti-Rebels	12	59	4.91
Anti-Government	9	19	2.1

Source: Gromes and Dembinski (2019)

provides a refined analysis of the HMIs which involves military actions to resolve ongoing violent emergencies. Benefiting from the Gromes and Dembinski's novel database, it also covers a larger timespan of 1945–2019.

There is some relevant literature that lends support to the view that neutral HMIs lead to conflict resolution. Peacekeeping missions are closely related to neutral HMIs[17] and several studies have found that peacekeeping missions lead to a reduction in the level of atrocities.[18]

Conflict and humanitarian military interventions 1945–2019

Figure 1 shows that of the 41 episodes of HMI in the database, only 6 were experienced in the period of 1945–1990. These are: The United Nations' intervention in D R Congo (1960–64), India's intervention in the then East Pakistan (1971), the Arab League's intervention in Lebanon (1976–79), Tanzania's intervention in Uganda (1979), the United States' intervention in Lebanon (1982–84), and India's intervention in Sri Lanka (1987–90). The remaining 35 HMIs were in the era following the break-up of the Soviet Union. As Table 1 shows, in 20 cases, the interveners deployed military forces to counter violence from all parties in the conflict (here termed "neutral HMIs"). In the remaining 21 HMIs, the main targets were either the government forces or the rebel groups (here termed "biased HMIs").[19] The longest duration HMIs were those in which the primary targets were non-state rebellious groups, which lasted, on average, around 5 years.

The data source used for conflict intensity is the Uppsala Conflict Database Program (UCDP) Conflict Termination Database Version 1.0 [20] and is examined over the period of the HMI and 7 years before and after. Conflict intensity is an ordinal variable measured on a three points scale of 0,1 and 2 which represent less than 25, between 25–999, and 1000 or above battle-related deaths a year. As Figure 2 shows, before the interventions were underway, targeted countries were already experiencing excess conflict intensity, defined as the difference between their average conflict intensity and the global (horizontal line). Then, when biased HMIs occurred (year 0) average conflict intensities increased sharply and reached their maximum. While it is possible that these increases were independent of biased HMIs and that HMIs were launched in response, it is also possible that biased HMIs were responsible for worsening conflict intensity. It is not possible to disentangle cause and effect from these trends, but average conflict

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16 Kisangani and Pickering (2008); Sullivan and Koch (2009)
17 According to the United Nations three key principles underline peacekeeping missions 1) consent of the parties 2) neutrality and 3) use of force only in defense of forces deployed and the mandate. Hence, the element of neutrality is common to both peacekeeping missions and neutral HMIs. For more see information on peacekeeping see the United Nations' peacekeeping webpage at https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/what-is-peacekeeping (last accessed 16th of September 2022)
18 Hegre, Hultman, and Nygård (2018); Bara and Hultman (2020)
19 Gromes and Dembinski (2019) determine the partiality of an intervention by focusing on the political strategy of the intervener. For instance, they examine whether the intervener attempts to prevent the defeat of any party or takes selective action while enforcing ceasefire or peace agreement.
20 Kreutz (2010).

intensities remained high during the years when HMIs were ongoing. Except for the first year following the anti-government HMIs, the difference from the global average conflict intensity remained relatively large during the period post biased HMIs, widening after 2 years. Interestingly, the neutral HMIs saw a reduction in average conflict intensity from the pre-intervention year. For almost the whole post-intervention period, this reduction was to a level that was lower than both the global average in some years and also below that of conflict-affected countries[21].

