

**TRANSCENDING THE INTER-INTRA.
THEORETICAL INQUIRY INTO CIVIL WAR AND ITS
REPERCUSSIONS ON INTERNATIONAL
COLOMBIA-VENEZUELA CASE**

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Abstract

For scholars of Venezuela and Colombia the transnational dimensions of the Colombian armed conflict are an evident and hardly new fact. In the international literature in the fields of Conflict Studies and International Relations, however, some of the aspects of how Colombia's internal conflict have affected the bilateral relations between Bogota and Caracas are hardly considered. In this paper we argue that the dominant orthodoxy that distinguishes between internal and external conflict stands in the way of a comprehensive understanding of how armed conflict within states can affect disputes among states. We provide a review of existing studies on internal strife and inter-state conflict, and identify the main factors they have singled out as connecting both dimensions. These factors are evaluated in light of the Colombo-Venezuelan crises between 2006-2010. We propose that a model transcending the inter-intra divide needs to analyze factors against the backdrop of two relevant conditions, namely state capacity and international rivalry. The paper concludes with a reflection on the way future research could take.

Keywords: Colombia, civil war, border security, guerrilla, inter-state conflict

TRANSCENDIENDO LA DISTINCIÓN ENTRE EL ESTUDIO DE CONFLICTOS INTERNACIONALES E INTERNOS. UNA INVESTIGACIÓN SOBRE LAS DIMENSIONES TRANSNACIONALES DE LA GUERRA CIVIL Y SUS REPERCUSIONES EN LAS DISPUTAS INTERNACIONALES A LA LUZ DEL CASO COLOMBIA- VENEZUELA

Resumen

Para quienes han estudiado las relaciones entre Colombia y Venezuela, las dimensiones transnacionales del conflicto armado colombiano son un hecho evidente. Sin embargo, en la literatura internacional en las áreas de conflicto y relaciones internacionales, la manera en que el conflicto armado colombiano ha afectado las relaciones entre Bogotá y Caracas han recibido poca atención. En este artículo argumentamos que la ortodoxia dominante que distingue entre conflictos internos y externos obstaculiza nuestra comprensión de cómo conflictos internos pueden generar disputas entre estados. Ofrecemos una revisión de la literatura sobre conflictos internos e interestatales, señalando y discutiendo los principales factores que se han identificado a la luz de las crisis colombo-venezolanas entre 2006 y 2010. Proponemos que un modelo que trascienda la división inter-intra necesita analizar estos factores con dos condiciones centrales, capacidad del Estado y rivalidad, como telón de fondo. El artículo concluye con una reflexión sobre posibles caminos la investigación sobre este tema puede tomar.

Palabras claves: Colombia, guerra civil, seguridad fronteriza, guerrilla, conflicto internacional

AU-DELÀ DE LA DISTINCTION ENTRE L'ÉTUDE DES CONFLITS INTERNATIONAUX ET INTERNES. UNE RECHERCHE SUR LES DIMENSIONS TRANSNATIONALES DE LA GUERRE CIVILE ET LEURS RÉPERCUSSIONS SUR LES CRISES INTERNATIONALES A LA LUMIÈRE DU CAS COLOMBIE-VENEZUELA

Résumé

Pour les chercheurs de la Colombie et le Venezuela, les dimensions transnationales du conflit armé colombien sont un fait difficile et évident. Cependant, dans le domaine des études sur les conflits et les relations internationales, on comprend peu comment quelques aspects de la violence ont affecté les relations entre Bogota et Caracas. Dans cet article l'argument expose que l'orthodoxie dominante, qui discrimine entre les conflits internes et les conflits externes, entrave une compréhension globale de la dynamique de la violence politique. Les auteurs offrent une révision des études sur les luttes internes et les conflits entre États, et ils identifient les facteurs interrelationnels que ces études présentent comme des générateurs d'effets entre les différents types de violence politique. Ces facteurs sont analysés à la lumière de la crise colombo-vénézuélienne des années 2006-2010. Les auteurs proposent qu'un model au-delà de la division inter-intra doit analyser les facteurs transfrontalières dans le contexte de deux conditions importantes: la capacité de l'État et la rivalité internationale. L'article conclut par une réflexion sur les chemins futurs de la recherche.

Mots clés : Colombie, guerre civile, sécurité frontalière, guérilla, conflit international

1. Introduction¹

It is now almost commonplace in the literature to picture the world as one of regions of war and peace.² Empirical evidence suggests that states afflicted by internal violence cluster in areas that are also more prone to international conflict, implying causal linkages between the two phenomena (Holsti, 1996; Kacowicz, 1998; Kaldor, 2006; Miller, 2005). These linkages have however received scant attention. Traditionally, students of civil war have focused on conditions within states, while scholars of inter-state conflict have tended to look at aggregate attributes of relations between states, and the structural conditions of the international system.

In recent years this orthodoxy has come under scrutiny. On the one hand, civil war studies have moved to explore different transnational dimensions of civil war such as how international factors affect the risk of civil war, its prospects for termination, the way they are fought, and the levels of civilian victimization, among others (Sambanis, 2001; Gleditsch *et al.*, 2008; Kalyvas and Balcells, 2010; Mampilly, 2011; Checkel, 2013). On the other hand, scholars of interstate disputes have analyzed domestic factors that affect the escalation and de-escalation dynamics of international conflict, but have not distinguished between different forms of political violence occurring within the state. As a consequence, and some important advances notwithstanding, still very few studies have considered the impact internal warfare may yield on disputes among states. In other words, the flip side of transnational conflict linkages has been left underexplored³.

We depart from the premise that the state continues to be the most important structuring unit in international politics, but consider that a neat conceptual distinction between the domestic and the international is misleading in studying conflict. We contend that to fully understand the domestic origins of interstate dispute dynamics the analytical distinction between intra and inter-state conflict needs to be transcended. With this in mind, we focus on a single domestic phenomenon, the presence of civil war, and inquire into how its internal dynamics impact upon militarized interstate disputes. We put forward some working hypotheses of how civil war can affect the odds of militarized interstate disputes, and broadly illustrate them by tracing the turbulent relationships between Colombia and Venezuela during the 2006 – 2010 period. Unlike other important contributions that test a limited set of factors, often times based on their significance in statistical models but without taking their substantive effect into account, our goal is not to identify and determine those effects stemming from civil war that are most likely to generate inter-state conflict. Rather, we argue that any potential factors are contingent upon two conditions: state

capacity and international rivalry.

