The Causes of Recurrent Conflict

POSC 3610 – International Conflict

Steven V. Miller

Department of Political Science

CLEMSON
UNIVERSITY

Puzzle for Today

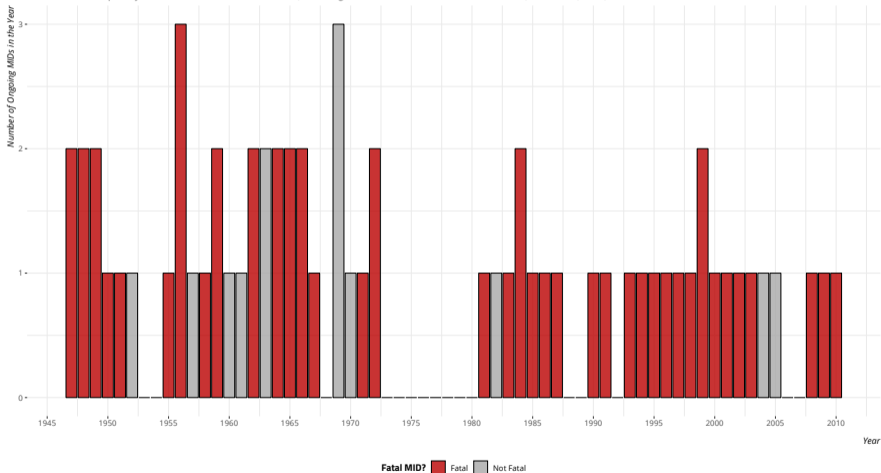*What explains the duration of peace following a conflict?*

The Problem

All conflicts must end (Ikle, 1971) but disputes routinely recur.

- France and Prussia/Germany contested 12 MIDs between 1848-1941.
  - Four were wars and an additional six were uses of force.
- India and Pakistan have been in 39 MIDs between 1947 and 2010.
  - Only four were anything other than uses of force or war.
- Likewise, Israel and Syria have been in 34 MIDs between 1948 and 2010.

India and Pakistan Have Contested 39 MIDs Since Independence and Have Been in Almost Constant Conflict

The red shades capture years in which there were fatal MIDs, including MIDs that became wars from 1947-1949, 1964-1966, 1971, and 1993-1999.

Fatal MID? ▮ Fatal ▮ Not Fatal

Data: GML MID Data (v. 2.03)

Four Primary Approaches

1. Bargaining
2. Enduring rivalries
3. Conflict management
4. Deterrence

Bargaining Approaches to Conflict Recurrence

Bargaining models do well to endogenize (sic) all phases of conflict (see: Filson and Werner).
Core findings:

- Power is central to explaining international conflict
  - See also: asymmetric information
- Incentives to renegotiate (however arrived) explain conflict recurrence.
- Third-party mediation mollifies commitment problems.

Enduring Rivalries and Conflict Recurrence

Intuitively, most conflict recurrence is between enduring rivals.

- e.g. India-Pakistan, France-Prussia/Germany, etc.
- Rivalry scholars tend to treat this as a sample selection issue.

There is some focus on how dispute outcomes facilitate new dispute onset.

- Hensel (1994): 93% of disputes followed by a decisive outcome are followed by a new dispute (in Latin America).

Conflict Management and Conflict Recurrence

Conflict management scholars place high emphasis on how disputes end.

- e.g. third-party intervention, UN peacekeeping missions, even regime type.
- Generally, more multilateralism and more negotiation -> more stability

Some core findings:

- Third-party interventions are good for peace.
- UN PKOs -> more stability after disputes.

Scholars additionally quibble about selection issues.

- e.g. do PKOs and mediators follow the more difficult conflicts or the easier ones?