Figure 1: Humanitarian military interventions 1945-2019
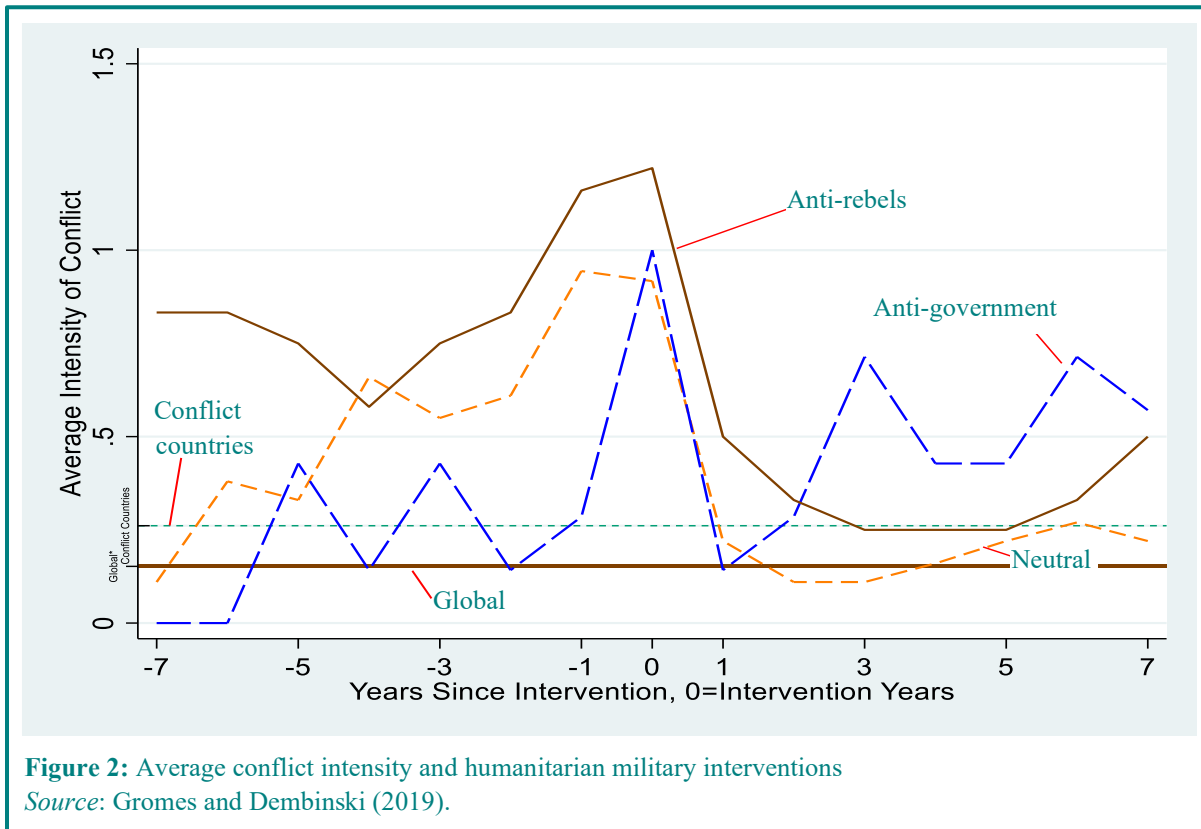*Source*: Gromes and Dembinski (2019).
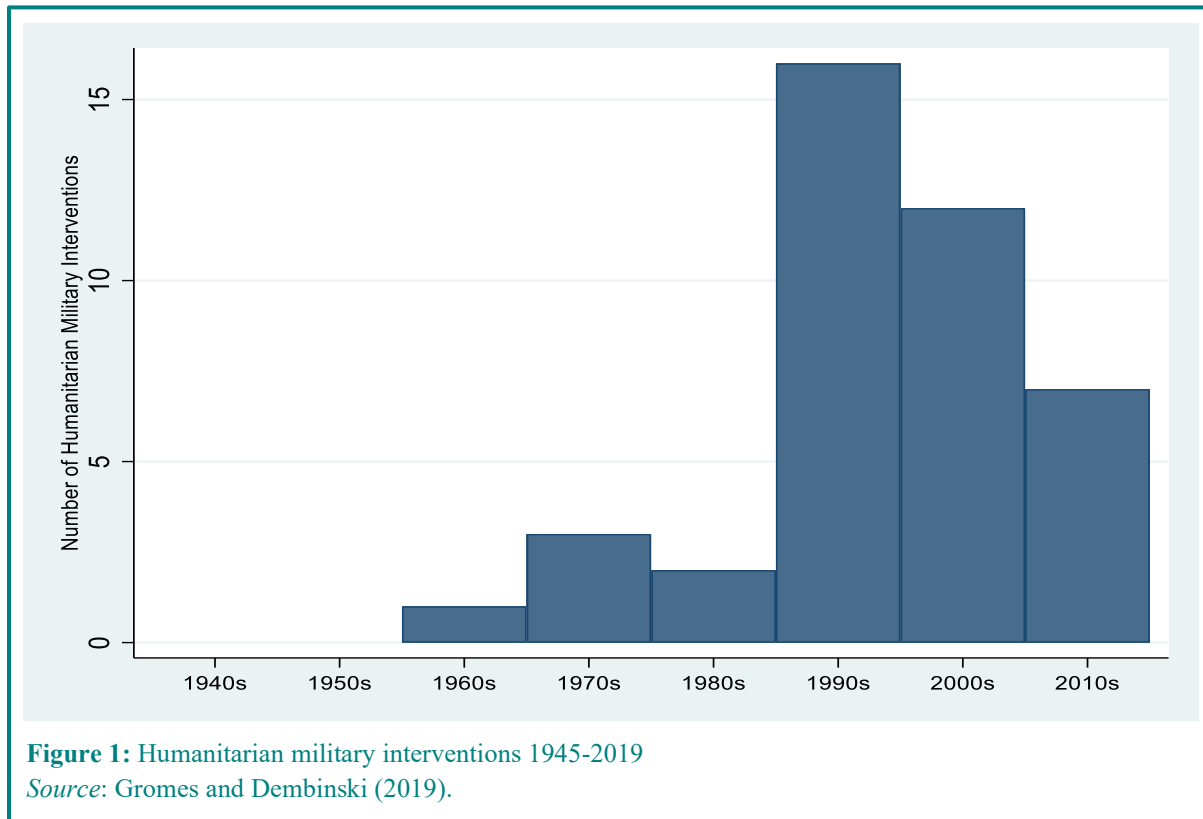
While the trends in Figure 2 are insightful, the conflict intensity data restricts the analysis to an annual basis, but it is possible conflict escalation and HMIs occurred at different times during the year. There are 15 cases of HMIs—of which 6 are neutral, 7 anti-government, and 1 anti-rebel—that have starting and ending dates falling within a single calendar year.

