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From Social Tension to Protracted Civil Conflict

Using fsQCA to Analyze Conflict in Lebanon

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Abstract

Since the foundation of conflict studies in Lebanon, scholars have often used ambiguous terms and employed all-inclusive explanations to describe various types of conflict. While their historical analysis has been helpful in understanding case specificities of conflict periods, the scholarship has relied on dichotomous characterizations: i.e., Lebanon was either on the brink of civil war during moments of volatile social tension (ST) or experienced protracted civil conflict (PCC). Furthermore, scholars have yet to test or empirically justify the strength of the conditions or combinations for ST or PCC that they investigate. In order to rectify these issues, this article uses the methods of fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) to solidify conclusions on different conflict dynamics in Lebanon. Most importantly, it demonstrates how to empirically distinguish between cases of conflict along the continuum of ST to PCC in Lebanon over an expansive timeframe (1841-2008). This article contributes to both the fields of fsQCA and conflict studies in the Middle East as it simultaneously extends the application of fsQCA to conflict dynamics in Lebanon, while challenging and elaborating theories on conflict in Lebanon through empirical justifications.

Key words: fsQCA, social tension, protracted civil conflict, threats to identity

Introduction

When addressing volatile ‘social tension’ (ST--low-level casualty clashes, demonstrations, scuffles, etc.) in Lebanon, scholars frequently employ the phrase ‘Lebanon was on the brink of civil war’ in one way or another (Kaufman 2004). When analyzing protracted civil conflict (PCC--high-level casualty armed conflict), most scholars argue that it is made possible by the dynamic push and pull between local, regional and international pressures; therein, considering all three fields of pressures as necessary conditions for PCC (Khalaf 2002). While the scholarship has laid out the historical specificities of the conflict periods, theoretically, this dichotomous characterization limits the ways to explain various forms of conflict. Under this typology, ST assumes a vague definition of what it has not quite transformed into, “civil war,” to distinguish itself as a dissimilar phenomenon and the definition for PCC accounts for all possible conditions for collective violence, while limiting none. In other words, these counterfactual and all-inclusive claims have very little explanatory value.

Compounding the theoretical issue is an empirical one: scholars of conflict in Lebanon have yet to test causal combinations across relevant cases to assess the patterns that distinguish different forms of conflict. As a result, the scholarship also lacks empirical justifications for what factors are most prominent for high-intensity conflict, a crucial node of understanding conflict variation. Given this dilemma, one not limited to scholarship on Lebanon or conflict in the Middle East, the scholar must seek out a “research approach” that can both theoretically and empirically articulate the contours of conflict variation in a given case or cross-case analysis (Schneider and Wagemann 2010).

In an attempt to address this problem, Sambanis forwards the idea of “coding levels of violence on a continuum,” which would shift explanations outside the framework of

dichotomous characterizations (Sambanis 2004: 819). In addition to situating relevant cases of conflict on a continuum, a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) approach, and specifically, one based on fuzzy set-theoretic relations (fsQCA), can demonstrate what combinations of casual conditions lead to the different forms of violence on the continuum. For these reasons, I argue that an fsQCA research approach is needed in order to advance the scholarship of conflict in Lebanon on both theoretical and empirical grounds and understand the exact parameters for different forms of conflict in Lebanon.

In this article, I address the following research question: what are the causal conditions and combinations that distinguish different forms of conflict (i.e., events along the ST to PCC continuum) in the Lebanese context, and in turn, what ensures an escalation? The study uses twelve cases of intra-state conflict in Lebanon across a broad time period (1841-2008) to answer this question. It employs fsQCA analysis to test the interaction between the following five causal conditions: 1). oppositional challenges against the ruling power, 2). authoritarian actions meant to extinguish these types of challenges, 3). increased armament in some capacity, 4). foreign intervention and 5). threats to the status or identity of groups. By charting the interplay between such factors, and how they result in different forms of conflict, the fsQCA analysis clarifies past scholarship through empirical justifications.

In the first section of this article, I review the three major scholarly approaches to conflict in Lebanon and exploit their pitfalls in order to pose fsQCA as an effective addendum. Next, I articulate all facets of the study, including the significance of the extensive timeframe, parameters for case membership and the nature of the assessed degree of membership to the PCC outcome. Also in this section, I utilize examples from the twelve included cases as a means to describe the contours of all causal conditions. Lastly, I review the findings of the fsQCA

analysis, examining the intricacies of several factors and cases. This includes both an investigation of what certain combinations can indicate about an event's placement along the ST to PCC continuum and the most crucial factors in ensuring an escalation to the highest forms of PCC.

Approaches to the Study of Conflict in Lebanon: fsQCA as an Effective Addendum

Before the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1991), the study of Lebanese politics was the main venue in which scholars discussed conflict potentiality. In this context, many stressed Lebanon's miraculous political stability, given its diverse, and some times combatable, group identities and accompanying ideologies. Some dispelled the use of the term stability, and thought it more fitting to label it "precariousness" (Hudson 1968). However, because conflict became protracted and extremely violent in the mid-1970s, most of the scholarship on all conflict in Lebanon, even that which occurred before 1975, emerged during or after the civil war period. As a result, these scholars use the major characteristics from this conflict period to explain other earlier events. Therein, the foundations of conflict studies in Lebanon are somewhat questionable, but given their microscopic historical analysis of individual cases, they still serve as a basis for assessing the value of certain casual conditions in distinguishing different forms of conflict.

Regardless of academic background, most scholars would agree that the interaction between local, regional and international pressures makes PCC most likely in Lebanon. Yet a deeper examination uncovers that in many cases, scholars stress certain factors at the expense of others. In other words, through the scholars' approaches it is possible to locate what they consider the single most important factor for an escalation. Investigating the foundational works

of Kamal Salibi, Farid el-Khazen and Samir Khalaf exposes the three major approaches to conflict dynamics and escalation in Lebanon.

The first scholarly approach focuses on the internal dynamics of conflicts in Lebanon that lead to a disenfranchised public and create a setting for potential PCC (Hudson 1968; Salibi 1976; Khalidi 1979). Kamal Salibi's work epitomizes this perspective. While he emphasizes that the interplay between internal and external forces was pivotal in the lead up to the Lebanese Civil War (i.e., the period of 1958-1975), Salibi stresses local actions and connections between oppositional challenges and authoritarian transgressions. Leading up to the conflict, Salibi argues that "there was hardly anything that went right" at the domestic level, including regime corruption, student grievances and a growing oppositional call for the "deconfessionalization" of Lebanon (meaning the abolishment of the practice in which high political posts and lower bureaucratic positions were allocated based on questionable census data that favored the Maronite Christians over other sects). All of these domestic issues, which he favors while only pointing to a few regional or international ones, "contributed collectively to a state of confusion the like of which had not been previously experienced" (Salibi: 72).

