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Relative Capability and Rebel Objective in Civil War*

HALVARD BUHAUG

*Centre for the Study of Civil War (CSCW), International Peace Research
Institute, Oslo (PRIO)*

When all else fails, aggrieved groups of society often resort to violence to redress their grievance – either by seeking to overthrow the ruling government or by attempting to secede. The strength of the rebel group relative to the state determines what direction the conflict will take. In institutionally and economically capable countries, any opposition group is likely to be inferior to the government. These groups will see secession as the most viable strategy to improve living conditions. Inconsistent, poor, and resource-dependent regimes are typically quite unstable and should therefore be more likely to attract coups and revolutions. In addition, large and ethnically diverse countries contain a higher number of peripheral and possibly marginalized groups, as well as remote and inaccessible terrain, both of which are expected to favor secessionist insurgency. Smaller countries, in contrast, offer few opportunities for separatist claims but, in such countries, capturing the state might also be a more realistic objective. This article provides a first test of these presumptions by estimating the effect of several popular explanatory factors separately on the risk of territorial and governmental conflict, 1946–99. The analysis offers considerable support and demonstrates that territorial and governmental conflicts are shaped, in large part, by different causal mechanisms. The reputed parabolic relationship between democracy and risk of civil war only pertains to state-centered conflicts, whereas democracy has a positive and near-linear effect on the risk of territorial rebellion. Moreover, the analysis strongly suggests that the puzzling no-finding of ethnicity in several prominent studies is affected by their inability to account for rebel objective in civil war.

The more restricted the strength, the more restricted its goals must be.

Carl von Clausewitz (1832/1984: 283)

Introduction

Armed civil conflicts come in two types. Some conflicts involve groups aiming at overthrowing the government or in other

ways modifying the political system. Military coups d'état and popular revolutions belong to this category. Other conflicts concern the control and righteous authority of a limited territory within the state. These conflicts are usually labeled territorial or separatist rebellions. While some conflicts may seem to include elements of both, rebel groups rarely fail to issue some form of political demand that corresponds to one, and only one, of these two archetypes. For example, the supreme, explicit goal of the Free Aceh Movement (also known as Aceh Sumatra National Liberation Front, ASNLF) in Indonesia was to ensure 'the survival of the people of Aceh Sumatra as a nation'

* E-mail address: halvadb@prio.no. Replication data are available from <http://www.prio.no/jpr/datasets>. I thank Sabine Carey, Indra de Soysa, Nils Petter Gleditsch, Håvard Hegre, Philip A. Schrodt, and colleagues at the CSCW and the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) for valuable comments on previous drafts. I am grateful to the Research Council of Norway and the CSCW for financial support.

through separation from the 'Javanese colonialists'.¹ Similarly, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP), the dominant guerrilla group in the country, has issued numerous documents and pamphlets opposing privatization of natural resources, denouncing US interference in domestic affairs, and generally calling for 'a Colombia for Colombians, with equality of opportunities and equitable distribution of wealth'.² And even the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, which in many regards seemed more like a loose gang of criminals preoccupied with looting of diamonds for personal profit, released a political manifesto stating that 'it is our right and duty to change the present political system in the name of national salvation and liberation'.³

Previous research on civil war has generally failed to acknowledge the government-territory distinction. Nonetheless, there are ample reasons to expect various state- and group-level characteristics to be associated with these types of conflicts in different ways. Therefore, an aggregated research design is likely to diminish or even conceal important causal relationships that apply only to conflicts of one kind. In the following section, I elaborate on the distinction between governmental and territorial conflicts and discuss why some groups seek state control while others claim self-determination. I argue that a significant determinant of rebel objective is the capability of the rebels relative to the government. Objective is here understood as the ultimate stated goal of the rebellion. I then develop five testable hypotheses on how characteristics of the state are linked to type of civil conflict. These are evaluated through multinomial logit regres-

sions of outbreak of governmental and separatist conflicts, 1946–99. The results support the notion that institutionally consistent states are better able to avoid state-centered unrest than territorial conflict, relative to the inconsistent regimes. Economic capacity, too, shows a relatively stronger negative effect on governmental conflict, although only for major civil wars. Moreover, the analysis presents strong and robust evidence that country size and ethnic fractionalization only affect the propensity for separatist rebellion, thus offering important insight into the puzzling no-finding of ethnicity in studies of civil war in general.