Using battle related fatalities data, which is available at a disaggregated level, allows a more detailed analysis. HMIs are launched on the pretext of addressing violent emergencies, hence average daily battle-related deaths should fall from their pre-intervention levels. The main data source for battle-related deaths is the UCDP Georeferenced Database which only starts in 1989. It also does not provide data for ongoing HMIs, so these were calculated and added. The total sample consists of 33 HMIs—16 of which are neutral, 7 anti-government, and 10 anti-rebels. The data for the neutral HMIs is presented in Table 2 and shows that in 14 out of the 16 neutral HMIs the daily average battle-related deaths fell from their pre-intervention levels. Only in cases of the Central African Republic (2013–

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21 This comprises those countries which experienced at least one episode of conflict-defined as 25 or more battle-related deaths in a calendar year during the 1945-2019 period.

ongoing) and South Sudan (2011–ongoing) did they increase from the pre-intervention values. These trends are broadly in line with the annual level trends in conflict intensity in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Average conflict intensity and humanitarian military interventions
Source: Gromes and Dembinski (2019).

In the 7 episodes of anti-government HMIs for which data is available, Table 3 shows average daily battle-related deaths increased in only 2 cases from their pre-intervention levels. While not in line with Figure 2, caution is needed as the sample size is so small. Nevertheless, since most of the against government HMIs ended within a calendar year, it is possible that conflicts intensified before the launch of these interventions and were followed by de-escalation once the military action was underway. However, in 3 out of 7 cases of anti-government HMIs, new violent emergencies started within the 5 years of the end of interventions.