In the second approach, the concentration is on the role of foreign intervention or interference (whether international, regional or non-state) in triggering PCC (Rabinovich 1985; Corm 1988; Picard 1996; El-Khazen 2000). Farid el-Khazen's work typifies this perspective. He takes a broader approach than Salibi, looking back as far as the late-Ottoman period to examine certain primary factors that lead to conflict in Lebanon. He indicates that "the concurrence of internal unrest and external destabilization" is the necessary combination for PCC, but nonetheless, distinguishes intervention as the most crucial factor for PCC (El-Khazen:

6). In different times of crisis, “the external loads on Lebanon [regional and international] have always exceeded those arising from internal conditions” (El-Khazen: 24).

The last distinct approach focuses on the shifts in perceptions of different communal groups in Lebanon and how they correspond to the transitions from civil disobedience to collective violence (Hanf 1993; Gerges 1993; Makdisi 2000; Khalaf 2002). Samir Khalaf’s work symbolizes this perspective. Like the others, he defends the all-inclusive combination for conflict in Lebanon: it is an “interplay between internal divisions and external dislocations” (Khalaf: iv). Nevertheless, the heart of his book is on the nature of violence and militant behavior in the Lebanese context, whether in the case of the 1860 or 1975-1991 Civil War. From this approach, he attempts to locate the basis of out-group antipathy, which can characterize a spiral towards “communal conflict.” He argues that when groups feel threatened, they will start seeking help from outside sources they usually would not. He terms this process the radicalization of “communal identities,” which leads to the most intense forms of collective violence.

Even though these three scholarly approaches have built the study of conflict in Lebanon, they all have their analytical problems, which I argue necessitates the use of fsQCA. First, I agree that PCC in Lebanon is rendered most possible through the combination of local, regional and international pressures, but this characterization is vague and possesses very little explanatory value. What distinguishes this study is its attempt to use fsQCA methodology and empirical connections to figure out the exact relationships between the presence or absence of specific factors and an event’s placement along the ST to PCC continuum. Additionally, the three approaches, represented through the works of Salibi, el-Khazen and Khalaf, can be elaborated or challenged by an investigation of the conducted fsQCA analysis.

Second, the major scholars of these conflicts lived through them. For example, Salibi, el-Khazen and Khalaf all lived in Lebanon during the civil war and their seminal works were formalized during or after the conflict. This first-hand perspective is both a blessing and a curse. These primary observations come from those who understand the conflict dynamics the best, but they are clearly not far removed, and could reflect the writers' biases more so than the actual realities of conflict. This is why fsQCA serves as an effective addendum, as it is finally testing the causal factors that scholars have analyzed, but with a separation from the work that is reinforced by empirical evidence. Moreover, fsQCA helps formalize these narratives by codifying all possible combinations and factors for conflict.

Third, QCA, more so than case-study analysis or variable-oriented analysis, accounts for causal complexity across a larger number of cases. In a strict correlation analysis, one could not account for the thirty-two different combinations in this study; that is, 2^5 for the five causal conditions. In other words, it would prove extremely difficult to understand all the intricacies of the cases individually within this approach. On the other hand, QCA makes “sense of the diversity across cases in a way that unites similarities and differences in a single, coherent framework” (Ragin 1987: 19). In the context of this study, QCA provides codified explanations, supported by empirical evidence, for a range of different solutions (i.e., complex, intermediate and parsimonious solutions) that explain the dissimilar characteristics of events along the ST to PCC continuum.

Lastly, I argue that utilizing fuzzy set QCA is essential to challenge the scholarship that largely rests on hindsight (i.e., the extreme violence of the 1860 or 1975-1991 Lebanese Civil War) to define an event as either on the ‘brink of civil war’ or an all-out civil war. Fuzzy set analysis, and specifically, the fuzzy-based PCC outcome shows the many shades along the ST to

PCC continuum. Also, just because a conflict period has a 0.5 or higher membership to the PCC outcome does not necessarily mean that it must be labeled as a “civil war.” All it demonstrates is that based on the causal conditions that are deemed as important in studying Lebanese conflict, one case has a higher or lower membership score than another analyzed conflict period. This distinction through the mechanism of fuzzy set logic is meant to use concrete number scores, instead of ambiguous language under dichotomous characterizations, to quantify and qualify certain conflict periods in Lebanon.

Contextualizing the Study

The Selected Timeframe and Parameters of the Study

The period of analysis for this study is 1841-2008. Even though this is a vast timeframe, with dissimilar historical, political and social contexts, there is one characteristic that permits the scholar to investigate it as one. Since 1841, confessional identity has been the marker for individual or group participation (whether political, social or economic) in the entity of Lebanon (Makdisi 2000). Correspondingly, conflict periods since 1841 deal in part with calls to abolish political confessionalism or uphold its basis of power allocation, a similarity that helps formulate one analyzable period. The year of 2008 was chosen as the end point of this study, as it marks the latest, major event of armed conflict in Lebanon.

Even though this timeframe is extensive, a careful selection of specific parameters for case membership limited the study to a maintainable number of the most prominent cases. First, the event had to be a conflict of some sorts (whether heavily armed or not) between different parties or groups within Lebanon and have national implications. The latter includes cases like the 1952 Presidential Crisis, where there was a protracted political confrontation regarding the

authoritarian actions of Maronite President Bishara al-Khoury. Even though this conflict period experienced no lives lost, the debate over Khoury's transgressions raged at the national level. Also, lessons from this conflict period can be instructive in explaining why PCC did not occur. The latter also excluded small skirmishes that did not have large-scale ramifications.

Second, the conflict period had to be intra-state in nature; that is a case of "civil" conflict of some form.ⁱ This did not bar events that exhibited a type of international, regional or non-state actor interference in intra-state affairs (whether rhetorical political pressure or physical intervention). Without this stipulation, there would be very few cases included in this study. Due to Lebanon's geopolitical location, and its evolving but conflicting political ideologies of pan-Arabism and pro-Westernism, the country has been a contested zone between regional and international powers (Corm 1988). Additionally, few wars are entirely "civil" in space or location, and Lebanon is not an exception to this rule.

Finally, the study excluded some intra-group or recurrent conflicts within the greater Lebanese Civil War as they had little to do with the selected causal conditions. These types of conflict, which merely by deaths and duration could be considered PCC from a broad perspective, convolute the first goal of this study: to discover what conditions and combinations distinguish conflicts along the ST to PCC continuum. This is largely because these forms of conflict rarely deal with the general political or social goals that led to the original conflicts. Due to their recurrent nature, and placement within a larger conflict, these events revolve around other causal conditions, where local control of people, territory or resources are the primary objectives (Martinez 2000). Thus in all, the study incorporates twelve cases.