Governmental and Territorial Conflicts

According to the Uppsala/PRIO Armed Conflicts project (Gleditsch et al., 2002), roughly two-thirds of all intrastate conflicts since 1946 have been challenges to the central government, the remaining being classified as territorial disputes. Governmental conflicts are here understood as concerning 'type of political system, the replacement of the central government, or the change of its composition'. Territorial conflicts are defined as involving 'demands for secession or autonomy' (2002: 619). Figure 1 further shows that while both the rate of new wars and share of territorial conflicts remained fairly stable throughout the Cold War, the 1990s saw a dramatic increase in both the absolute and relative frequencies of separatist rebellion. A similar pattern can be found in Fearon & Laitin's (2003) data on major civil wars. This trend now seems reversed. The annual average number of new conflicts in the 21st century is not much higher than it was twenty or thirty years ago, and the share of conflicts over territory is again at about one-third.

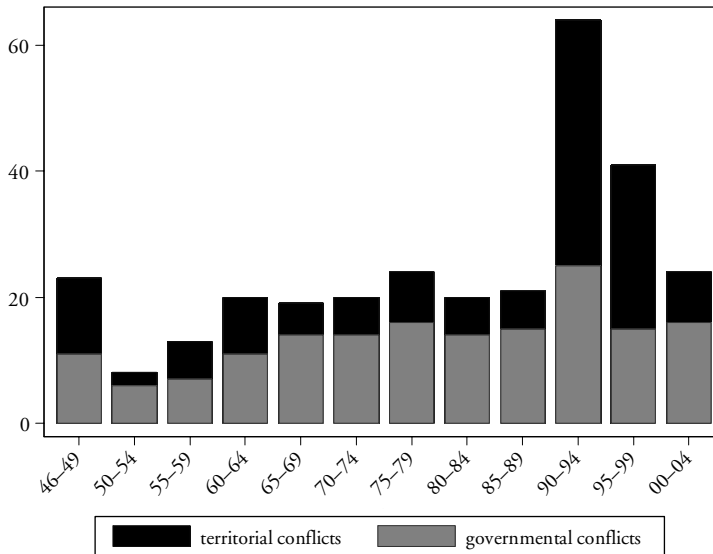
The distinction between territorial and policy-related issues has a long and well-

¹ See <http://www.asnlf.net/topint.htm> (accessed 7 March 2006).

² See http://www.farcep.org/pagina_ingles/ (accessed 7 March 2006).

³ See <http://www.sierra-leone.org/footpaths.html> (accessed 7 March 2006).

Figure 1. Outbreak of Intrastate Conflicts by Type and Period, 1946–2004



Source: Uppsala/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, v. 3.0 (see Gleditsch et al., 2002).

founded tradition in the literature on interstate war (see e.g. Vasquez, 1995); yet, it remains an understudied typology in research on civil war. Studies that do acknowledge the heterogeneous nature of intrastate wars tend to focus on ethnic versus ideological conflicts (Doyle & Sambanis, 2000; Licklider, 1995; Reynal-Querol, 2002; Sambanis, 2001). Common wisdom holds that ethnic and territorial conflicts overlap, but there is no shortage of cases to the

contrary. The recent ethnic wars in Rwanda and Burundi were both wars over government control, and the same goes for the ruthless, ongoing feud between the secular Algerian government and radical Islamist activists. Conversely, the secessionist conflicts in Yemen (1994) and Comoros (1997) appear to be driven more by economic and political motives than by ethnic issues. Table I presents a more complete picture of the association between ethnicity and