Apart from a number of large-N studies coding active conflicts around the globe, the bulk of in-depth case studies of transnational dimensions of civil war has focused on the Great Lakes region, the Balkans and the Caucasus and has hitherto been neglectful of Latin America's experience⁴. In light of this geographical limitation, the Colombian-Venezuelan case is an empirically rich example, well suited to the goal of proposing and illustrating new hypotheses about the linkages between civil war and international conflict. While we acknowledge that Colombia's internal conflict has different dimensions of political and criminal violence that interact in complex ways, this study focuses on guerrilla warfare as the center of gravity of Colombia's civil war⁵. Specifically, we explore whether and how rebel groups' activity, mainly that of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC as in Spanish), has had an impact on the dynamics of the disputes between Colombia and Venezuela.

The paper proceeds as follows. The subsequent section discusses the literature that addresses the inter-linkages between interstate conflict and civil war with a specific view towards the problems inherent in the approach of neatly distinguishing the internal from the international. Next, the third section outlines the background to Colombia's long-standing war and the Colombian-Venezuelan crises during 2006 to 2010. The fourth section identifies and discusses the prevalent arguments about the effects of civil war on interstate dispute in light of the findings of the case study at hand. The last section offers some tentative conclusions and outlines ahead for future research.

2. State of the art

Studies addressing inter-state conflict have focused on aggregate attributes of states and the relationships between them, ignoring the impact domestic realities, such as the existence of civil war (and the subsequent presence of non-state actors such as rebels groups), can have on the likelihood of inter-state dispute. This is clear in one of the most extensive and influential research programs dealing with inter-state disputes, the 'democratic peace'. Centering its attention on the institutional constraints for the use of force as a mechanism to lower the likelihood of interstate war, this literature turns a blind eye to the type of issue at stake in an international conflict (Mesquita *et al.*, 2003; Morgenthau and Thompson, 1985; Russett and Oneal, 2001). Moreover, researchers that advocate an issue perspective have not addressed civil war as a possible source of conflict (Huth and Allee, 2002; Diehl, 1992; Hensel, 1996). If included in the analysis, civil war has generally been modeled as an independent factor to international politics and as merely one amongst different expressions of domestic instability. This

scholarship hence fails to grasp the more complex and intertwined modes of conflict dynamics transcending the confines of the state.

Building on insights from both fields, Gibler (2012) and Owsiak (2013) have challenged the democratic peace theorem arguing that the resolution of territorial inter-state conflict eliminates external pressures that precondition democratization. In other words, it is not democracies that create peace, but international peace facilitates the development of inclusive democracies in which the probability of experiencing civil war is significantly lower. However, this research agenda, known as the 'territorial peace', has yet to explore the mechanisms through which the hypothesized effects supposedly occur. Largely, and persistent calls to move beyond a strict distinction between the international and the domestic notwithstanding, attempts to bridge the two literatures have remained one-sided.

Civil war has been the most common form of political violence during the post-Cold War era (Kalyvas and Balcells, 2010). In spite of being largely understood as an internal phenomenon, evidence shows that civil wars are not simply domestic events but exhibit multiple transnational dimensions. For instance, the Non-State Actors in Civil Wars dataset shows that over half (55%) of all rebel groups active in civil wars since 1945 have undertaken extraterritorial operations in countries beyond their target state (Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan, 2009). Moreover, this research has clearly shown that these transnational dynamics are anything but peace inducing and have hence important implications beyond the civil war state (Gleditsch, Salehyan, and Schultz, 2008; Salehyan, 2009). Indeed, cross-national quantitative evidence reveals that, after controlling for relevant factors, the odds of international conflict are almost twice as high in countries experiencing civil wars compared to those where peace reigns (Gleditsch and Salehyan, 2008).

Based on these insights, scholars have moved to include transnational dimensions into the analysis of civil war (Checkel, 2013). Although their findings are in many regards still indeterminate, important advances have been made regarding the impact of changes in the international system on the way civil wars are fought (Kalyvas and Balcells, 2010); ethnic ties across borders and diaspora mobilization in support of armed actors (Gleditsch, 2007; Buhaug and Gleditsch, 2008; Mampilly, 2011; Adamson, 2013); the impact of refugee presence on conflict onset, duration and patterns of violence both in the host and origin countries (Salehyan and Gleditsch, 2006; Salehyan, 2009; Buhaug and Gleditsch, 2008; Harpviken and Lischer, 2013); transnational activism and armed groups behavior towards civilians (Bob, 2006; Mampilly, 2011; Hamberg, 2013); the relationship between international interventions and peace operations and levels of civilian victimization (Fielding and Shortland, 2012; Hultman,

2010; 2012); and various issues related to transnational insurgencies, such as the likelihood of mobilizing and channeling material and ideational support and resources by external actors (Salehyan, 2009; Bakke, 2013; Schmitz, 2013)⁶.

Within this new strand of literature, studies that have asked how civil war dynamics spanning across state borders impact on the relations between states are still rare. A small group of scholars has taken on the task by testing a number of hypotheses based on the MID/COW and Uppsala/PRIO datasets (Salehyan, 2009; Salehyan 2008; Gleditsch, Salehyan, and Schultz 2008; Schultz, 2010; Gleditsch and Ward, 2013). The civil war dynamics this work identified to give rise to disputes among states include, among others: border violations when states pursue rebels into neighboring countries; neighboring states becoming concerned about humanitarian crises in the region during periods of war; external states protesting maltreatment of co-ethnics or human rights violations in countries experiencing internal war; responsibility for direct externalities caused by refugee flows; and host countries being accused of support and harboring armed factions.

While direct spill-over effects have been theorized in relation with the capacity of a state to regulate and control its internal affairs, the existence of civil war as such provides a favorable opportunity for outside interference especially when the relation with other states is characterized by rivalry. These two factors, state capacity and rivalry, have been treated as explanatory variables to conflict but have not been systematically examined in relation to the transnational dimension of civil war. Addressing this gap, the main claim of this paper is that both state capacity and rivalry serve as conditions moderating the effects from civil war on international dispute. In section 4 we elaborate on the two factors and propose to model them not as explanatory factors that increase or decrease the likelihood of interstate dispute in dyads where at least one country is experiencing a civil war, but instead as conditions that can augment or temper the effect of other factors that the literature has identified.