The PCC Outcome

The outcome for the study is the PCC outcome. All cases have a certain degree of membership to this outcome. If the membership score of the conflict period is higher than 0.5, it is considered PCC in form. If it is lower than 0.5, it is considered ST in form. The PCC outcome is a combination of three facets: deaths related to the conflict, the duration of the conflict and the intensity of the conflict, where the presence of high deaths divided by a short duration would equal a high intensity (i.e., *deaths/duration*). Using both scholarly and news sources, I was able to find casualty and duration information on all the conflict periods in this study. Some of the evidence is more reliable, but case-based knowledge supplemented the investigation. With a nuanced historical understanding of the variations between the twelve cases and concrete data, I was able to determine clear-cut descriptive thresholds for the calibrations. This process was only made simpler by the fact that the cases were largely clustered into two groups, in which deaths and duration were either relatively high or low with few cases in between.

Deaths and duration were separately calibrated for each case and then averaged together using the compensatory approach of fuzzy set analysis (Ragin 2000). The last component of the PCC outcome is intensity, which was only a secondary indicator because conflict intensity can contribute to more deaths and a longer duration. However, the intensity factor also serves as a counterbalance to cases with a long duration but few deaths. A conflict period that lasts a year with one hundred deaths is not particularly intense, but a conflict that lasts a month with one hundred deaths is relatively intense. Simply assessing for intensity by *deaths/duration* accounted for such cases. The 1936 Riots, for example, saw the death of fifty people in three days, an intense conflict given that short duration (yielding a 0.56 intensity score). There are several

cases that mimic the 1936 case (i.e., the 1973 Army-PLO Clashes which lasted two weeks and saw the death of 147 people, yielding a 0.31 intensity score), and I argue that these types of cases should be defined as relatively intense.

After I chose the thresholds for the separate death and duration calibrations and averaged them together, I had a raw PCC outcome score for each case (indicated below in Table 1 as “PCCoutraw”). Then, after selecting the thresholds for the intensity calibration, I used the intensity score to slightly increase or decrease the raw PCC outcome to make the final PCC outcome score. If the intensity score for a case was higher than the raw PCC outcome, I increased the outcome score by 0.05 and vice-versa if it was lower. This process produced the final PCC outcome score for each conflict period (i.e., each case that had reliable death and duration data) but one: the 1952 Presidential Crisis. Using the compensatory approach for this specific outcome score was misleading, as the case experienced no deaths but still generated a 0.49 PCC raw outcome score because of its high duration of five months. I assigned the 1952 Presidential Crisis the lowest possible PCC outcome score (0.01), as this political crisis was the lowest form of ST in the examined cases. Based on this method, five conflict periods have a membership score greater than 0.5, and thus, are considered PCC in form. Seven conflict periods have a membership score less than 0.5, and as a result, are considered ST in form (indicated below in Table 1 along with descriptive thresholds for calibrations and raw and calibrated death, duration and intensity data).ⁱⁱ

The only case that I did not obtain concrete casualty data on was the first case of the study: the 1841 Druze-Marionite Clashes. Deaths ranged from fifty to one thousand depending on the source, but it is most likely that the casualty number was closer to 300, which would be approximately double the deaths of the 1973 case (147 deaths equaling 0.07 calibrated), and

thus, I assigned it a 0.14 calibrated death score. Regarding the duration, the most frequent estimate among most scholars of late-Ottoman Lebanon is four months (between the duration of the 1958 case--almost 3 months equaling 0.74 calibrated--and the duration of the 1973 case--5 months equaling 0.92 calibrated), and thus, I assigned it a 0.8 calibrated duration score (Makdisi 2000; Lutsky 1969; Churchill 1994).

Table 1. Protracted civil conflict: data and calibration

Case ID	Deaths		Duration (Months)		PCC (uncorrected)	Intensity (Dea/Dur)		PCC (corrected)
1841DMC	300	0.14	4	0.8	0.47	250	0.25	0.42
1860CW	12000	1	2	0.65	0.825	6000	1	0.88
1936R	50	0.05	0.1	0.06	0.055	500	0.56	0.11
1952PC	0	0.05	5	0.92	0.485	0	0.05	0.01
1958C	4000	0.86	2.75	0.74	0.8	1455	0.93	0.85
1969D	11	0.05	0.03	0.05	0.05	367	0.44	0.1
1970KP	12	0.05	0.1	0.06	0.055	120	0.11	0.11
1973AP	147	0.07	0.5	0.18	0.125	294	0.31	0.18
1975CW	18500	1	18	1	1	1028	0.83	0.95
1983MW	1300	0.54	6	0.95	0.745	217	0.2	0.7
1985WC	4000	0.86	32	1	0.93	125	0.11	0.88
2008MC	80	0.06	0.25	0.1	0.08	320	0.35	0.13

Thresholds: Deaths (0 – 1000 – 6000); Duration (0 – 1 – 6); Intensity (0 – 400 – 1600)

Its intensity was most likely situated between the 1973 case (a 0.31 score) and the 1983 case (a 0.2 score), making its relatively intensity score 0.25. Due to this lower intensity score, the 1841 case's raw PCC outcome score of 0.47 was decreased to 0.42 to make the final PCC outcome score. This process clearly produced the most subjective PCC outcome score of the study. Nonetheless, this was reconciled by the fact that if the calibrations of deaths, duration and intensity were all averaged using the compensatory approach (another possible method to obtain the PCC outcome that was not used), a similar PCC outcome score of 0.4 is obtained.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Causal Conditions for the Study

All causal conditions for the study deal with the spark of the conflict period itself (in the case of ST and PCC) or its initial escalation (in the case of PCC). For each conflict period, I investigated the relative presence or absence of each condition before or during the early stages of the specific conflict period. However, the cutoff for examination of such conditions was before the case became severely protracted or violent, as conditions under these extreme contexts would attribute little in understanding how to best distinguish ST from PCC. In this section, I use specific examples of the cases to explain the intricacies of the five causal conditions. In addition, I also describe how I decided to apply these conditions to a fsQCA analysis.

The first causal condition is social, political or constitutional **challenge(s) to the ruling power**. A social challenge could be a mass demonstration against ruling power directives, like in the case of the 1969 April Demonstrations, where Leftist and Arab Nationalist parties protested “the reactionary policies of the Lebanese government” regarding Palestinian commando action and living standards in the Palestinian refugee camps (El-Khazen 2000: 142). This could also be a political challenge, like the Lebanese Nationalist Movement’s (a strong, oppositional Leftist coalition) call for the *Kata’ib* party’s disbandment and resignation from parliament in 1975, which challenged the political basis of the predominately Maronite Christian ruling establishment. Lastly it could be a constitutional challenge, like that which was forwarded by oppositional politicians before the 1958 Crisis, where they called for an amendment that would create a balance between presidential (always Maronite Christian) and prime minister (always Sunni Muslim) powers. In different capacities, these oppositional challenges can result in ruling power reactions, that if authoritarian in nature, can increase the possibility of conflict.