Table I. Cross-Tabulation of Aim and Ethnicity in Civil Wars Since 1946

		<i>Gleditsch et al. (2002)</i>		<i>Fearon & Laitin (2003)</i>	
		<i>Territorial</i>	<i>Governmental</i>	<i>Exit</i>	<i>Center</i>
Sambanis (2001)	Ethnic	40	30	33	27
	Other	5	36	7	33
Licklider (1995)	Ethnic	41	32	32	31
	Other	2	30	5	25
Goldstone et al. (2000)	Ethnic	40	29	35	25
	Other	3	23	3	24
Fearon & Laitin (2003)	Ethnic	33	27	37	29
	Other	3	29	3	31

objective in civil war. With very few exceptions, violent separatist claims are launched by distinct ethnic (minority) groups. This corresponds well to observations of secessionist movements by, for example, Horowitz (1985) and Gurr (2000). On the other hand, almost half of all ethnic conflicts since World War II concern government control. Hence, a deduction that ethnic wars are wars of secession because secessionist wars are conducted by ethnic minorities is fallacious.

So what makes some rebel groups seek governmental changes while others claim self-determination? The prime reason is likely to vary between cases and may involve such factors as characteristics of the aggrieved group (ethnic/social identity, historical origin, size), form and intensity of group grievances (racial discrimination, lack of political influence, economic inequalities), and personal ambitions of the rebel leadership. While not denying the potentially vital role of these less tangible issues, I shall focus here on another aspect of the equation, namely how attributes of the state affect the political aim of emerging rebel groups.⁴

Relative Capability and Rebel Objective

This article starts from the presumption that a major determinant of rebel objective is relative capability. In order to make a credible threat and have a fair chance of receiving concessions from the government, the rebels must be of some strength. This is analogous to the logic of balance of power;

⁴ It is unreasonable to assume that rebel leaders always speak for the aggrieved group, and some conflicts may well be influenced by phony claims and personal ambitions on the part of the rebel entrepreneurs. In particular, it is debatable whether the so-called warlords in western Africa are at all concerned with the well-being of the local population. Even so, the stated objectives of the rebels are likely to reflect the most viable approach, since rhetoric is crucial for rallying support, recruiting soldiers, and keeping up the morale (see Weinstein, 2005).

domestic unrest is more probable if there is uncertainty about the supremacy of the state. A similar reasoning is found in Timasheff (1965), who observes that revolutions usually break out when both parties have a realistic chance of victory. The notion of relative strength as an indicator of conflict propensity can also add some more systematic empirical evidence to its belt. In an unpublished paper, Buhaug, Cederman & Rød (2006) find that the size of a marginalized ethnic group compared with the ethnic group(s) in power is strongly and robustly associated with the likelihood of civil war, where relatively large minorities are the most likely to rebel.

This theorizing further rests on a crucial premise: capturing the state apparatus requires more power and resources than securing limited territorial authority. From this, it follows that frustrated opposition groups that are able to project a considerable amount of force – for example by drawing on central elements of the regular armed forces – are likely to demand state control. After all, managing to get hold of government office constitutes the ultimate prize (which explains why state leaders select policies that are designed to minimize the opportunities for the opposition to remove them from power, see Bueno de Mesquita & Siverson, 1995). Weaker dissidents, however, may have no other realistic option than to seek autonomy or secession for a limited piece of the country. This is consistent with Horowitz's (1985: 241) statement that groups 'with a keen sense of weakness, are easily convinced . . . that their only hope of resisting domination lies in some form of separation'.

