Transforming Conflict Traps: From Theory to Practice

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Research Questions

Problem: Persistent civil conflict threatens human security and global stability in spite of interventions through humanitarian aid, development, peacekeeping.

Observation: Patterns of violence in persistent conflict display archetypal reference behaviors

Questions:

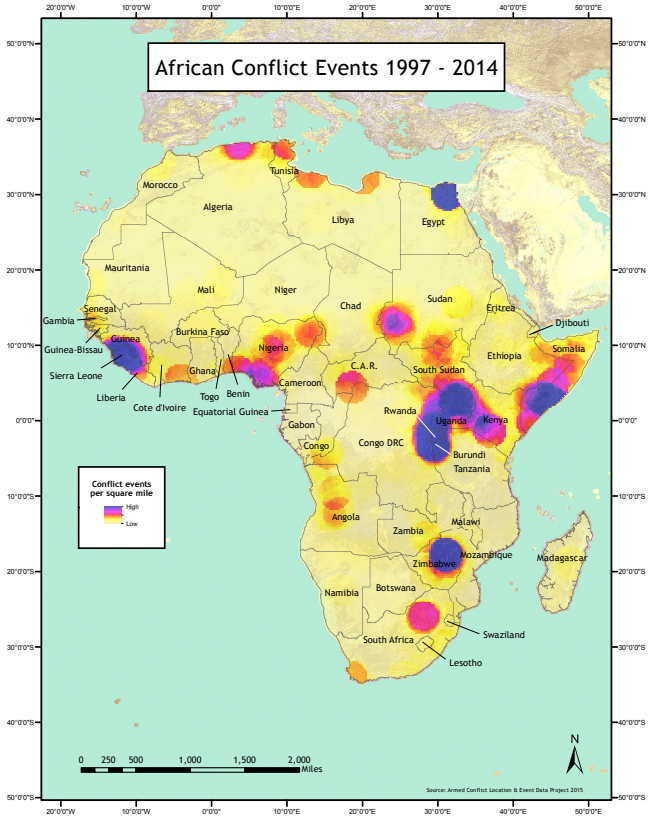
Are reference behaviors robustly correlated with theoretical risk factors for conflict persistence and impacts of interventions?

Do correlations between behaviors and risk factors map to system structures that explain resiliency of different actors?

Do the conflict behavior patterns and correlations scale to mesa and micro levels?

How do third party peace operations and aid interventions interact to reduce or increase risk of conflict persistence?

What are the implications for conflict transformation?



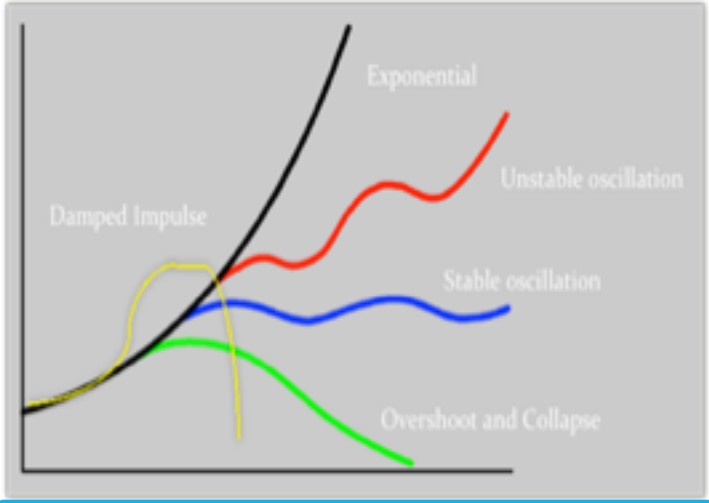
Dynamic Hypotheses

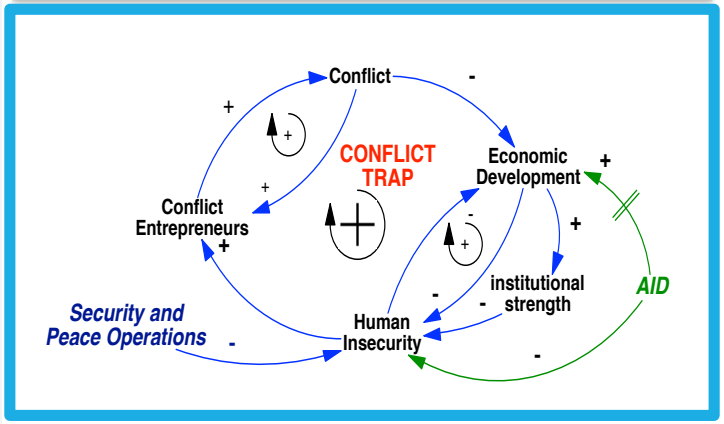
Overshoot and collapse is correlated with **endogenous conflict balancing mechanisms** due to capacity constraints, delayed feedback structures, higher opportunity costs.