On the other hand, the findings for anti-rebels HMIs reported in Table 4 are mixed. In 5 out of 10 cases of anti-rebels HMIs, average daily battle-related deaths increased from their pre-intervention levels whereas in the remaining half they decreased.

Overall, the data suggest that there is some relief in conflict intensity as a result of neutral and anti-government HMIs, but that conflicts escalate when anti-rebels HMIs are ongoing. In the few cases for which data is available, conflicts do also seem to escalate in the post anti-government HMIs period. While these trends are insightful, the effects of HMIs on conflict intensity cannot be isolated without controlling for other potential conflict-causing factors in a multivariate setting and including conflict affected countries that did not experience HMIs.

Table 2: Average daily battle-related deaths during neutral HMIs

Interventions	Pre Intervention Period	Intervention Period	Change
Bosnia and Herzegovina 1993–1995	25.21	20.05	↓
Burundi 2001–2008	3.84	1.82	↓
Central African Republic 2013–ongoing	0.17	4.51	↑
Chad 2008–2010	1.89	1.38	↓
Côte d'Ivoire 2002–2005	95	1.59	↓
DR Congo 2000–2013	20.55	5.73	↓
DR Congo 2003	2.85	0.06	↓
East Timor 1999	28.12	1.22	↓
Georgia (Abkhazia) 1992–1993	NA	4.43	NA
Haiti 2004–2005	5.21	0.37	↓
Rwanda 1994	5497.91	725.95	↓
Sierra Leone 1999–2000	6.43	1.68	↓
Solomon Islands 2003	0.1	0	↓
Somalia 1992–1995	7.86	0.9	↓
South Sudan 2011–ongoing	2.04	3.97	↑
Sudan (Darfur) 2007	8.48	4.59	↓

Source: Gromes and Dembinski (2019), Sundberg and Melander (2013)

Table 3: Average daily battle-related deaths during anti-government HMIs

Interventions	Pre Intervention Period	Intervention Period	Change
Côte d'Ivoire 2011	3.18	1.67	↑
Haiti 1994	0.61	0.27	↓
Iraq (Kurds) 1991–1997	47.88	2.18	↑
Iraq (South) 1992–1996	1.49	0.71	↓
Libya 2011	12.06	7.83	↓
Moldova 1992	1.76	6.23	↑
Yugoslavia (Kosovo) 1999	4.31	25.19	↑

Source: Gromes and Dembinski (2019), Sundberg and Melander (2013)

Table 4: Average daily battle-related deaths during anti-rebels HMIs

Interventions	Pre Intervention Period	Intervention Period	Change
Afghanistan 2003–2014	15.13	16.91	↑
Bosnia and Herzegovina 1995	21.52	1.63	↓
DR Congo 2013–ongoing	5.02	7.25	↑
Iraq 2014–ongoing	122.31	24.27	↓
Liberia 1990–1996	14.8	5.79	↓
Mali 2013–ongoing	0.97	1.81	↑
Sierra Leone 1997–1999	4.02	13.52	↑
Sierra Leone 2000–2001	6	0.83	↓
Somalia 2007–ongoing	3.44	5.47	↑
Tajikistan 1993–1996	9.29	3.11	↓

Source: Gromes and Dembinski (2019), Sundberg and Melander (2013)

Multivariate analysis of conflict intensity and humanitarian military interventions

Panel data on 96 countries that experienced at least one conflict episode (more than 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year) during the 1946–2019 period was constructed, and a conflict dependent variable created. This was an ordinal conflict intensity variable, 0 (below 25), 1 (between 25–999), and 2 (1000 or above) battle-related deaths where levels 1 and 2 are referred to as minor conflicts and war, so an ordered probit regression method was used. Fixed effect regression analysis was used as a robustness check. The main explanatory variables are neutral, anti-rebels, and anti-government HMIs, introducing up to 3 lags for each of these variables.