As the rebels update their expectations during the conflict – in large part influenced by battlefield performance – the demands may become more, or less, ambitious. The Dhofar rebellion, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, serves as a nice example. In the initial

phase of the insurrection, the Dhofar Liberation Front, which operated from the southernmost part of Oman, sought little beyond removing Sultan Said bin Taimur from power. However, with the British withdrawal from the Protectorate of Aden in 1967 and the subsequent establishment of the People's Republic of South Yemen, the Dhofar rebels received militarily equipment and experienced recruits from Oman's western neighbor. This shifted the balance of power in favor of the rebels, who renamed themselves the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG) and declared their intention to overthrow all traditional Arab Gulf regimes. After a staged coup by the Sultan's son, Quaboos bin Said, in 1970, the new regime initiated significant social reforms, offered amnesty to surrendering rebels, and obtained military support from British as well as Iranian forces. This had a detrimental effect on the rebellion, which was pushed backwards towards and eventually into Yemen. In 1974, shortly before the uprising finally collapsed, the rebels once again changed their name, to Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman (PFLO), reflecting their reduced ambitions (see Jeapes, 1980).

The temporal dynamics in rebel claims implies that it may not be fruitful to theorize further on differences in the extent of objectives here. As Horowitz (1985: 232) notes, demands by self-determination movements occasionally shift from autonomy to independence and back again, depending on how the war is going. Besides, increased autonomy is often the compromise in a separatist dispute. However, the overall objective of the rebellion – whether to seek governmental or territorial concessions – rarely varies over time. This is partly because the two types of conflict usually require different military strategies that entail dissimilar forms of warfare. Guerrilla operations are often highly successful in denying

government troops territorial control in rural areas but may be ineffective in toppling the ruling coalition. Just as important, the identity structure and base of recruitment of the rebel group may be incompatible with one of the alternative objectives. A rebellious ethnic minority that is concentrated in a peripheral region may never be able to capture and uphold state power. Conversely, an aggrieved group residing in the heart of a country may find it unrealistic to claim independence for a limited area surrounded on all sides by the motherland. This is, of course, why contemporary separatist activities exclusively occur along the rim of the conflict-ridden countries.

So far, the discussion has centered on the rebels but it takes two to tango. In fact, since any country is likely to host a number of discontented citizens at all times (the size and cohesion of the group obviously vary considerably across countries), one could argue that the set of opportunities for defiance provided by the state is a major determinant of whether, when, and how a rebellion breaks out. This is where state capacity becomes relevant. Capacity can be defined and measured in various ways. Tilly (2003: 41) defines governmental capacity as 'the extent to which governmental agents control resources, activities, and populations within the government's territory'. Higher-capacity regimes avoid armed unrest by increasing the costs to insurgents of using violence to make their claims. Conversely, a weakening regime facilitates the growth of dissidents, which explains why revolutionary upheavals often emerge in the wake of military defeat (Gurr, 1970).

Previous empirical work has demonstrated that the frequency of domestic unrest is inversely related to state strength. Transitional and institutionally inconsistent regimes as well as impoverished countries account for a large majority of contemporary civil wars (Collier et al., 2003; Fearon &

Laitin, 2003; Hegre et al., 2001). The reason is simple: a state's monopoly of the use of force is secured only by its ability to dissuade potential challengers. Assuming, for now, that dissenting groups are of similar strength across countries (indeed a heroic assumption), it follows that relatively weak states are the most likely to see armed challenges to state power, whereas domestic violence in highly capable regimes will almost exclusively concern claims of self-determination. Put differently, while state capacity is expected to be negatively associated with the overall risk of civil war, it should display a particularly strong negative relationship with governmental conflicts.