Damped impulse is correlated with greed-based conflict trigger, rapid feedback from goal-seeking conflict balancing mechanisms supported by **exogenous asymmetric security capacities**

Exponential growth is correlated with low opportunity costs, amplifying mechanisms unconstrained by capacity and **supported through exogenous interventions**,

Oscillatory behaviors are correlated with moderate **endogenous conflict sustaining mechanisms**, delayed **endogenous balancing structures**, and low opportunity costs





Research methodology

- Multinomial logit regression (macro level)
  - What are correlations between reference behaviors and risk factors that proxy conflict drivers, opportunity costs, resiliency?
  - State, conflict, aid characteristics from published data
  - Peace operation data constructed from multiple sources
- Causal Loop Model and simulation of Somalia case study (micro)
  - Do balancing and amplifying mechanisms from narratives replicate structures associated with observed behavior patterns? Are tipping points between outcome types consistent with macro level predictors?

Do the correlations between behaviors and risk factors map to system structures that explain resiliency of different actors?

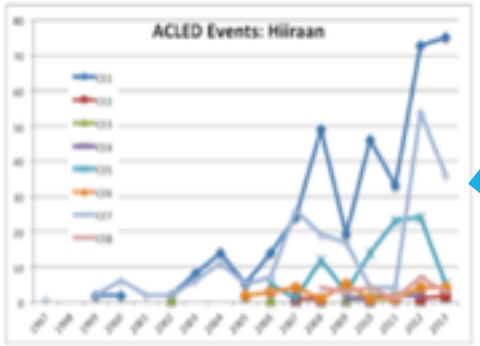
Finding 1: YES, and…

- Ratios and dichotomies of pairings between amplifying capacities and balancing relationships have strongest differentiating influence
- Interventions are secondary influence compared to state characteristics and endogenous conflict balancing mechanisms
- Mechanisms are a mix of micro and macro phenomenon

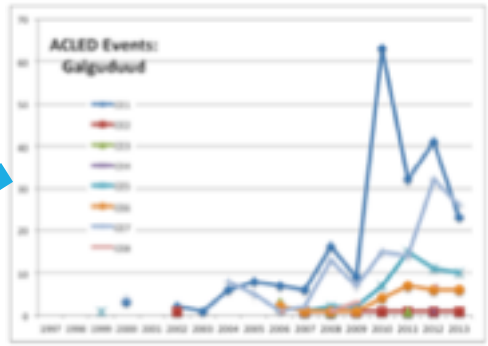
Study Results (Regression Analysis)			
Reference Behavior	**Strongest influence**	**Resilience**	**Little to no influence or inconsistent results**
Overshoot and Collapse	**small population** **highest gender equality** **high state capacity/reach** lower infant mortality highest % humanitarian aid UN peace operations	Low combatants High noncombatants **Transformative outcomes support peace**	GDP growth; coalition or single actor troop mission months; peace agreements or negotiated settlements; aid % GDP; CPIA
Damped Impulse	**high state capacity/reach** **higher infant mortality** gender equality natural resources ethnic polarization high military expenditures to aid	State: high Challenger : low **Risk: Vulnerable outcomes**	
Exponential	**lowest state capacity/reach** **high % humanitarian aid** **lowest military expenditures to aid** **lowest polity** **high social fragmentation**	High combatants Low noncombatants **Risk: Transformative outcomes support high intensity conflict**	
Oscillatory	**highest population, infant mortality** **high capacity/low state reach** **lowest gender equality** **highest poverty, low cover** **lowest % humanitarian aid**	Moderate combatants Low noncombatants **Risk: Adaptive outcomes support low intensity conflict**	

Do the conflict behavior patterns and correlations scale to mesa and micro levels?