3. Historical overview

3.1. The Colombian armed conflict

The Colombian armed conflict dates back to the early 1960s when the two main revolutionary armed groups, the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), were founded and an irregular, asymmetric civil war set off (Fals Borda, *et al.*, 2005)⁷. During the following two decades, both guerrilla groups grew steadily both in rank members and military capacity. As a response, several paramilitary groups were organized in order to fight the guerrillas (*ibid.*). In 1997, many of the paramilitaries united under the umbrella of the new United Self-

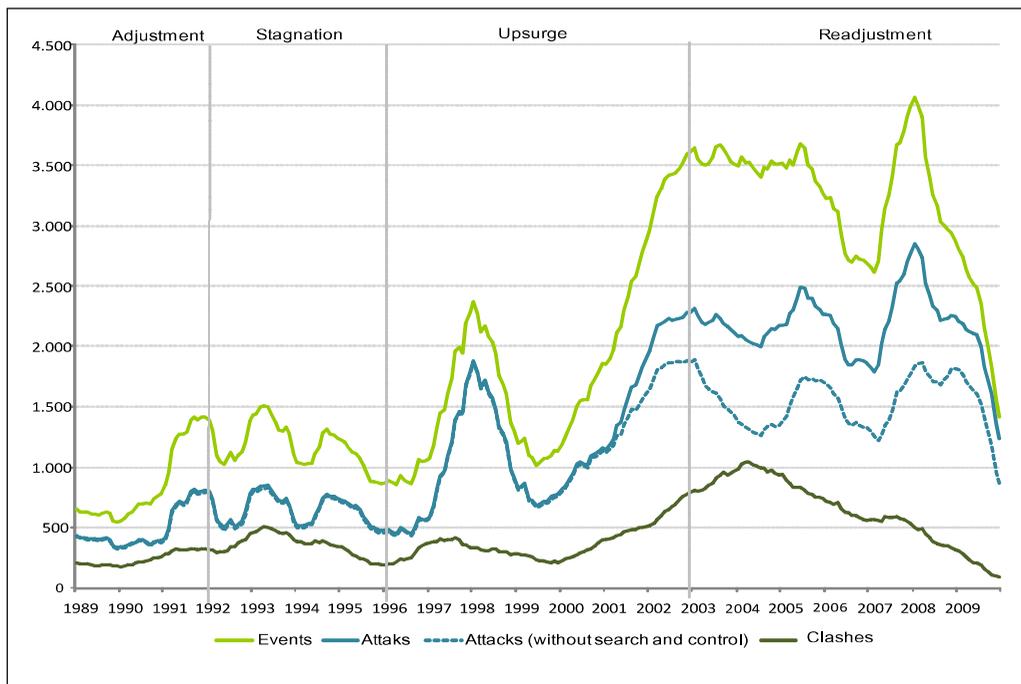
Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) to regain control of large parts of the country. In response to the escalation of the conflict and high levels of violence, successive governments negotiated various cease-fires and initiated peace talks. These efforts led to the incorporation into the Colombian polity and society of several small and medium size guerrillas, such as the Popular Liberation Army (Spanish: Ejército Popular de Liberación, EPL) and the 19th of April Movement (Spanish: Movimiento 19 de Abril, M-19), but fighting continued. Between 2003 and 2006, thousands of AUC members, including major leaders, demobilized under a strongly criticized framework provided by the government. Not all of the paramilitary groups disbanded, while others rearmed into new criminal organizations or merged with existing ones (Granada, Restrepo y Vargas, 2009; Massé, 2009). Formal peace negotiations set off again in La Havana in November 2012, and though the outcome remains to be seen, both sides have made significant concessions to advance towards a final settlement.

According to Restrepo *et.al.*, (2006) and Granada *et.al.* (2009), the development of the Colombian armed conflict over the past two decades can be divided into four different stages based on the dynamics of violence. After an initial adjustment phase during 1988 to 1991, a period of stagnation followed (1992-1995); but 1996 saw a renewed upsurge that lasted until 2002, when a

period of re-adjustment (2002-2009) began.

The peace process and the consequent demobilization of several small and medium-size guerrilla groups after the end of the Cold War was the main determinant of the adjustment stage. During this period, the guerrilla groups that did not demobilize were forced to seek new financial sources and to re-think their strategic orientations. Towards the end of this period the level of conflict-related violence started to increase mainly due to the end of the cease-fire and the failure of the peace process with the ELN and FARC. During the stagnation stage, the remaining guerrillas (mainly FARC) went through strategic and organizational adjustments, and disperse paramilitary groups emerged. Conflict-related violence remained stable at the levels reached by the end of the adjustment stage. During this decade, both guerrilla and paramilitary groups grew stronger, both in military and organizational terms. The third stage was thus characterized by a steep increase of conflict-related violence, especially against civilians. In fact, between 2000 and 2002 the number of civilian deaths surpassed the one of combatants and reached the highest level observed in the conflict's history. The escalation of the conflict, which took place during a peace process between the government of Andrés Pastrana and FARC⁸, is explained by a increase in fighting between guerrilla groups and paramilitary armies for territorial control

Figure 1. Armed conflict events by type of action 1988-2009



Source: Colombian Armed Conflict⁸ data set V.11.3. Data subject to revisions and updates.

(including control over the drug economy during an international boom of the business) and an increase of one-sided violence as a strategy of warfare of the AUC.

The re-adjustment stage, was characterized by a decisive military effort by the state to regain control over the territory. This military offensive severely weakened the guerrillas (mainly the FARC) and led to the relocation of the insurgency/counter insurgency war to geographically and socioeconomically isolated areas of the country. In addition, the AUC began a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process that led to a steep decline of conflict-related civilian deaths, reaching levels below those observed in 1989. The DDR process also led to a transformation of the nature of violence, with its main manifestation being the emergence of new groups that took the reins of the criminal activities that used to be controlled by the AUC. These groups, although at significantly lower levels compared to the AUC, are today the main perpetrators of violence against civilians (HRW 2010).