In the empirical analysis below, I distinguish between institutional and economic capacity. Both are expected to reduce the risk of armed conflict – and particularly so with respect to coups and revolutions – but the mechanisms through which they prevent conflict are different. Institutional capacity may refer to a host of qualities, but the most important aspect within the context of conflict prevention is the ability of the state to deter, detect, and detain antagonistic underground movements before hostilities erupt. Disregarding failed states, the least institutionally capable countries are the anocracies (Hegre et al., 2001; see also Gates et al., 2006). These states combine some level of repression with a limited degree of openness: an unfortunate mix that enables the annoyed populace to protest against the inept regime, which all too often responds by calling upon regular or paramilitary forces (an example of the latter is the atrocities committed by the former Guatemalan Civil Self-Defense Patrols, or *Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil* [PAC], in the 1980s). The inherent instability of the so-called inconsistent regimes, many of which have undergone recent transitions, accounts for the parabolic relationship between level of democracy and propensity for armed intrastate conflict. And even among relatively durable anocracies, the

underlying inconsistencies in the nature of the political system has considerable potential for political struggle, within as well as outside the cabinet. According to the above reasoning, most conflicts in these states should deal with policy issues and government control. In contrast, authoritarian and democratic political systems are well designed to avoid domestic turmoil and are equally unlikely to experience civil war (Hegre et al., 2001). The means to ensure stability are radically different, though. In totalitarian regimes, the narrow concentration of power in the hands of the autocrat severely restricts potential challengers' access to political influence. Widespread and unconstrained repression against any perceived enemy of the state further discourages disobedient behavior. Conversely, coherent democracies enjoy a rigid, self-enforcing system of power-sharing institutions that prevents any one actor from gaining unlimited authority. Regular and fair elections, unbiased public goods delivery, explicit protection of minority groups, and well-functioning local authorities raise the opportunity costs and imply that it is virtually unthinkable for any group of society to claim a legitimate *casus belli* against the regime and generate massive public support. Hence, armed opposition groups in ideal-type regimes are likely to be limited in size, but, whereas authoritarian systems restrict opportunities for rebellion, democracies rely as much on the people's general unwillingness to rebel.

The complementary aspect of state strength is economic capacity. High standards of living and low unemployment rates increase the average costs of abandoning everyday life and joining a band of rebels. Besides, wealthy states are better able to initiate costly reforms to reduce grievances of marginalized groups or simply buy off the opposition. Poor countries have few resources to allocate to infrastructure and policing, which makes an ideal environment

for rising dissident groups. Poverty is also associated with inequality and corruption, which further lower the opportunity costs of rebellion (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Therefore, the political leadership of impoverished countries should be particularly worried about antagonists seeking government control.

The two main expectations can be formulated as follows:

H1: Anocracies are particularly predisposed to governmental conflict.

H2: Poor states are particularly predisposed to governmental conflict.

Several other country characteristics, some of which are indirectly associated with state capacity, are also likely to display dissimilar effects on the risks of territorial and governmental conflict. The first of three factors that will be investigated here is oil dependence. A number of recent studies (see Ross, 2004 for a review) point to the fact that resource-dependent countries often suffer from bad politics as their governments mismanage the wealth, initiate massive domestic spending, and tend to be genuinely corrupt. In particular, oil wealth seems to reduce the incentives of governments to levy taxes, which means that central aspects of the bureaucracy, including local authorities, are largely neglected (Fearon, 2005). As a result, oil-rich states are often considered less capable than their level of income suggests. Furthermore, revenues from oil – in contrast to other precious resources (gems, drugs, timber) – are only available to governments. This could of course be an incentive to secede for the oil-rich regions (e.g. Cabinda, Angola; Biafra, Nigeria), but is generally expected to exert a larger positive influence on the motivation for capturing the state. Thus:

H3: Oil-dependent countries are particularly predisposed to governmental conflict.