Qualitative assessments of case patterns were utilized in the oppositional challenges

condition to link the number of challenges leading up to a specific conflict period with its degree of membership to the condition. Under this associational logic, no challenges equaled full non-membership, one challenged equaled a 0.25 membership, two challenges equaled a 0.75 membership and three or more equaled full membership. A similar approach to create fsQCA-compatible conditions was used for all conditions besides the “crisp” armament one.

The second causal condition is related to the first factor: **authoritarian action(s)** meant to extinguish existing or potential oppositional challenges. In 1936, for example, President Emile Eddé and the High Commissioner of French-mandated Lebanon signed the Franco-Lebanese Treaty. This treaty established a prospective independent and sovereign Lebanese state, which crushed the hopes of a large portion of the population that protested for geographical and political unity with the Syrian mandate. In this case, the president and his political supporters neglected many constituents of the mandate in an attempt to make sure their vision of Lebanon (somewhat narrow and without widespread support) materialized (Traboulsi 2007).

This is merely one example of a decision which is meant to crush oppositional calls, but authoritarian action at the hands of the ruling power can include election rigging (in the case of the lead up to the 1958 Crisis) constitutional meddling meant to consolidate power (in the case of the 1952 Presidential Crisis) or the destruction of oppositional infrastructure (like in the case of the ruling power’s dismantling of Hizbullah’s telecommunications system in 2008).

Authoritarian actions and their relationship to further oppositional challenges reinforce the “vicious circle of contentious action and reaction” that can lead to a conflict spiral (Rubin, Pruitt and Kim 1994). The number of actions connects with a case’s degree of membership to the condition, where two actions equaled a 0.75 membership and three or more equaled full membership.

The next causal condition tested was **armament**; that is an observation of increased armament leading up to a conflict period. This factor was labeled as fully present (1) or absent (0), namely because of the inherent subjectivity of assessing a degree of membership to this condition. First, there are no concrete numbers on sales, transactions, and in many cases, the suppliers or transporters of the arms. Additionally, with the technological advancements in heavy equipment throughout the period of study, it would be very difficult not to assign higher membership scores to those more recent conflicts. For example, leading up to 1975, small arms of various kinds were coming into Lebanon from all parts of the world, marking the highest procurement of weapons in Lebanese history (Sampson 1977). However, by 2008, Hizbullah possessed 42,000 rockets and various mid-range weapons, which surpassed the quantity and quality of arms in any other conflict (Hirst 2010). Therefore, armament had to remain a “crisp” identifier.

The fourth causal condition is **physical intervention**. Three forms of intervention were combined to create the assessed degree of membership for the condition: international, regional and/or non-state intervention. This could be pre-conflict political intervention, like that of the British and Ottoman reforms in the mid-nineteenth century. The direct imposition of these reforms transformed the social and political landscape of Mount Lebanon, which was definitely a factor in the PCC of 1860. It could also be the use of force by an intervening body during the early stages of a conflict. In the case of the 1983-1984 Mountain War, after Druze militias attacked a number of Christian towns, U.S. warships that were docked off the coast of Beirut fired shell after shell on Druze locations (Hanf 1993). Lastly, it could be the presence of belligerent non-state actors during conflict periods (i.e., the presence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization--PLO--fighting forces in Lebanon after 1969).

In terms of direct material support, it is possible in some cases to trace arms trades and the assistance of foreign fighters, and thus, I accounted for its presence in a case's relative degree of membership to the intervention condition. The presence of outside assistance was clear in the 1958 Crisis, where arms (in this case from the United Arab Republic--Syria and Egypt) were transported into Lebanon along with fighters meant to aid the oppositional parties in Lebanon (Gerges 1993). Nonetheless, it must be noted that in instances of quick and vast increases of armament, especially during the Lebanese Civil War, it is almost impossible to locate who intervened in Lebanon by offering arms or bodies to leftist, PLO or status-quo groups.

It also must be noted that the coding for intervention was by number of different forces, not different types of intervention at the hands of the same source. In the 1958 Crisis, for example, the U.S. intervened in Lebanon in several ways. Their intervention started with the ratification of the Eisenhower Doctrine, continued with CIA involvement in election rigging in the summer of 1957 and ended with U.S. warships docking on the shores of Beirut in July 1958 (Eveland 1980). The number assigned to this intervention stands as 1, not 3. Due to the difficulty in tracking some specific forms of intervention, it was best to code based on the actual number of intervening forces, not the number of ways or intensity in which one force intervened. Additionally, in several cases foreign forces intervene in the early stages of a conflict period to ignite it and then later, based on their own interests, intervene in an attempt to foster a resolution between groups (Stedman 1997). The latter type of intervention only deals with a few cases, does not help to distinguish the conditions or combinations that lead to ST or PCC, and as result, was not accounted for in the study. I combined the number of international, regional and non-state interventions to complete the intervention casual condition, where two occurrences of intervention equaled a 0.75 membership and three or more equaled full membership.

The last causal condition is the combination of “**enemy images**” and how they facilitate the perception of a **threat to the political, economic or social participation of a group**, or at a higher level, the fear of a **threat to the identity and existence of a group**. As defined by Janet Gross Stein (1996), “enemy images” are a group’s perceptions of the “other,” and they are instilled in a group through a group leader’s rhetoric. At the highest severity, these types of images can result in the recipient group perceiving that their identity or existence as a group is threatened. In return, this can spark a quicker escalation in violence, like in the cases of the 1958 Crisis or the first phase of the Lebanese Civil War. Therefore, enemy images and threats to group identity were combined into one causal factor because there is a consistent relationship between the two.

Enemy images and threats to group identity can range in severity and differences in acridness can be observed fairly easily. For example, in the lead up to the 2008 May Clashes, Secretary General of Hizbullah, Hassan Nasrallah, publically called for the ousting of the “Western-backed” regime, which would rid the country of its “foreign tutelage or hegemony” and create a “clean” Lebanon, free of “theft and waste” (Hirst 2010: 383). This type of relatively tame political rhetoric is distinct from the harsh enemy images exchanged during the earliest stages of the Lebanese Civil War, where specific militia leaders were telling their supporters to “execute the object” (Hatem 1999: 6). The response that these two types of enemy images would evoke is related to the perception of threats to group identity. In the second case, such an image did facilitate the fear of group extinction, whereas in the first case, low-level political rhetoric alone did not produce a fear of group extinction.