3.2. The trans-nationalization of the Colombian conflict and Colombo-Venezuelan relations

The Andean states have been affected in different ways and to varying degrees by the Colombian conflict (Millett, 2002). Amongst all neighboring countries Venezuela has had the most complex involvement in the conflict. Venezuelans first felt the effect of the Colombian war in the early 1980s, when the drug economy began to aggravate the magnitude of the conflict both within and across Colombia's borders (Últimas Noticias, 1987 Junio 17; El Diario de Caracas 1988 enero 17). Yet, until the early 1990s, the Colombo-Venezuelan agenda was dominated by problems related to the demarcation of the common land border and the delimitation of their respective maritime jurisdictions in the Gulf of Venezuela and the adjacent seas (Ramírez, 2003).

According to Cardozo (2004), the Venezuelan attitude towards the Colombian guerrillas can be divided into three phases. During the first, spanning the presidencies of Luis Herrera Campíns (1979-1984) and Jaime Lusinchi (1984-1989), the guerrilla war was seen as an exclusively Colombian problem. In reaction to attacks by the ELN on Venezuelan oil drilling facilities and military posts, as well as kidnappings and extortions in the frontier area, Venezuela demanded Colombia to take measures to prevent violence spilling over into its territory (Últimas Noticias, 1987). However from the early 1990s on, and as the magnitude of the conflict increased, the guerrilla came to be seen as a common enemy. While the Venezuelan government of Carlos Andrés Pérez (1989-1993) sought an active participation in the Colombian peace process, the successive Rafael Caldera administration chose a more

pragmatic and defensive approach. Given Colombia's weak capacity to control the border areas, Venezuela's Caldera government defended the idea of "hot pursuit" into Colombian territory (El Tiempo, 1996a). Relations between the two countries deteriorated markedly when guerrillas of the ELN's Frente Domingo Lain launched a deadly attack on the military post Cararabo along the Meta river in the province of Apure in February 1995 (Sainz-Borgo 1998; El Tiempo, 1996b). In response, Venezuela pursued a double strategy of fortifying the areas bordering Colombia and negotiating with the FARC (El Nacional, 1999) to shield itself from direct spill-overs (Cardozo, 2004: 93-94). Relations deteriorated yet again in early 1997 when ELN attacks across the border wounded three Venezuelan soldiers. Venezuelan troops pursued the rebels into Colombian territory and fired on a boat carrying suspected guerrillas, killing a child and wounding other civilians (Bustamante and Herrera, 2006; Latin American Weekly Report, 1997a; 1997b). By that time, the perception that Colombia was an "exporter of insecurity" (Tokatlán, 2000: fn.77) had come to prevail in the region. It is worth noting though that the most pressing issues for the neighboring countries were drug trafficking and herbicide spraying, refugees, and violence at the hand of paramilitaries, rather than the guerrilla (Tickner, 2004).

Venezuela's position towards the guerrilla underwent a fundamental change when Chávez assumed power in 1999. The rebels were now recognized as legitimate interlocutors, with Chávez explicitly stating that Venezuela was not an enemy for the guerrilla. His contacts with the FARC, dating back to the time of the attempted coup by the Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement-200 (MBR200) in 1992, became more visible and eventually publicly acknowledged in the early 2000s (El Espectador, 2002; IISS, 2011). When the US launched its 'war on terror', Venezuela refused declaring the FARC and the ELN terrorist organizations. Indeed, the US's involvement in the Colombian conflict through the implementation of Plan Colombia from 2000 onwards added another layer of tension to Colombia's relation with the Latin American countries, and with Venezuela in particular (Borda, 2007; 2010; Jacomé, 2006).

In 2002, Álvaro Uribe took office with the promise to implement a hard line against the guerrilla. This change in approach coincided with the dissolution of the 42.000 km² demilitarized zone in the region of El Caguán, where the FARC had enjoyed a safe haven while peace talks with the Pastrana administration were under way (Restrepo, Spagat y Vargas 2003). The ideological differences between Caracas and Bogotá aggravated the already strained relations, which reached another low point in 2004 when Rodrigo Granda, a high-ranking member of the FARC, was kidnapped in Caracas and transferred to Colombia (BBCMundo, 2005).

In 2004-2005 the Colombian security forces pressed ahead with their strategy to expel the rebels from the

urban centers to push combat towards the geographical margins of the country, thus increasing pressure on the border areas (Jácome, 2006). The Uribe government's relentless pursuit of FARC rebels did not stop at the national border. In March 2008 the Colombian military launched an attack on a FARC camp 1.8 kilometers into Ecuadorian territory, killing the FARC's second-in-command Raúl Reyes and 25 other persons present in the camp (Semana, 2008). Ecuador broke diplomatic relations with Colombia, and Chávez sent out a warning that a similar action on Venezuelan ground would give rise to war (El Universal, 2008). The day after, in his weekly televised address to the nation, he ordered the deployment of ten battalions, fighter jets and tanks to the border, closed the border passes and withdrew Venezuela's diplomatic staff from Bogota (*ibid.*). On March 5, the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) in an extraordinary session denounced the violation of Ecuador's territorial integrity and convened a meeting of the organization's foreign ministers. While Bogotá did not reciprocate the military muscle flexing and Uribe assumed the political responsibility of his country for the unlawful incursion, he also revealed information about guerrilla bases on Venezuelan ground and links between the FARC and several state officials of the neighboring countries obtained from computers seized in the operation (Caracol Radio, 2008; El Tiempo, 2008). The crisis dominated the agenda of the Rio Group summit in Santo Domingo two days later, and was eventually regarded as overcome after the OAS foreign ministers meeting on March 17 where the rejection of the territorial violation adopted by the Rio Group governments was reiterated (Grupo de Rio, 2008; OAS, 2008).