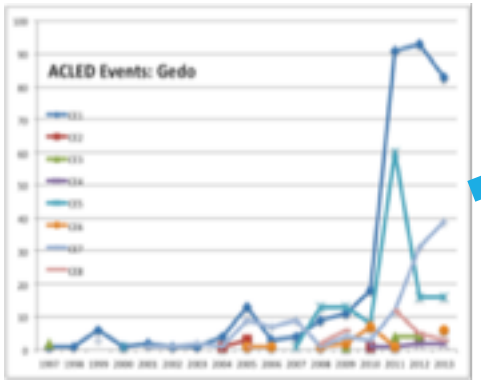
Finding 2: Qualified yes



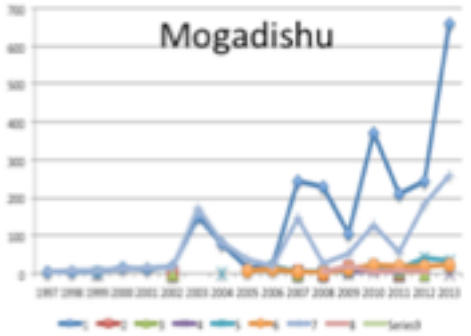
Oscillatory



Overshoot and collapse



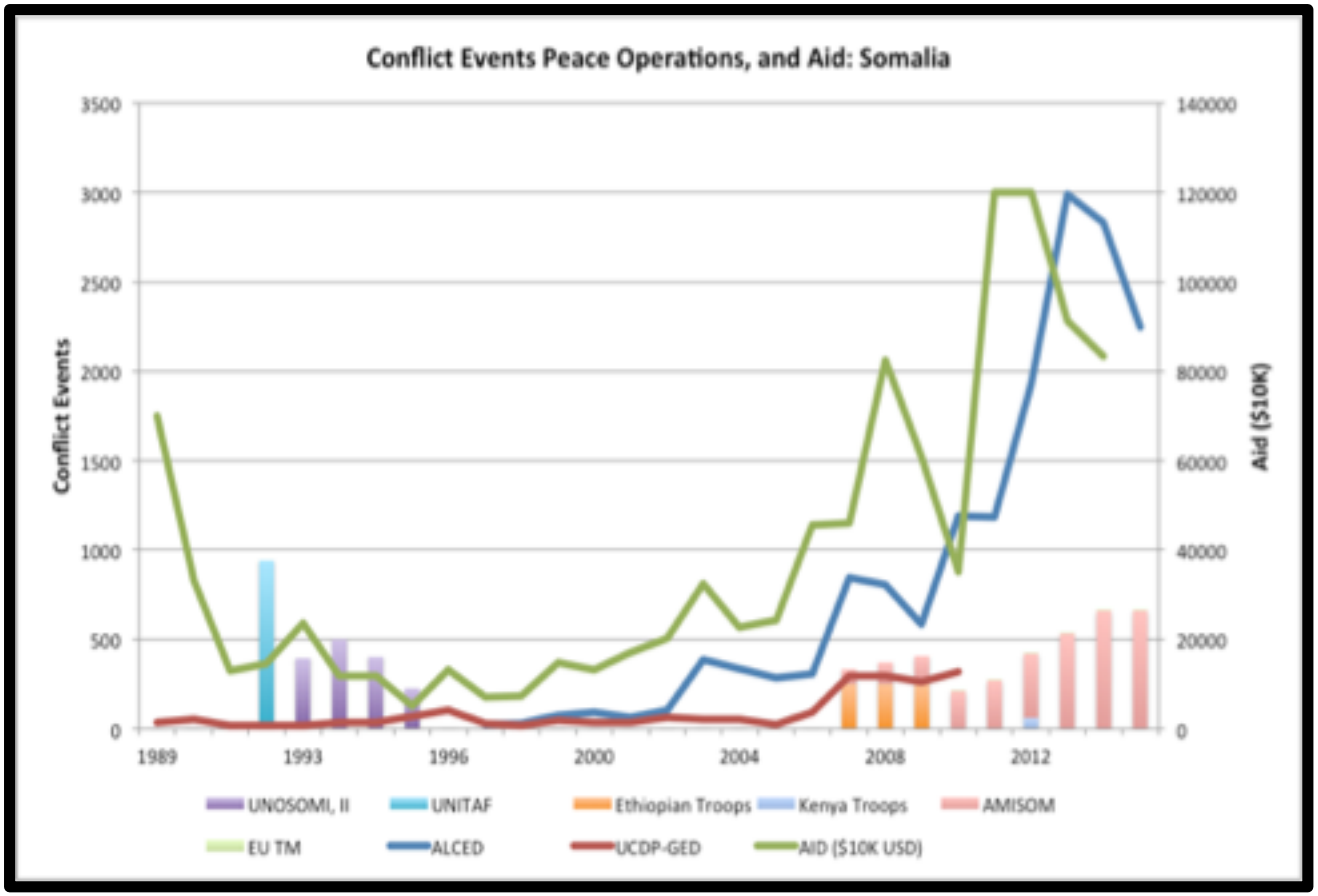
Damped impulse



Exponential (oscillatory)

Do third party peace operations and aid interventions interact to reduce or increase risk of conflict persistence?