In addition, there are certain cases with an absence of enemy images, but a perceived threat from an opposing group. In the case of the 1985-1988 War of the Camps, there was little

to no exchange of heated rhetoric leading up to the conflict, but the Shi'a political party Amal were fearful of how the movement of armed Palestinian groups to their territories would challenge their mobilization in the area. Amal's panic regarding these developments was definitely one of the major sparks for the War of the Camps (Hanf 1993). However, this panic was slight, and it cannot be argued that Amal feared for the future existence of their group. For each case, I recorded the number of enemy images produced leading up to ST or PCC and their relative intensity. Then, I assigned a membership score based on that number and intensity. The process was similar for threats to group identity. Then, I averaged the two and assigned a final membership score under the variable name "enident." The assigned membership scores of each casual condition for the twelve cases are indicated in Table 2.^{iv}

Table 2. Causal conditions and outcome (calibrated)

Case ID	oppchall	authoract	armament	interven	enident	PCCoutcome
1841DMC	0.25	0	1	0.75	0.25	0.42
1860CW	0.75	0.25	1	1	0.75	0.88
1936R	0	0.25	0	0.25	0.25	0.11
1952PC	0.25	0.25	0	0	0	0.01
1958C	0.75	1	1	0.75	0.75	0.85
1969D	0.25	0.25	1	0.25	0.25	0.1
1970KP	0	0	1	0.25	0	0.11
1973AP	0.75	0.75	1	0.75	0.25	0.18
1975CW	1	1	1	1	1	0.95
1983MW	0	0	1	1	0.75	0.7
1985WC	0	0	1	0.75	0.25	0.88
2008MC	0.75	0.75	1	0	0.25	0.13

Analysis of the Conditions for PCC

The truth table below displays all possible combinations that lead to PCC (a PCC outcome score higher than 0.5 and marked with a 1) and those combinations that do not lead to

PCC (a PCC outcome score lower than 0.5 and marked with a 0) in the twelve observed cases (indicated in Table 3). All five causal conditions were combined in 40 percent of the cases of PCC and four of the five conditions (excluding the authoritarian actions condition) were combined in 60 percent of the cases of PCC. Finally, 80 percent of the cases of PCC combined the armament, intervention and enident conditions, the same combination which produced the intermediate solution.

Table 3. Truth table (presence of outcome)

oppchall	authoract	armament	interven	enident	#	PCC	Consistency	Cases
1	1	1	1	1	2	1	0.89	1975CW, 1958C
0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0.87	1983MW
1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0.85	1860CW
0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0.75	1985WC, 1841DMC
1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0.52	1973AP
1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0.44	2008MC
0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0.41	1970KP, 1969D
0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0.08	1936R, 1952PC

Correspondingly, the most consistent solution for the PCC outcome was the intermediate one--the combination of **armament, multiple forms of intervention and severe threats to group identity**--with a consistency score of 0.93 (indicated below in Table 4).

Table 4. Intermediate solution for presence of outcome

Solution	Consistency	Coverage	Cases
armament * intervention * evident	0.93	0.74	1975CW, 1860CW, 1958C, 1983MW

This solution accounted for four of the five cases of PCC and had a coverage score of 0.74. The main reason this coverage score is below 0.8 is because it excludes the case of the 1985-1988 War of the Camps (a PCC outcome score of 0.88). The omission of this specific causal combination from the intermediate solution can be explained through case-based knowledge and a loose understanding of conflict theory.

The War of the Camps was a recurrent conflict within the greater Lebanese Civil War that originally started on a low level during the 1982 Israeli Invasion of Lebanon (Hanf 1993). In terms of assessing the conflict's specific causal combination, its makeup is distinct from the other cases with a 0.5 or higher PCC outcome score. Most distinctively is that no oppositional challenges or authoritarian actions contributed to this PCC. Mass armament and two forms of foreign intervention (i.e., Syria and the PLO) were the only factors present. As explained by Martinez (2000), mini-conflicts that occur in the latter stages of a larger conflict are often based on a group's main objective to "control the locality," rather than the greater political or social issues that led a group to believe armed conflict was necessary. In 1985, Amal feared that the movement of PLO groups towards West Beirut would challenge their territorial power. The possibility of this type of perception leading to PCC (without high membership associated to other causal conditions, like oppositional challenges or authoritarian actions) is most likely once conflict has already begun, as groups are more sensitive and ready to act on threats they would usually resist in other situations (Kriesberg 1998).

Therefore, the War of the Camps is an anomalous case. It does not explain the consistent dynamics of conflict escalation, as conflict had already escalated and was in a semi-perpetual state by the mid-1980s in Lebanon. Nevertheless, the fact that oppositional challenges and authoritarian actions were absent from this case (a 0.88 PCC outcome score) and the 1983-1984 Mountain War (a 0.7 PCC outcome score) prohibited these two factors from the final assessment of what condition is the most crucial to ensure PCC. This is not to argue that Kamal Salibi's focus on the importance of local actions in conflict escalation, like oppositional challenges and authoritarian actions, was misguided. As indicated in Tables 2 and 3, high oppositional challenges contributed to PCC in three of the five cases of PCC and two of the five cases of PCC for high authoritarian actions. Salibi was using the period of 1958-1975 to explain conflict dynamics, and given the significance of these factors in PCC in this time period, his arguments are acceptable. However, his arguments do not explain the factors for later cases of conflict. Those cases which either had no oppositional challenges/authoritarian actions but PCC, or many oppositional challenges/authoritarian actions but no PCC, leave these two factors as weaker in explaining PCC over a broad timeframe.

In sum, the solution that most consistently explains PCC is the intermediate one of **armament, multiple forms of intervention and severe threats to group identity**. It is also worth pointing out the parsimonious solution: the causal condition that combines **intense enemy images** and **severe threats to group identity** (i.e., "enident") can explain PCC alone. This solution had a consistency score of 0.88 and a coverage score of 0.78. It will be necessary to revisit this solution when discussing what could be considered the single most important factor for PCC.

Analysis of the Conditions for the Negation of PCC

The truth table below displays all possible combinations that lead to the negation of PCC (a PPC outcome score lower than 0.5 and marked with a 1) and those combinations that lead to PCC (a PCC outcome score higher than 0.5 and marked with a 0) in the twelve observed cases (indicated in Table 5). The negation of all five causal conditions were combined in 29 percent of the cases of \sim PCC (or ST) and the negation of four of the five conditions (excluding the armament condition) were also combined in 29 percent of the cases of \sim PCC. Finally, 71 percent of the cases of ST combined the negation of intervention and the evident conditions, the same combination which produced the intermediate solution.

Table 5. Truth table (negation of outcome)

oppchall	authoract	armament	interven	enident	#	\sim PCC	Consistency	Cases
0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1.00	1952PC, 1936R
0	0	1	0	0	2	1	0.95	1969D, 1970KP
1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0.93	2008MC
1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0.85	1973AP
0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0.66	1841DMC, 1985WC
0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0.65	1860CW
1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0.58	1983MW
1	1	1	1	1	2	0	0.33	1958C, 1975CW

Accordingly, the most inclusive and wide-ranging solution for the negation of the PCC outcome is the intermediate one: **the absence of intervention and the absence of threats to group identity** (indicated in Table 6).