Diplomatic and commercial relations were reestablished in July, yet speculations about plans to transfer an American military base from Manta (Ecuador) to Colombia originated another diplomatic crisis in late 2008 (Massé, 2009, 91). Tensions remained on a nearly constant high during 2009 mainly over an agreement allowing the US to use Colombian military bases and accusations on part of the Colombian government that Venezuela supplied weapons to the guerrilla. Shortly before leaving office in July 2010, Uribe eventually presented allegations of Venezuela harboring FARC and ELN guerrillas before the OAS and his administration released an official document with detailed information about FARC's presence in Venezuela and its links with high-ranking officials of Chávez' government (Semana, 2010; El Espectador, 2010a; 2010b; El Tiempo, 2012). According to the document, in 2010 around 1.500 members of the FARC, including members of the Secretariat, had a constant presence on Venezuelan territory. The document claimed that FARC had the support of local, regional and national militaries and politicians, and that their activities in the neighboring country included provision of arms and

communications equipment, military training, treatment of wounded rebels, rearguard zones, drug trafficking, use of clandestine airstrips, and strategic planning. Chávez categorically denied the accusations, claiming that these were to serve as a pretext for an invasion, and withdrew the Venezuelan diplomatic staff from Bogota. The military forces were put on alert and lived through 72 tense hours until the diplomatic intervention by Argentina and Brazil within the framework of UNASUR defused the crisis (personal conversation with a military analyst, Caracas, 29 September 2012).

When shortly after Uribe's former Minister of Defense Juan Manuel Santos took office, relations with Venezuela improved markedly. Nevertheless, security problems in the border areas persisted. The role of Venezuela in the Colombian war has been complicated by local links between the rebels and members of the Venezuelan security forces, especially where these are involved in criminal networks. Political will to improve the relation, however, muted protest on both sides.

4. Escalatory factors and scope conditions for escalation: rivalry and state capacity

In this section we present five of the main escalatory factors identified in the literature on civil wars that affect the likelihood of inter-state conflict, and discuss their applicability to the Colombia-Venezuelan case. Then, we argue that the effect of these factors is contingent on two more general conditions, interstate rivalry and state capacity, and elaborate on both of these conditions in dialogue with the case at hand.

4.1 Escalatory Factors

How internal conflict with ethnic cleavages leads to interstate war has been the central question in the literature addressing the internal-external war relation. The underpinning logic is that external state actors intervene in countries facing civil strife in order to protect their ethnic kin or support irredentist claims. Although these elements have proven to be useful for understanding cases in some regions of the world, they find little explanatory power in the Colombian-Venezuelan case. The Colombian conflict is not fought along ethnic cleavages, and despite the presence of a considerable number of Colombians in Venezuela (as in other neighboring countries such as Ecuador), it would be inaccurate to refer to them as diaspora communities in the sense these are understood in the literature, ethnic conflict and secessionist movements have been rare in Latin America's history.

Another factor refers to cross-border displacement. Major refugee flows into neighboring countries may generate resentments in the host society, aggravate existing political instability or become an economic burden for states lacking capacities to resettle or integrate refugees (Ghobarah et.al., 2003; Weiner, 1996). On part of the civil war country, refugees may

develop into a contentious issue when camps located across the border are used as bases from where to plan and/or execute attacks or to recruit fighters (Lischer, 2005). Unlike in other internal conflicts producing large numbers of displaced persons, the presence of by far most Colombians in Venezuela is first and foremost the product of various waves of labor migration that set off before the effects of the guerrilla conflict came to be felt across Colombia's borders, or at least unrelated to them. Despite the fact that the number of refugees has increased over the past decade (CODHES, 2015; UNHCR, 2013) there is no systematic evidence of formal camps being created along the Venezuelan border, let alone of armed factions using them for recruitment or other military purposes. Although Colombia produces one of the highest numbers of displaced persons worldwide, most of these are internally displaced, i.e., moving within Colombian borders (see iDMC Country Profile). Moreover, many of the refugees of the Colombian war have been displaced due to violence exercised by armed groups, and are therefore generally unsympathetic to any of the parties to the conflict, which minimizes the likelihood of them supporting one of the sides while living as refugees in Venezuela (personal conversation with an aid worker placed at the Ecuadorian border, 18 November 2012). However, under specific conditions such as rivalry, the possibility of the host state, in this case Venezuela, using the presence of this population in its territory as a pretext for different strategic reasons (e.g., diverting attention away from internal tensions in Venezuela) should not be ruled out as a factor of potential conflict between the two countries.

A third factor that has been identified is what Gleditsch and Salehyan call "responses to irregular government change" (2008, 70). States may come into conflict with one another due to concerns related to the profile or legitimacy of a new regime seizing power through revolution coup. Although this logic is found in cases such as Iran-Iraq after the Iranian revolution, it does not carry far in the Colombo-Venezuelan case. One the one hand, regime change brought about by guerrilla victory has largely been an unlikely outcome of Colombia's civil war, and more so during Uribe's presidency. On the other hand, Chávez' relations with FARC and his attitude towards the Colombian conflict points to a rather limited concern with the political profile of a potential new regime coming out of the hypothetical scenario of FARC seizing power in Colombia⁹. Nonetheless, the stark differences in political profile of the Uribe and Chavez administrations, which can be seen as one possible source of international rivalry, led to different understandings of how to deal with the conflict, creating grounds for tensions between the two states (OAS, 2004; Semana 2010).

Another factor is related to conflict of preferences between the "home" country and its neighbors over the outcome of a civil war. Salehyan (2009) stressed that states may enter in conflict with foreign governments that are domestically challenged because they hold different preferences regarding the outcome of the civil war. Evidence for the argument that Venezuela's preference has been a military victory of the FARC is yet to be presented. What is certain, however, is that the Chavez administration strongly disapproved Uribe's hard-handed military approach and differed in its view on what each government considered the best way to deal with the conflict. Exemplary of these differences are their positions regarding a humanitarian exchange, something that Chavez consistently advocated for while Uribe was more than reluctant about (Semana, 2007)¹⁰.

The fifth factor reflects the logic of an escalating security dilemma. Scholars have argued that when a civil war country deploys troops near an international border to fight insurgents, neighboring states might see this as a threat to their own security because they can never be certain of the intent of such actions (Gleditsch *et al.*, 2008b, 9). The argument does not carry far in explaining the interstate dynamics between Colombia and Venezuela. On the one hand, the Venezuelan government has explicitly called upon the Colombian authorities to increase the number of military personnel and take care of what is going on in the border areas (El Diario de Caracas, 1988; personal conversation with a Colombian foreign affairs official, Bogota, 19 October 2012). It has thus been the absence of troops rather than its presence that has caused tensions. On the other hand, during the crises of the period under examination, increases in troops deployment at the border were minor. Including in the crisis over Colombia's incursion into Ecuador in 2008, only part of Chávez' announced reinforcement actually reached the border (personal conversations with a military analyst and a member of the FANB, Caracas, 29 September and 1 October, 2012), and Colombia abstained from reciprocating.