A second geographic factor that affects the ability of a state to control its population and resources is country size. Successful theories of interaction, such as the gravity model (Linnemann, 1966) and Boulding's (1962) notion of a loss-of-strength gradient (LSG), emphasize the impeding role of distance. Both positive and negative interactions occur predominantly between proximate actors. Similar arguments can be made regarding patterns of domestic interaction. Distance reduces the intrusiveness of the central government while simultaneously limiting the opportunity for peripheral groups to inflict damage on the regime. The sporadic turmoil in Chinese Tibet demonstrates that even highly capable countries may be unable to exert full and unlimited authority throughout their peripheral territories. Alesina & Spolaore (2003) further argue that state size is positively associated with heterogeneity of preferences among the population. As heterogeneity increases, a larger number of people will be dissatisfied with the policies of the central government. Since residents of peripheral areas are more distant from the capital, where the public goods presumably are produced, they receive fewer benefits for their taxes and therefore have an incentive to secede. In addition, sparsely populated hinterlands favor guerrilla tactics where even a small band of rebels can sustain prolonged combat against a militarily superior opponent (Buhaug & Rød, 2006). In smaller countries, any subgroup is relatively close to the center of power and therefore has a higher baseline probability of, quite literally, reaching the political elite by military means. Partitioning a small country may also be deemed unrealistic, because an even smaller entity might simply be too weak to maintain sovereignty. This gives the following hypothesis:

H4: Larger countries are particularly predisposed to territorial conflict.

Finally, a number of recent and ongoing civil wars seem to be organized along ethnic

lines. This has led some to speculate whether ethnically dominant or polarized societies – that is, countries with one or a few large ethnic groups – are particularly prone to conflict (Esteban & Ray, 1999; Hill & Rothchild, 1986). As the argument goes, highly diverse societies should not be more at risk than homogenous states because (dynamic) inter-ethnic coalitions are the inevitable outcome when no single group is of sufficient strength to rule all others. Besides, a fragmented society limits the recruitment pool of rebel groups by imposing high coordination and transaction costs for rebel entrepreneurs (Gates, 2002). The result is an expected non-monotonic effect of ethnic fractionalization on the risk of civil war (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). However, this argument at best only pertains to struggles for governmental influence and, at the extreme, revolutionary wars. The more fragmented a state, the higher the number of potentially marginalized or excluded ethnic groups. For example, Easterly & Levine (1997) report a negative correlation between ethnic fractionalization and growth, which they attribute to ethnic differences making it harder for communities to agree on pro-growth policies. Moreover, questions of ethnic and historical importance, such as the preservation and recognition of a local language, are typically highly salient and declared non-negotiable. Ethnicity, perhaps more than any other foundation of identity, is further liable to manipulation and exploitation for political purposes. Therefore, diversity should be monotonically and positively associated with the likelihood that at least one group of people among the populace decides to use violence to improve on the status quo. Since aggrieved ethnic groups in fragmented societies tend to be quite small, we should expect to find, as Horowitz (1985) argues, that such countries have a higher probability of facing secessionist movements. Ethnic minorities that form

a majority within their home regions should be particularly prone to demand self-determination, since they have a regional base upon which to form a rebellion. Recent investigations into the ethnicity–civil war puzzle (see e.g. Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Sambanis, 2004) have been unsuccessful in uncovering a strong and robust relationship, but this may well be because they have failed to distinguish between territorial and governmental conflict. A final hypothesis follows:

H5: Ethnically diverse countries are particularly predisposed to territorial conflict.

Data and Research Design

To test the five proposed hypotheses, I rely on conflict data from the Uppsala/PRIO Armed Conflict dataset, v. 3.0 (Gleditsch et al., 2002). The latest release of this dataset includes every violent conflict between a state government and an organized opposition group that caused at least 25 annual battle-deaths between 1946 and 2004. Most importantly in this context, all conflicts have been classified as concerning either governmental or territorial issues. Since this investigation focuses on the outbreak, rather than prevalence, of conflict, only the first year of each conflict is coded as an onset. Two types of dependent variables are used. In the first model, a conventional binary indicator that simply distinguishes between spells of conflict and periods of peace is analyzed. In the remaining models, a three-category dependent variable is used, in which episodes without conflict are coded as 0, territorial conflicts are assigned the value 1, while outbreaks of governmental conflicts are coded as 2. Subsequent years of conflict are dropped; by nature of the Uppsala/PRIO coding procedures, a state can have only one conflict over state governance at any time. In cases of discontinuous events, a two-year rule is

applied, which means that if a conflict falls below the casualty threshold for more than two consecutive calendar years, the next observation between the same parties is treated as a new onset. For the 1946–99 period – the years that are covered by the explanatory variables – there were 80 outbreaks of territorial conflict and 123 onsets of governmental conflict among the 5,411 valid country-year observations.