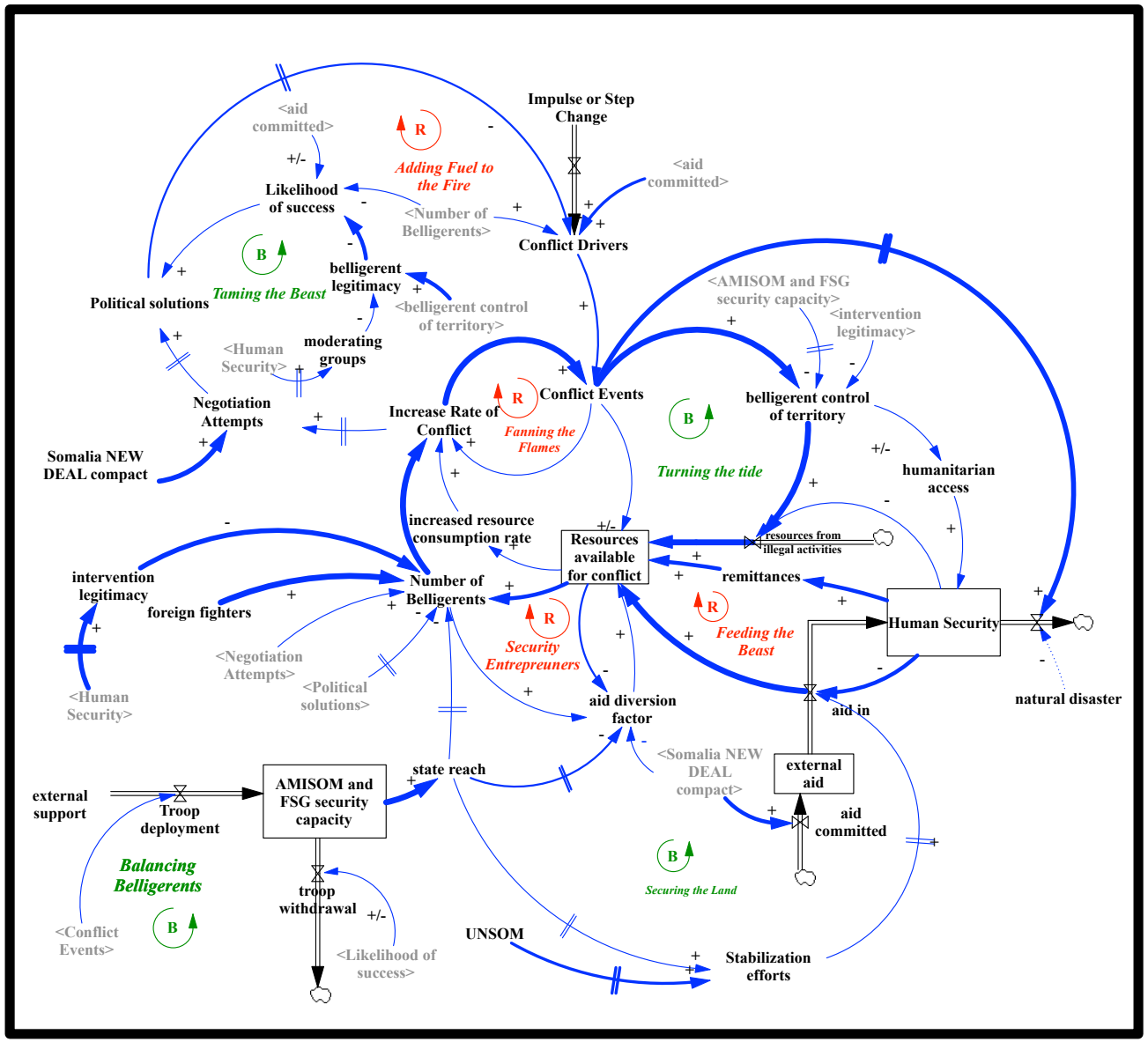
Finding 3: YES but….



Interactions are only apparent through lagged, second order effects at mesa and micro levels

- Highly dependent on perceived legitimacy of operations
- Local to national processes define contexts of interactions
- Lack of coordination, transparency, trust contravene mission goals: Security Entrepreneurs

How do third party peace operations and aid interventions interact to reduce or increase risk of conflict persistence?



Stock and Flow Model
Somalia Conflict

Insights

- Persistent civil conflicts exhibit archetypal reference behaviors characteristic of complex adaptive systems. The behaviors are dependent on endogenous system level capacities for conflict, cooperation, and governance, and the amplifying and balancing feedback structures through which these operate.
- Interventions that fail to change structural factors or relative capacities that determine dominant, systems-level feedback mechanisms are likely to reinforce, rather than transform, existing conflict patterns.
  - Key levers: Gender equality, transparency between intervention actors, local level community-led accountability

Limitations and Future Research

- Data limited to national level averages
  - Future GIS based micro level modeling is desirable
- Robust simulation of Somalia for model testing
- Simulation of additional cases studies for more general theory extension
  - Include new datasets on conflicts in Syria, SE Asia
- Extend model boundaries to include immigration, refugee returns, regional FDI, climate change