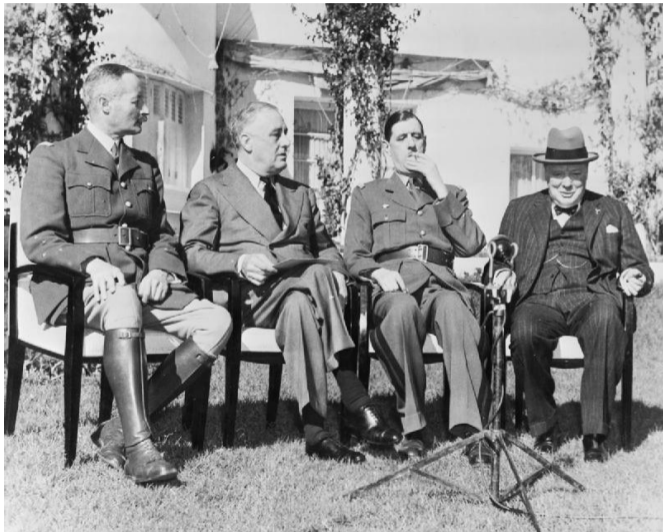# Conflict Recurrence as Deterrence Failure?

Scholars in this vein see conflict recurrence as a form of deterrence failure. Findings:

- Imposed settlements are more peaceful than negotiated ones.
- Cease-fires can help maintain peace.
- Victor-imposed regime change are followed by longer peace spells.

"Peace for Our Time"

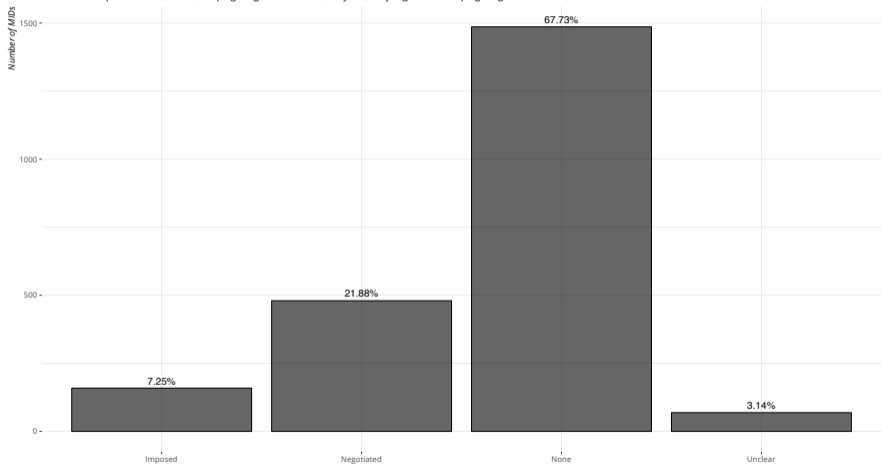# Announcing Unconditional Surrender Ultimatum in Casablanca

Types of Settlement

- **Negotiated**: an agreement, formal or informal, struck by both sides of a conflict absent any attempt of external imposition.
- **Imposed**: an agreement forced on another state without invitation.
- **None**: a dispute ends because both sides stop fighting without any agreement about the pre-war status quo or conflict.

Most MIDs (67%) End in No Settlement Type

Most MIDs stop because both sides stop fighting and not necessarily that they "agreed" to stop fighting.

Settlement Type

Data: GML MID Data (v. 2.01)

Why Should Imposed Settlements Be More Peaceful?

Quackenbush argues imposed settlements are a case of unilateral deterrence.

- In mutual deterrence, both sides need to be deterred.
- In unilateral deterrence, only one side (i.e. the loser) needs to be deterred.

Unilateral deterrence is actually more peaceful than mutual deterrence.