Several other control variables are also included in the model to capture conflict history, and economic and political characteristics which have been observed in existing models to be closely related to conflict dynamics. [22] These include: Lagged conflict intensity, a dummy for new conflict[23], GDP per capita growth rate, life expectancy, military expenditure/ GDP, logged total population[24], an index for material capability[25], ethnic fractionalization[26], and a human rights observance score.[27]

The results are presented in Table 5, with Model 5.1 showing that the contemporaneous effect of anti-rebels HMIs

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22 Esteban and Ray (2008); Hegre, Hultman, and Nygård (2018); Sawyer, Cunningham and Reed (2015).
23 Data sources: Gleditsch, *et al*. (2002) ; Pettersson, *et al*. (2019).
24 Data source for GDP per capita growth rate, life expectancy, total and urban populations: World Development Indicators database of the World Bank (2021).
25 Material capability is a composite index of six variables which include military personnel, military expenditures, iron and steel production, primary energy consumption, total and urban population. The index is constructed by first dividing each state's share into these six components with the total of these components in the whole system. Then for each state, the average of all relative shares is computed which gives the index of material capability and which has a score between 0 and 1. The data for material capability is taken from the Correlates of War Project (Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey, 1972: Version 6.0).
26 Ethnic fractionalization measures the probability of randomly selecting two individuals not to be from the same ethnic group. Data source: Drazanova (2019).
27 Human rights observance is measured on a scale where the global average is set at 0. The higher number reflects better human rights observance. Data source: Fariss(2019).

on conflict intensity is positive and statistically significant, having a p-value of less than 5 percent. This result is consistent in Model 5.2, which is estimated using a fixed effect estimator. The coefficient for anti-government HMIs is also positive but statistically insignificant and the coefficient for neutral HMI has a negative sign (and is also not significant). Models 5.3 and 5.4 show that for the lagged variables the coefficients for both neutral and anti-government HMIs are negative and significant—however anti-rebel HMIs has a positive sign (but it is statistically significant only in Model 5.4). In models 5.5 and 5.6, which include two lags for intervention variables, the coefficient for neutral and anti-government HMIs are still negative and statistically significant whereas the coefficient for anti-rebels HMIs is positive (and statistically significant). Finally, in models 5.7 and 5.8, 3 lags are introduced with the results indicating a large positive effect of anti-government HMIs on conflict intensity—the effect of anti-rebels HMIs is still positive and statistically significant.

So, there is consistent evidence that anti-rebels HMIs escalate conflict intensity, while the evidence for anti-government HMIs is mixed. While these interventions negatively correlate with conflict intensity with lags of 1 and 2 years, the impact becomes positive after a lag of 3 years. The results also show that neutral HMIs lower conflict intensity in the long run.

The average marginal effects from the contemporaneous model in Table 6 show that country-years that experience anti-rebels HMIs are about 6.9 percent more likely to experience minor conflict and 4.9 percent more likely to experience war, as compared with country-years that do not experience such interventions. The marginal effects for anti-rebels HMIs in the long-run models are in the range of 6.1–4.8 percent for minor conflict and 4.3–3.4 percent for war. Hence the likelihoods of experiencing minor conflict and war significantly increase in countries that experience anti-rebels HMIs, compared with conflict-affected countries that do not.

The average marginal effects for neutral HMIs from long-run models show that country-years which experience these interventions are approximately 2.8–3.8 percent less likely to experience minor conflicts and 2.7–2.0 percent less likely to experience war as compared with the baseline conflict-affected countries with no such interventions.

On the other hand, while anti-government HMIs reduce the likelihoods of minor conflict and war by a significantly high magnitude (62–43 percent for minor conflict and 44–33 percent for war), the impact turns positive after a lag of three years (41 and 29.7 respectively). In other words, anti-government HMIs seem to lead to a reduction in the level of atrocities with a lag of 1 and 2 years but eventually, the impact turns positive and assumes a magnitude that is substantially larger than that of anti-rebels HMIs after a lag of 3 years. However, it should be noted that the findings for anti-government HMIs might be affected by a small sample size as the data for these HMIs is only available for 19 years as compared with 75 and 59 years for neutral and anti-rebels HMIs.