To summarize the foregoing considerations, the Colombian-Venezuelan conflict represents a case from an underexplored part of the globe where a number of supposedly decisive transnational factors of civil strife have been less central to bilateral conflict dynamics than existing studies suggest. Instead, we propose two preliminary factors that help understand the escalation in the tensions between Colombia and Venezuela in the period 2002-2010, namely, violations of territorial sovereignty and the alleged support to armed factions by external governments. Moreover, we propose that any effect likely to be on two general conditions, namely the capacity of the concerned states and inter-state rivalry.

4.2. Scope Conditions for Escalation

Inter-state rivalry

Work on inter-state conflict that incorporates domestic factors highlights the role of opportunity and suggests two main ways to link the intra-state level with the inter-state level. First, according to the diversionary theory of war, leaders who confront internal contestation aggravate international dispute to rally domestic support (Levy, 1989; Mansfield and Snyder, 2005). A second claim shifts the responsibility of originating an international dispute from the civil war state to the non-civil war state and holds that the latter capitalizes upon the opportunity structure created by civil war in another country to further its own interests by direct or indirect intervention (Weinstein, 2000). These effects should be prevalent especially where conflict arises between rivaling states that share a history of militarized disputes and mutual suspicions (Maoz and San-Akca, 2012).

The concept of inter-state rivalry was developed to underscore that certain dyads within the international system are more conflictive than others. While early work built on the history of militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) between states to identify rivals (Bennett, 1997), more recent contributions stressed the importance of mutual threat perceptions (Thompson, 2001). Nonetheless, this literature focused on the state as the locus of rivalry, without taking into account the particularities of the government in power. The rivalry concept as proposed in this study considers the history of the relationships between states, but pays special attention as to how rivalries stemming from ideological differences between governments can lead to conflict escalation.

Where states maintain a relation of relative amity and can credibly commit to a common approach to deal with the transnational dimensions of a civil war taking place in one of the countries, it is unlikely that civil war gives rise to interstate conflict. Contrariwise, international borders between rivals tend to be highly fortified against any type of counter-insurgency operations and are thus more likely to lead to inter-state disputes on the basis of violations of sovereignty. This situation is especially likely if one considers that civil wars are more likely to be fought close to borders and that these are oftentimes poorly defined (Buhaug and Gates, 2002). Under conditions of rivalry, we contend, crossing the borders of one's country to fight rebels is more likely to spur conflict.

In fact, the violation of territorial sovereignty was the initial reason underlying the steep escalation of the tensions between Colombia and Venezuela in 2008. Although Ecuador protested the Colombian incursion, it was Chavez who took the issue further by mobilizing troops towards the border, withdrawing his country's diplomatic presence from Colombia and alerting that if something alike happened in Venezuelan territory

he would send fighter jets to the border (El Universal, 2008). Although Chávez' relation with the guerrilla certainly mattered, such reaction which was stronger than that of Ecuador itself, could only be understood factoring the rivalry between Caracas and Bogota into the equation. To a significant extent, the rivalry explains the escalation of the tensions during the second half of the 2000s.

Similarly, Colombia's government allegations of Venezuelan support to FARC cannot be understood out of the context of the political rivalry between the two governments¹¹. The Colombian government for a long time had enough evidence of FARC's presence in Venezuela and of its links with members of Chávez' cabinet, local government authorities and security forces (Semana, 2011). In fact, the document released by the Colombian Ministry of Defense, with all the details about FARC's transnational dimension and the support coming from the neighboring country, was ready well before July 2010 (*ibid.*). The fact that the document was released shortly before the end of Uribe's term in office and in the moment when the elected President, Juan Manuel Santos, expressed his desire to restore relations with Venezuela, shows that Uribe used the trans-nationalization of the FARC to push his rivalry with Chavez further. The revelation was not only meant to provide detailed evidence of the phenomenon, but also to warn Santos and Colombian citizens about the risks of "being friends with the enemy" (*ibid.*, authors' translation). It can be argued that both governments used the transnational reality of FARC to advance their political rivalry.

Without taking into consideration the dimension of rivalry, it is difficult to explain why the transnational reality of FARC, well known since the 1980s, never led to such escalation before. Moreover, the rivalry condition helps to explain the ease in relations after 2012, contrary to then prevailing expectations.

4.3. State capacity

The potentially contagious effects of civil war have been found to give rise to contentious issues between states unable to contain internal violent struggle in sub-Saharan Africa, the Balkans, the Black Sea Area and Central Asia (Lake and Rothchild, 1998; Atzili, 2006; Zartman, 1995). Gleditsch *et al.*, (2008) and Gleditsch and Salehyan (2008) provide statistical evidence showing that countries affected by civil war cluster in regions with a high incidence of interstate conflict. The authors argue that this is not merely co-occurrence due to the existence of context conditions which favor political violence generally, but that there is a causal link between the two forms of conflict which is likely to stem from the direct and immediate effects of civil war. For example, Salehyan's (2009) analysis of transnational insurgencies deals with rebel activity in internal and external conflict. Examining the presence of rebels in neighboring countries, he finds that external bases effectively increase the probability of interstate dispute. Salehyan argues that weak states may be drawn unwillingly into insurgency and counter-insurgency

as they lack effective control of their territory and the capacity to credibly commit themselves to abstain from capitalizing upon the civil war state's vulnerability.

It is apparent in the work of these authors that the potential effects of civil war on inter-state dispute are conditional, at least to some extent, to state capacity. We follow this lead and understand state capacity in line with the traditional Weberian notion of the state. Accordingly, it includes the dimensions of effective territorial control and the existence of functioning state institutions providing basic services to the populace (Weber, 1994). The capacity of a state mediates the extent to which a country affected by internal strife can contain fighting and the direct externalities of civil war, as well as the capacity of the neighboring state to protect itself from such. Secondly, and because weakness tends to be especially pronounced in border areas, the level of institutionalization determines the degree to which the affected state can implement its policies towards the belligerent parties in the respective zones. More specifically, while rebels may obtain benefits involuntarily from crossing the border into a weakly institutionalized state unable to oppose their presence, a strong state has greater leeway in deciding whether and how to deal with them. Micro-dynamics in the frontier zone thus weigh heavier where a state lacks effective control and where the chain of command is loose (ref). Put differently, the impact of the nature of the bilateral relation is positively correlated with the level of state capacity of the affected state, be it that the neighboring state remains neutral or even collaborates with the government of the civil war country to combat its contesters, or be it that a foreign state lends support to rebel groups.