Table 6. Intermediate solution for negation of outcome

Solution	Consistency	Coverage	Cases
~ intervention * ~ enident	0.95	0.71	1952PC, 1936R, 1969D, 1970KP, 2008MC

This solution had a consistency score of 0.95, setting the solution as the most likely combination to distinguish ST from PCC. Furthermore, this solution included five of the seven cases of ST, equaling a coverage score of 0.71. The two cases not included in this intermediate solution are rather complex (the 1841 Druze-Marionite Clashes and the 1973 Army-PLO Clashes) and will be investigated when I re-address the second part of the research question: what ensures an escalation to PCC?

The complex solution of the negation of the PCC outcome uncovers some pertinent information about one factor that, in theory, could be argued to ensure an escalation to PCC alone. This solution is **the absence of oppositional challenges, the absence of authoritarian actions, the absence of intervention and the absence of threats to group identity**. Its consistency score is 0.97, but its coverage score is only 0.58. The only factor that this solution leaves out is armament, and this is because there are all but two cases in the study (the 1936 Riots and the 1952 Presidential Crisis) that saw a relative increase of armament, whether labeled as ST or PCC.

The 1970 *Kata'ib*-PLO Clashes, for example, were preceded by a major increase of armament. After the 1969 Cairo Agreement, which all but legalized PLO attacks on Israel from

Lebanese soil and allowed a steady flow of arms to Palestinian refugee camps, status quo parties (mostly Maronite Christian) began to increase their armament in an attempt to catch up to these armed groups (Rabinovich 1985). This increase in armament between 1969-1970 in part contributed to the clashes in late March. These clashes only lasted three days with twelve deaths, and as a result, were assigned a PCC outcome score of 0.11. This example symbolizes the dynamics for five out of the seven cases of ST, which experienced large increases in armament without escalating to PCC.

Before examining the fsQCA truth table analysis, I hypothesized that armament would be a necessary condition. When tested as a necessary condition, it did have the highest consistency score of any single causal condition (at 0.98), thus making it a consistent necessity for PCC. Nevertheless, its relevance score was low at 0.52.^v This is because an increase in armament is involved in almost all cases, marking it as “an empirically trivial necessary condition” and making it largely irrelevant for distinguishing ST and PCC (Ragin 2008: 61). For a factor to even be considered the most important for an escalation to PCC, it had to be absent in most cases of ST and present in most cases of PCC, which is not the case for armament.

The parsimonious solution for the negation of PCC is also telling for an analysis of the most crucial factor for PCC. This solution of **the absence of foreign intervention** has a consistency score of 0.93 and a coverage score of 0.73, which would empirically confirm the arguments of Farid el-Khazen. With such a high consistency score and a modest coverage score, multiple forms of intervention could be labeled a necessary condition for PCC. Nonetheless, a further investigation of both the foreign intervention and evident factors in several cases uncovers that perhaps this parsimonious solution is misleading.

What Ensures an Escalation: Foreign Intervention vs. Threats to Group Identity

When tested as individual, necessary conditions, foreign intervention has a higher necessity with consistency score than evident for the PCC outcome: 0.93 vs. 0.78. However, this small difference does not confirm that foreign intervention is more essential for PCC than the evident factor. It only demonstrates that both (with their higher scores) could be considered necessary conditions for PCC. In a similar fashion, the evident condition only has a slightly higher relevance score than foreign intervention: 0.88 vs. 0.73 (an assessment of each individual condition tested as a necessary condition to PCC is indicated in Table 7).

Given these weak justifications, it is necessary to go beyond an empirical examination of these individual conditions. Through a descriptive three-case analysis, it is found that the combination of **harsh enemy images and severe threats to group identity** can be considered a slightly more important condition than multiple forms of intervention in distinguishing ST from PCC, and as a result, ensuring an escalation to PCC.

Table 7. Necessary condition analysis (presence of outcome)

Condition	Consistency	Coverage
oppchall	0.59	0.66
authoract	0.49	0.57
armament	0.98	0.52
interven	0.93	0.73
enident	0.78	0.88

The case of the 2008 May Clashes provides an example of where an event remained as ST because of the combined absence of these two factors. As mentioned prior, Hizbullah had an immense arsenal of 42,000 rockets in 2008. Hizbullah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah promised that they were only for defense against Israel. Nevertheless, some Lebanese pro-status quo parties and their constituents were very suspicious of this high level of armament (full membership) and under what conditions Hizbullah would use them against the state. Oppositional challenges (0.75 membership score) and authoritarian actions (0.75 membership score) were also intense in the lead up to the 2008 May Clashes, as Hizbullah called for veto power over the pro-status quo political bloc and organized sit-ins near parliament against the current government, and the status quo took several actions that were meant to weaken Hizbullah's infrastructural capabilities. These were the dynamics that led to eighty casualties in only two weeks of fighting and convinced many analysts that Lebanon was "on the brink of civil war" (Martinez and Volpicella 2008: 3).

What were the reasons that this conflict did not transition into PCC (only a PCC outcome score of 0.13)? In short, the absence of foreign intervention and threats to group identity were instrumental in keeping this conflict period at a low level. Foreign pressures from the United States were present, where President Bush urged status quo politicians to use a simple majority to elect a new pro-status quo Lebanese president, as opposed to the two-thirds majority that was ensured under the constitution (Hirst 2010). This pressure is dissimilar from the multiple forms of intervention that were observed in the five cases of PCC. Moreover, enemy images and threats to group identity were fairly low (0.25 membership score) and might have contributed to fears of Hizbullah's political marginalization, but not an extinction of Hizbullah or the constituents that supported it.

Therein, this was a case that could have escalated to PCC, but the combination of the absence of intervention and threats to group identity did not permit such an escalation. In other words, it is a sound example of the intermediate solution for the negation of PCC, where the absence of foreign intervention combines with the absence of threats to group identity to create a consistency score of 0.95. Given the vibrancy of this solution, I argue that this negative combination is the most important to block the possibility of PCC, and as a result, is the most likely combination to distinguish ST from PCC. Nonetheless, through this analysis an important question arises: are there any cases in the study that could clarify if one of these factors could be considered more important in ensuring an escalation to PCC?

Two of the most perplexing cases in the study are the 1841 Druze-Maronite Clashes and the 1973 Army-PLO clashes. They are the most likely to be labeled as cases where PCC could have occurred but did not. The most interesting facet of these two cases is that they included multiple levels of intervention (i.e., a membership score higher than 0.5), but very low threats to group identity (i.e., a membership score lower than 0.5). Even though they are only two cases, a deeper analysis of them helps verify the main hypothesis I made before examining the fsQCA truth table analysis: the presence of the causal condition of severe threats to group identity (facilitated through intense enemy images) is the most likely to ensure PCC.