These results are partially in line with the descriptive trends observed in Figure 2. Anti-rebels HMIs are observed to lead to an increase in conflict intensity in both contemporaneous settings and in the long run as compared with conflict-affected countries which do not experience any such interventions. Conflict intensity increases when the anti-rebels HMIs are ongoing and remain above the global average even in the post-intervention period. While conflict intensity also peaked during anti-government HMIs, there is no evidence to suggest that this is caused by the interventions. However, Figure 2 also showed conflict intensity increasing to a high level 2 to 3 years after the end of these interventions and the results shown in Table 5 for models 5.7–5.8, which include anti-government HMIs variable with a 3 year lag (most of which lasted less than a year), seem to suggest that the anti-government HMIs contributed to these increases.

Table 5: Regression results, dependent variable: Conflict intensity scale from 0 to 2

Variables	Model 5.1 Ordered Probit	Model 5.2 Fixed Effect	Model 5.3 Ordered Probit	Model 5.4 Fixed Effect	Model 5.5 Ordered Probit	Model 5.6 Fixed Effect	Model 5.7 Ordered Probit	Model 5.8 Fixed Effect
Neutral HMIs	-0.233 (0.41)	-0.035 (0.56)						
Anti-Government HMIs	0.577 (0.45)	0.305 (0.42)						
Anti-Rebels HMIs	0.926** (0.02)	0.432*** (0.00)						
Neutral HMIs$_{t-1}$			-0.515* (0.06)	-0.156** (0.01)				
Anti-Government HMIs$_{t-1}$			-8.40*** (0.00)	-0.882** (0.03)				
Anti-Rebels HMIs$_{t-1}$			0.577 (0.24)	0.289 (0.05)**				
Neutral HMIs$_{t-2}$					-0.382* (0.09)	-0.122** (0.02)		
Anti-Government HMIs$_{t-2}$					-5.83*** (0.00)	-0.321*** (0.00)		
Anti-Rebels HMIs$_{t-2}$					0.824 (0.01)**	0.328*** (0.00)		
Neutral HMIs$_{t-3}$							-0.543 (0.15)	-0.154** (0.02)
Anti-Government HMIs$_{t-3}$							5.58*** (0.00)	0.861*** (0.00)
Anti-Rebels HMIs$_{t-3}$							0.645** (0.07)	0.225 (0.11)
Wald- LR Statistic /Prob > chi2	717.29 (0.00)	5302.29 (0.00)	2105.91 (0.00)	4391.12 (0.00)	3122.46 (0.00)	4823.18 (0.00)	2186.26 (0.00)	75723.04 (0.00)
Observations	3414	3414	3414	3414	3414	3414	3414	3414

Notes: All models include battery of control variables. Ordered probit models also include regional dummies. Parentheses contain p values. *** p< 0.01, ** p<0.05. Robust clustered standard errors estimated in all models. Constant included in all models.

Table 6: Average marginal effects

Model	Intervention	0 (less than 25 battle-related deaths)	1 (25-999 battle-related deaths)	2 (1000 or above battle-related deaths)
Model 5.1	Anti-Rebels	-0.118	0.069	0.049
Model 5.3	Neutral	0.065	-0.038	-0.027
	Anti-Gov	1.02	-0.626	-0.446
Model 5.5	Anti-Rebels	-0.105	0.061	0.043
	Neutral	0.048	-0.028	-0.020
	Anti-Gov	0.747	-0.436	-0.310
Model 5.7	Anti-Rebels	-0.082	0.048	0.034
	Anti-Gov	-0.717	0.419	0.297

As far as the neutral HMIs are concerned, there is evidence that suggests a long-run pacifying effect on conflict. It can be observed in Figure 2 that the slope of the curve for neutral HMI is negative starting from 1 year before interventions until 3 years in the post-intervention period. Average conflict intensity remained lower in countries that experienced neutral HMIs as compared with other conflict-affected countries.