Below a minimum threshold of state strength the trans-nationalization of insurgency and counter insurgency corresponds to a different cost-benefit analysis. Where the presence of a state in the frontier area is low enough not to generate protest against transgressions by either guerrillas or the armed forces in hot pursuit, the likelihood of international dispute is significantly lower. By way of example, Colombia's violation of Ecuadorian sovereignty in 2008 came to be known in Quito only through a phone call by Uribe, and it took several hours until the Ecuadorian verification team arrived to the site. At a general level, however, Venezuela ranks on a medium level of state strength and a loss of institutionalization during the 14-years rule of Chávez notwithstanding, his government retained a high level of control over conduct in the border areas (personal conversations with a former foreign affairs official and a military analyst, Caracas, 19 and 29 September 2012). Scattered but well-documented evidence suggests a certain degree of autonomy on part of the civilian and military officials in the border areas when it comes to compliance with kidnappings and extortion, especially in Barinas, and to corruption

related to drug trade and smuggling of petrol in the states of Táchira and Zulia (Ávila, 2012). However, in regard of the guerrilla, Venezuelan members of the armed forces deployed in the frontier areas confirm that military cooperation was hardly allowed in order to avoid that the Venezuelan forces were used against the rebels (personal conversations with members of the FANB, Caracas, 2 October 2012).

Traditionally, both the Colombian and the Venezuelan political elites have tended to neglect their border areas (BID, 1964; Lizarazo and De Lombarde, 1998; Murillo and Pardo, 1989). This is especially true for Colombia, where different groups of armed non-state actors have filled the vacuum in the border departments by administering transnational economic activities and providing basic security and other services. From the Venezuelan side, irregular trans-border activity has met an attitude of benevolent tolerance as long as they were non-violent. When the country saw itself threatened by guerrilla attacks, the Venezuelan state appeared prepared to increase military presence along the border. The virtual impossibility to control the partly difficult terrain of the over 2.000 km-long boundary line notwithstanding, Venezuela disposed of a relatively superior reactive capacity to confront direct spill-over of violence.

After the ELN's deadly attacks on the Cararabo naval base in 1995 and on the Arauca river in the state of Táchira in 1997, two special operation theaters were created in Guasdalito in the state of Apure and La Fría, Táchira, respectively. Apart from the establishment of bilateral commissions to improve border security and the frontier integration projects launched under the auspices of the Andean Community (Ramírez, 2005), the Caldera administration even sought to promote settlement along the border through housing and farm subsidies (Associated Press, 1997). At the same time, from the moment that the Colombian conflict came to be felt in Venezuela, Caracas demanded to increase Colombian military presence along the border; a request that was met only hesitantly due to severe constraints in Colombian personnel and resources. Contrary to fears expressed on part of Western governments and to what the security dilemma predicts, the militarization of the border area did not lead to bilateral conflict when the number of troops was stepped up in the mid 1990s and later under Plan Colombia. At both moments in time, relations between the two countries were strained, but both recognized the necessity to establish a minimum level of control (Mendel, 2001).

Besides direct spill-over, Venezuela has been affected by two immediate consequences of the Colombian civil war. First, with the presence and the creation of paramilitary forces, the country witnessed the formation of non-state armed actors, though their existence in Venezuela has been denied by the Venezuelan authorities. In 2001, AUC leader Carlos

Castaño announced that he was to send instructors to train paramilitaries in Venezuela to fill the lack of protection (Millett, 2002), and in May 2004 the detention of Colombian paramilitaries in El Hatillo sparked a prolonged controversy about the circumstances of the incident (El Nacional, 2004; OAS, 2004). The second element has been the flow of armament to Colombian rebel groups across the Venezuelan border (International Crisis Group, 2007), which was first publicly denounced in Bogotá by the administration of Ernesto Samper (1994-1998). Both elements point to the limitations of the Venezuelan state to fend off the externalities from the Colombian conflict, though regarding the supply routes of arms, it has been Colombia to protest the failure to decidedly impair on the illicit transactions.

During the Uribe-Chavez period, the Colombian government accused the Venezuelan military to directly supply the guerrillas with weapons. It also denounced the Venezuelan government for allowing FARC sanctuaries in Venezuelan territory, a claim that has consistently been denied by Chávez. Although Venezuela's attitude has effectively changed with the Bolivarian governments, security policy in the border did not necessarily undergo a fundamental change. In order to reduce guerrilla attacks on Venezuelan facilities and military posts as well as kidnappings in the border area, the Venezuelan government had started negotiations with the FARC in the late 1980s without consent of the Colombian state. While no cooperative agreement was reached with the ELN, the Venezuelan authorities provided the FARC rebels with medicine, petroleum and construction materials in exchange for security (Llorente Forchheimer, 1989). Colombia at this time refused to accord the possibility of hot pursuit to the Venezuelan security forces, yet major crises did not appear.

However, this changed under Chávez when the impression that came to prevail was that of rebels receiving Venezuelan support by choice rather than for protection. As Colombian and Venezuelan analysts and militaries content, the FARC's presence in Venezuelan territory is accounted for by the fact that they need not fear any interference by the Venezuelan forces. At the same time, they were safe from Colombian persecution as feeble attempts to implement limited schemes of military cooperation between the two countries were largely paralyzed during the Chávez-Uribe era and Colombia appears to have strictly respected the international border in fighting the rebels.