In the 1841 case, both Ottoman officials and British administration intervened in the once autonomous entity of Mount Lebanon to institute reforms of “egalitarian” change. Once interpreted by the Maronite Christian commoners, a confrontation over landownership and the right of Druze sheikhs to rule over all other sects transformed into open conflict. Due to these multiple forms of direct interference, the case was given an intervention membership score of

0.75. Enemy images and threats to group identity, however, remained low or completely absent, receiving a membership score of 0.25.

A specific enemy image voiced by a Maronite Christian priest illustrates the relatively low rhetoric used in the lead up to this conflict. Reacting to what he perceived as the transgressions of Druze landowners, he decried that their actions were “motivated by their desire to continue domination in the Mountain” (Harik 1968: 253). This is little compared to an enemy image observed in the early stages of PCC nineteen years later, where the Maronite Christian organizer of the peasant revolt against Druze sheikhs in Maronite-Druze mixed districts, Tanyus Shahin, urged his followers to fight to the end against the Druze enemy, who had “stolen their money, killed their priests, plundered their churches and monasteries and destroyed their peace” (Makdisi 2000: 122). The commonality between these two periods was the level of intervention, respectfully at 0.75 membership for 1841 and full membership for 1860. The main factor that distinguished the 0.42 PCC outcome score of 1841 from the 0.88 PCC outcome score of 1860 was the difference in the severity of threats to the identity of groups, where 1841 had a membership score of 0.25 and 1860 had a membership score of 0.75.

This case of the 1841 Druze-Marionite Clashes is not the only, or the most elaborate, instance where a PCC could have occurred but did not. In the case of the 1973 Army-PLO Clashes, armament (full membership), which steadily increased throughout the early 1970s on both sides of the political divide, contributed to the possibility of a deadly conflict. In addition, the exchange of oppositional challenges (0.75 membership score) and authoritarian actions (0.75 membership score) revolving around the army’s non-action to an Israeli covert action in Lebanon, which left three commanders of the PLO’s *al-Fatah* dead, provoked an explosive situation. But why were these issues being debated at the national level? The presence of the

PLO, their continued military operations against Israel and Israeli retaliations in Lebanon were the forces of foreign intervention (a membership score of 0.75) that sparked such a conflict.

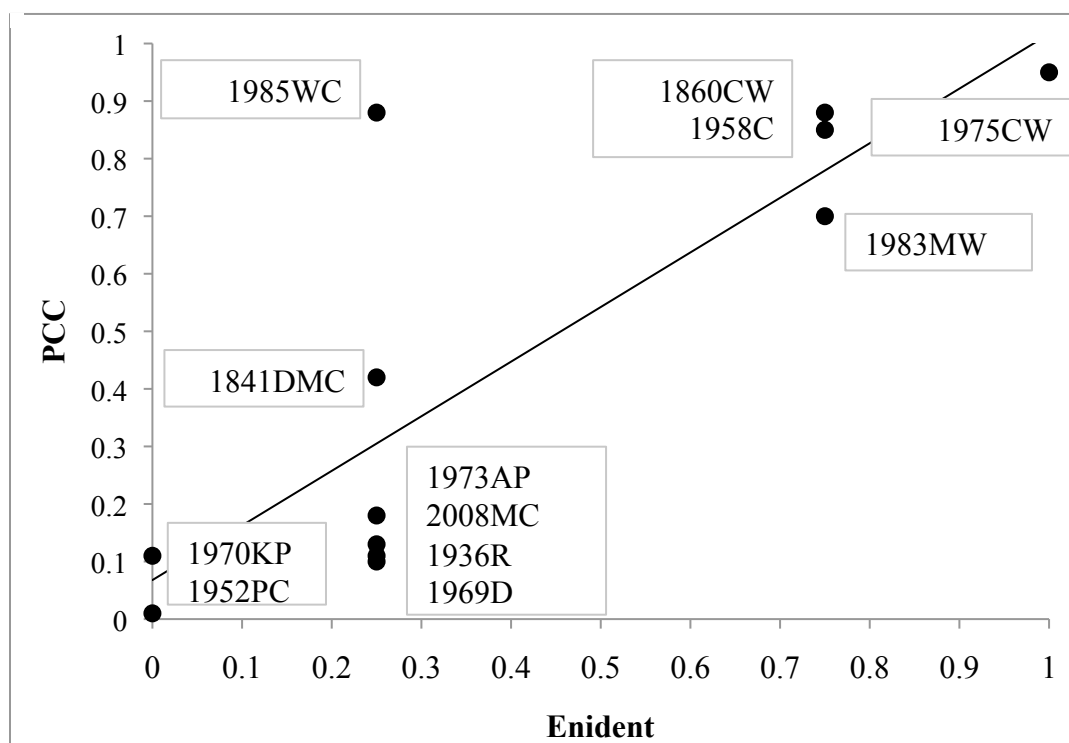
After President Faranjiyya refused to accept any calls for the ousting of his military general, fearing a change in the close relationship of command between the president and the Lebanese Army, clashes broke out between the army, PLO commando groups and smaller Maronite militias, which resulted in a two-week conflict that saw the death of 147 people (Badran 2009; Sayigh 1997). Given the relatively small number of deaths, this conflict period had a 0.18 degree of membership to the PCC outcome. The reality that all factors were at high membership level, besides the evident condition, is crucial to understand why this conflict period did not escalate to higher ST or PCC. The highest level of political rhetoric of this conflict period came from Maronite politician Pierre Gemayel, who argued that the Palestinian presence in Lebanon was “why there is a disagreement about the identity, role and (spiritual message) of Lebanon” (Sayigh 1997: 359). In short, it cannot be argued that this type of rhetoric led the PLO, or the Leftist Lebanese parties that were almost political and militarily united with the PLO by 1973, to consider their political existence or group identity endangered (Salibi 1976).

To understand the possibility of the evident condition ensuring PCC alone, it is beneficial to articulate that the solution that most likely ensures PCC (i.e., the intermediate solution for PCC--armament, multiple forms of intervention and evident) does not exist empirically in the case of 1973, as severe threats to group identity were absent. With this clarification, one could argue that if politicians were producing more acrid enemy images, like that of political leaders in the lead up to the 1983-1984 Mountain War, ST could have transformed to PCC. But the political rhetoric of 1973 was not similar to that of the mid-1980s, where for example, Druze politician Walid Junblatt declared that the upcoming battle with Maronite militias over the Chouf

mountains would “be a carnival, a bloody carnival” (Hanf 1993: 279). Again, the similarity in intense foreign intervention (0.75 membership score for the 1973 case and full membership for the 1983-1984 case), and the difference in the level of enemy images and threats to group identity (a 0.25 membership score in 1973 and a 0.75 membership score in 1983) between the cases of ST and PCC, helps locate the combined factor as the most singly important to ensure PCC.