As a robustness check for the non-randomization of HMIs, an instrumental variable regression method was used, with instruments generated from the heteroscedasticity in the errors of the endogenous covariate, i.e., humanitarian military intervention variable.[28] The results from IV regression support the findings from the fixed effect models that neutral HMIs lower conflict intensity whereas biased HMIs have the opposite effect.[29]

Some case study evidence

It is beyond the scope of this study to test in detail the underlying mechanism causing the diverging effects of neutral and biased HMIs on conflict intensity. But there does seem to be case study evidence to support the plausibility of the perverse incentive argument that biased interventions encourage the supported parties to escalate the fighting, particularly in case of anti-rebels HMIs. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)[30] was formed in 2007 to stop atrocities committed by the Al-Shabab group. This intervention is coded as an anti-rebel and the results in Table 5 would suggest it would escalate violent conflicts. A Human Rights Watch report suggests that the bias demonstrated during the intervention encouraged anti-Shabab forces to escalate the level of violence, describing AMISOM action as turning a blind eye to their allies' "abuses on the ground".[31]

Another relevant case is that of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) of the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The FIB was established in 2013 to counter four armed groups (out of a total of 70 groups operating in the country): The Front for the Patriotic Resistance in Ituri (FRPI), the Lord's Resistance Army

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28 Lewbel's (2012) method is used to generate instruments from the heteroscedastic errors of the humanitarian military intervention variable. Note that HMI is a binary variable, so its errors are heteroscedastic by construction.
29 Interested readers can find detail on Lewbel's (2012) methodology and the results from instrumental variable regression in Saeed (2022).
30 AMISOM is composed of troops from African countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Djibouti and Ethiopia.
31 Human Rights Watch, (2010: 5).

(LRA), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR).[32] The mission in fact worked in collaboration with the Congolese army (FADRC), which was accused in the United Nations' own confidential report "as a party to numerous violations" and that "Government security forces, particularly FARDC, remain a significant source of sexual violence, notably against minors."[33] Further accusations were made in the United Nations' 2017 report which noted that the Congolese army was responsible for 64 percent of documented violations of human rights, including extrajudicial killings of at least 480 civilians in 2016.[34] It appears that the intervention indirectly encouraged the Congolese army, which has a dismal human rights record, to increase the scale of atrocities against civilians and its opponents.

The positive long-run effect of anti-government HMIs on conflict intensity is likely to result from long-run instability caused by the weakening of the regimes which these interventions, mostly, lead to. While such interventions can stop oppressive regimes from perpetrating atrocities in the short-run, the level of violence seems to increase again in the long run. The case of Libya is illustrative in this respect. The number of battle-related deaths was approximately 3914 in 2011 after the Gadaffi regime started violently cracking down on the opposition. The number fell in 2012 and 2013 to 378 and 36 respectively and then started increasing again in 2014 to reach some 1455 such deaths.

Conclusion

This article examines the effects of humanitarian military interventions(HMIs) on conflict intensity in the targeted countries. Its key contribution lies in utilizing a novel HMIs database developed by Gromes and Dembinski, which unlike previous databases covers a larger time span of 1945–2019. Also, the focus is on HMIs which were launched to address ongoing violent conflicts. Unlike several previous studies, it excludes cases of humanitarian interventions which did not involve the objective of containing violence, such as evacuation missions, as their inclusion might distort statistical inference on the effectiveness of HMIs in reducing violence.

Humanitarian military interventions (HMIs) are launched on the pretext of pacifying violent conflicts. These interventions involve the deployment of military power which has humanitarian, economic and political consequences both for the targeted countries and the interveners. The findings from this study suggest that HMIs in which intervener(s) act discriminately against the conflict actors are likely to be counter-productive and further escalate conflict intensity. In other words, they may end up worsening conflict situation. On the other hand, if the intervener acts indiscriminately against all perpetrators of violence, the chances of conflict de-escalation are high. While some caution is necessary due to data limitation (e.g., the small sample size for anti-government HMIs), these findings are also supported by insights from several case studies of interventions in Africa (e.g., in the Democratic Republic of Congo since 2013).

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