5. Concluding remarks and future research agenda

The paper set out to accomplish a first step towards developing theoretical insights to explicitly tie intrastate and international conflict together. The Colombian-Venezuelan case was analyzed against available

theoretical contributions, to develop preliminary propositions regarding the complex connections between both dimensions of conflict. After evaluating a set of factors highlighted by the few available studies addressing this connection, we proposed to conceive state capacity and international rivalry as two conditions that affect the extent to which potentially contentious factors stemming from a civil war can generate interstate disputes. Both have been found to impact upon the dynamics of political violence within as well as between states, and preliminary findings indicate that a refined understanding of the two conditions and their interaction can improve our understanding of how domestic factors stemming from civil war can cause inter-state disputes. Besides highlighting the importance of taking into account these two general conditions, we stressed misfits between some of the dominant factors identified in the available literature and the concrete dynamics of the case under study, and probably of conflict in Latin America more generally. The fact that this literature has advanced largely by examining other parts of the world has led scholars to highlight factors such as ethnic cleavages, diasporas and refugee camps, which are not commonly at the core of conflict in Latin America, both in its international and domestic dimension.

The future task following for this endeavor to advance is the empirical analysis of the theoretical insights proposed. The challenge associated with this is two-fold. First, the two conditions identified need to be conceptualized in a way that they become operationalizable and measurable. Second, to examine the propositions empirically, the transnational elements of the Colombian conflict need to be detailed, and a fine-grained analysis of the decision-making processes in each individual crises needs to be carried out.

In line with the research program calling for a micro-perspective on civil conflict (Kalyvas, 2008; Restrepo *et.al.*, 2003) and based on the insight that the Colombo-Venezuelan border is heterogeneous in its socio-economic characteristics (Ardila, 1991), a differentiated analysis of transnational conflict dynamics and local proofs to be the best way ahead. To date, while there is an extensive body of work on the geography of the Colombian conflict (Fals Borda *et.al.*, 2005; García and Aramburo, 2011; Vásquez *et.al.*, 2011), efforts to map a variety of factors and patterns of violence are largely descriptive, and zoning stops at the confines of the Colombian state. One may seek instead to build on a now commonly used conceptualization highlighting distinct socio-economic factors along the border (León and Llambi, 1980), which are likely to determine the presence of armed actors and income opportunity structures in distinct areas. Accordingly, for the case we examined here, four frontier zones can be distinguished, namely the Guajira peninsula, the axes Perijá-Cesar, Táchira-Norte Santander, and Apure-Arauca.

Building on the Colombo-Venezuelan case study, there is scope to specify the individual instances of interstate dispute within the period dealt with in this paper. Further observations of inter-state crises, in which the conditions of capacity and rivalry vary, can provide additional insights and allow for more carefully designed studies. One obvious case for analysis is the so-called Caldas incident in 1987, a crisis that originated over the maritime boundary dispute at a time when Colombia lived through a critical moment of violence. Secondly, a potentially rich period for further enquiry are the years 1994-1995, which came to mark a turning point in the bilateral relations between the two countries. Prior, the relation had been dominated by the border conflict. In 1994/1995, Venezuela suffered an increased number of deadly attacks and a significantly deterioration of border security on the hands of the guerrilla. In consequence, domestic strife and criminal violence moved center stage on the bilateral agenda.

Notas

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2 The term is borrowed from Lemke's (2002) book with the same title. Lemke however does not deal with other than international conflict. In a later article co-authored with Cunningham (Cunningham and Lemke 2013) the authors suggest that the divide in the study of interstate and civil wars is artificial, being both driven by similar characteristics, but again, they do not examine inter-linkages between both forms of conflict. See instead Holsti (1996); Kacowicz (1998); Kaldor (2006); Miller (2005).

3 Exceptions include Gleditsch and Salehyan (2008); Gleditsch, Salehyan, and Schultz (2008a); Salehyan (2009); Gleditsch and Ward (2013).

4 One exception is Salehyan's (2009, Chap. 4) study of the Nicaraguan civil war and Borda's (2009) comparison of Colombia, El Salvador and Guatemala. See also Borda (2007) for the Colombian case.

5 The analysis takes the issues of drug trade, smuggling and trafficking in humans into consideration were it directly links up with rebel activity, but does not examine the effects of such transnational challenges in their own right.

6 See Masullo & Lauzurika (2014) for a brief discussion on the literature on the transnational dimensions of civil wars.

7 Its historical roots can be found in a previous period of violent conflict between the two traditional political parties (Liberals and Conservatives) known as La Violencia.

8 The peace process between the FARC and President Pastrana's government began in 1998 and ended without the expected results in 2002. This process involved recognizing the FARC as a political actor, the discussion of a common agenda, the involvement of the international community and the demilitarization of a part of the Colombian territory known as the "demilitarized zone" or "zona de distension". This area consisted of a demilitarization of approximately 42,000 km in the departments of Meta and Caquetá, in particular the towns of La Uribe, La Macarena, Villahermosa and San Vicente del Caguán.

9 In August 2007, due to external and internal pressures, Uribe accepted Chávez as a mediator for a humanitarian exchange with FARC only to end the mediation again in November. His pulling back increased the tensions between the two governments to the point that Chávez recalled the Venezuelan Ambassador from Colombia. ("Cronología del Acuerdo Humanitario", Revista Semana, November 30, 2007.)

10 Note, however, that the distinction between governments and presidents in Latin American politics is one that tends to easily get blurred in Latin American politics. See O'Donnell (1994).

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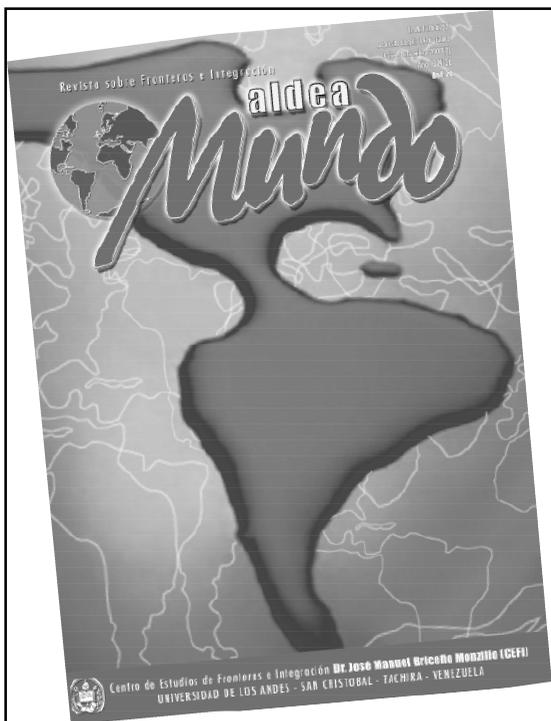
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