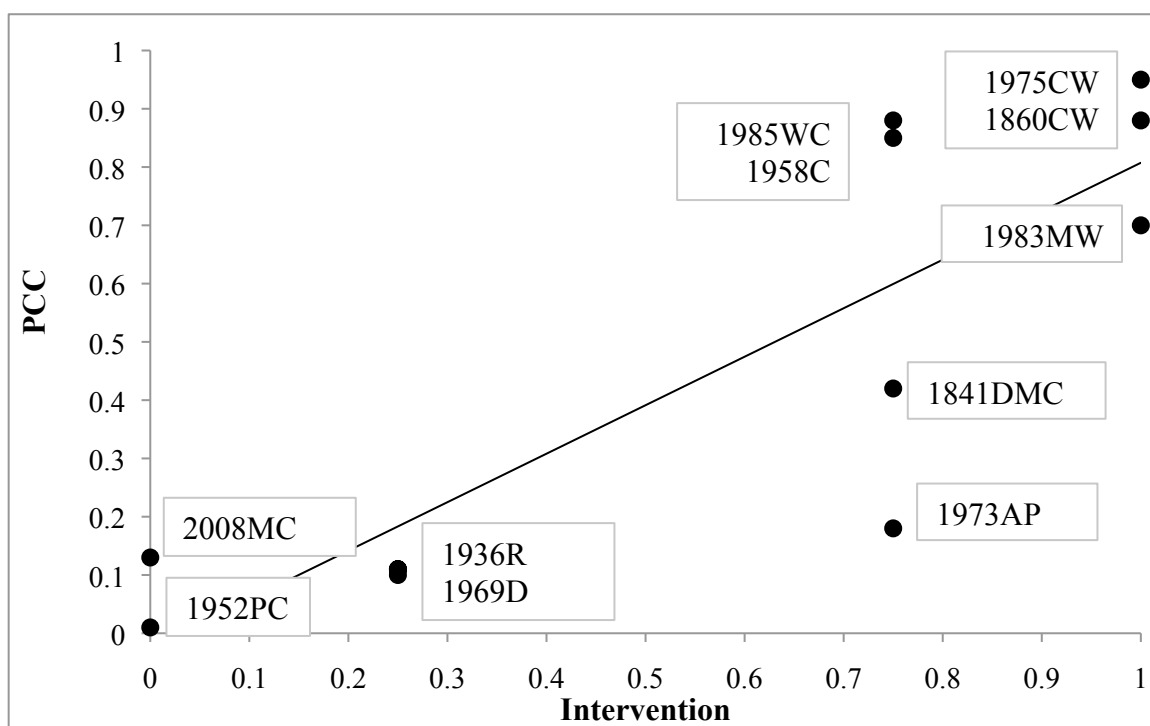
This is why I argue that the parsimonious solution of enident for PCC, with a 0.88 consistency score and a 0.78 coverage score, is not misleading. Indeed, as indicated in Tables 2, 3 and Graph1 (indicated below) the enident condition is the only causal condition in the most consistent solution for PCC (i.e., the intermediate one--armament, multiple forms of intervention and severe threats to group identity) that did not have a high membership score in any cases of ST. Based on this fsQCA analysis, el-Khazen’s argument that foreign intervention is the most significant factor in ensuring civil conflict should be re-evaluated.

Graph 1. Threats to group identity (enident) as necessary condition for PCC



This is not to argue that foreign intervention is not necessary in sparking PCC, as it is observed in all five cases of PCC. Nonetheless, to focus solely on it as el-Khazen has done is misleading, as there are several important cases that saw extremely high levels of foreign intervention, but did not experience PCC (indicated in Graph 2). Fears that contribute to violent and protracted conflict are more so sparked by perceived threats to the identity of groups, which then, as Samir Khalaf so brilliantly explains, radicalizes communal identities. Only then do threatened groups feel there are few options open to secure their group identity, so they take extreme positions and encourage outside intervention that they would not in other cases.^{vi}

Graph 2. Intervention as necessary condition for PCC



Conclusion

The implementation of fsQCA has been largely absent from the study of conflict, especially in the Middle East context. Most scholars of conflict in Lebanon have utilized ambiguous language to distinguish conflicts without considering the implications, applied all-inclusive explanations wholesale to different conflict periods, and most importantly, discussed conflicts in terms of causal conditions without actually testing or empirically justifying them. This article has contributed to the fields of fsQCA and conflict in Lebanon by offering an empirical sense of how to situate an event along the ST to PCC continuum, extracting the most important causal factors and combinations to distinguish events of ST and PCC, and in turn, locating the most likely factor to ensure an escalation.

To conclude, it is necessary to return to the initial research question and review the findings of this study. In the introduction I posed the question, what are the causal conditions and combinations that distinguish different forms of conflict (i.e., events along the ST to PCC continuum) in the Lebanese context, and in turn, what ensures an escalation? I argue that the causal combination of increased armament, multiple forms of foreign intervention and severe threats to group identity facilitated by harsh enemy images (i.e., the enident condition) is the most consistent (a 0.93 consistency score) in explaining PCC in Lebanon. Additionally, the combination of the absence of foreign intervention and the absence of threats to group identity (a 0.95 consistency score) most distinguishes ST from PCC. However, if only one factor was to be considered the most crucial in sparking an escalation to PCC, it would be the enident condition (a 0.88 consistency score, a 0.78 consistency with necessity score and a 0.88 relevance score).

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Notes

ⁱ This stipulation does exclude several inter-state conflicts with Israel, namely the 1978 Israeli Invasion to the Litani River, the 1982 Israeli Invasion to Beirut, the Israeli Operation “Grapes of Wrath” of 1996 and the 34-day conflict between Hizbullah, the Lebanese Army and the Israeli Defense Forces in 2006.

ⁱⁱ For all numerical outcome, membership or fsQCA solution scores, I rounded to the nearest hundredth. Therefore, almost all scores (besides decimals like 0.895 which were rounded to 0.9) are capped at two decimal points.

ⁱⁱⁱ This approach was not used because it assumes that deaths, duration and intensity are all equal components, but as aforementioned, intensity is not an equal factor to deaths or duration, but tied to these other two components.

^{iv} One could recreate this fsQCA analysis by combining the data from Tables 1 and 2, using the fsQCA software developed by Dr. Charles Ragin (download available at <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~cragin/fsQCA/software.shtml>).

^v Throughout the remainder of the article, anytime I refer to examining “consistency with necessity” or “relevance” scores, I am discussing conditions that I tested as necessary conditions using the fsQCA software.

^{vi} One could argue this is why multiple forms of intervention are observed in all five cases of PCC.

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