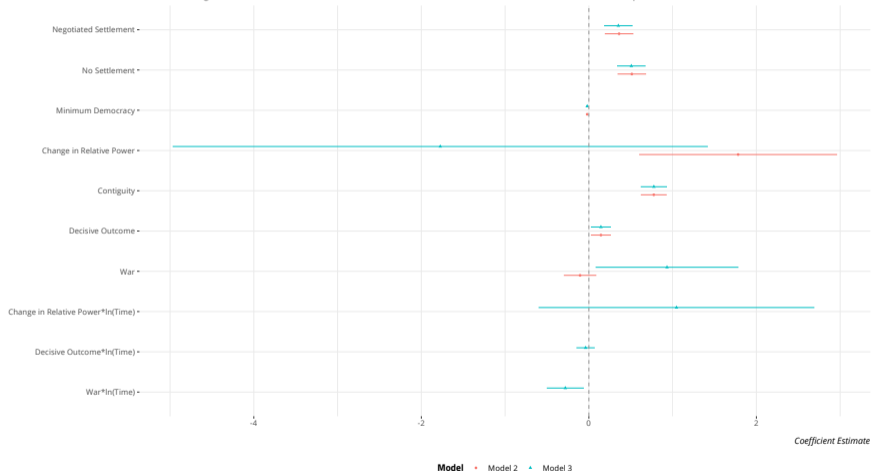Table 1: Log-Rank Tests for Settlement Types and Peace Duration (Quackenbush, 2014)

Settlement Type	Events	E(Events)	Chi-sq	p-Value
Imposed	237	353.08	46.84	<.001
No Settlement	1466	1341.87	31.82	<.001
Negotiated	427	435	.19	.663

Notice: we observe fewer peace failures if the settlement in the previous dispute was imposed.

- We observe *more* peace failures if there was no settlement type whatsoever.

Cox Model Results for the Effect of Settlement Type on Peace Duration

Notice how negotiated/no settlements increase the likelihood of survival "failure" relative to the baseline of imposed settlements.

Reproduction of Model 2 and Model 3 in Table 13.2 (Quackenbush, 2015)

Empirical Findings

Imposed settlements least likely to be followed by peace failure than other settlement types.
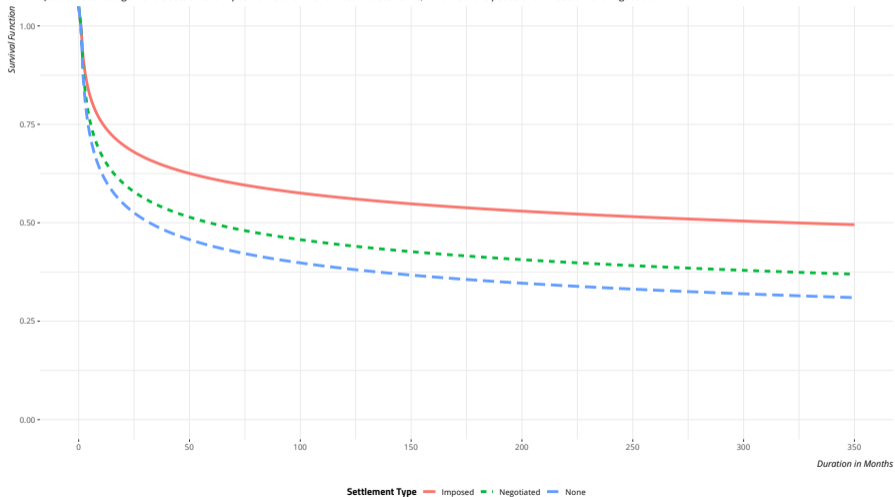
- Follows implications of perfect deterrence theory on unilateral deterrence.

Other findings:

- Jointly democratic disputes have longer peace spells.
- Changes in relative power -> peace failure.
  - This importantly goes away the longer the peace spell.
- Contiguous states have shorter peace spells than states further away.
- No differences between war and MIDs.
  - Until you model an interaction with time.

Survival Curves by Settlement Type

Quackenbush's argument is settlement imposition is a form of unilateral deterrence, which is more peaceful than settlement negotiation.

Conclusion

Why do disputes recur?

- Four primary theoretical perspectives
- Bargaining models assume changes in relative power drive conflict recurrence.
- Deterrence models see conflict recurrence as deterrence failure.
  - Counterintuitively: settlement imposition works better than settlement negotiation.

Table of Contents