Institutional capacity is proxied by regime-type dummies for democratic and anocratic systems from the Polity IV project (Gurr, Jagers & Moore, 1989). Countries with values of 6 or higher on the democracy–autocracy index are considered democracies, whereas regimes with scores between –5 and 5 are coded anocracies (the reference category, the autocracies, thus have values no higher than –6). As a measure of economic capacity, I use Fearon & Laitin's (2003) data on GDP per capita income. To reduce endogeneity problems, both capability indicators are assigned a one-year time lag. The dummy for oil-dependent countries is also drawn from Fearon & Laitin and marks off country-years in which fuel exports exceeded one-third of total export revenues. Country size is given as the logged geographical area of the country, taken from the World Bank (2002). The ethnic diversity measure is based on Fearon & Laitin's updated ethnolinguistic fractionalization index (ELF). The ELF takes on values between 0 and 1 and denotes the probability that two randomly drawn persons in a country belong to different ethnic groups. Finally, all models include a decay function of the time since the end of the previous civil war or year of independence to capture country-specific temporal effects. This control variable is given by 2 to the power of $-(\text{number of years since last civil war or independence}/\alpha)$, where α represents the half-life parameter (see Hegre et al., 2001). By comparing the log likelihood of the main model with various half-life

parameters, it was determined that a half-life of just two years produced the best fit. The statistical analysis, consisting of logit and multinomial logit regressions with robust standard errors, was conducted in Stata 8.⁵

Results

The results from the main evaluation of the propositions are presented in Table II. Two models are included: a conventional logit model of onset of intrastate conflict between 1946 and 1999, and the model of prime interest, a multinomial logit analysis that estimates the impact of the regressors separately for the two conflict outcomes. The far right column gives the probability that the effects of the independent variables on the log odds of territorial and governmental conflict in Model 2 are identical.

Model 1 largely supports prevailing theories on determinants of civil war. The best insurance against domestic instability is economic development. For a country with median values on all independent variables, the probability of onset of civil conflict in any given year is 0.016 or 1.6%. If we increase the level of GDP per capita to the 95th percentile while maintaining the other variables at their median, the probability of conflict decreases to one-fifth, at $p = 0.003$.⁶ The proxies for institutional capacity also behave as one might anticipate. The anocracies are almost twice as likely to host civil conflict as the reference group, the autocracies. Democratic states are also more at risk, but the regression estimate is smaller than that for the institutionally inconsistent regimes and not statistically different from zero. Hence, there appears to be a distinct parabolic effect of level of democracy, even if the inverted U curve is not symmetrical

⁵ Replication data and do-files are available at <http://www.prio.no/jpr/datasets>.

⁶ Marginal effects were calculated using the CLARIFY extension to Stata; see Tomz, Wittenberg & King (2003).

Table II. Logit and Multinomial Logit Regression of Civil War Onset, 1946–99

	<i>Model 1</i>		<i>Model 2</i>		$p(\beta_T = \beta_G)$
	<i>All conflicts</i>	<i>Territorial</i>	<i>Governmental</i>		
Democracy t_{-1}	0.347 (1.62)	0.896 (2.95)**	-0.133 (0.42)		0.02
Anocracy t_{-1}	0.428 (2.38)*	0.228 (0.73)	0.568 (2.67)**		0.36
GDP per capita t_{-1}	-0.160 (3.91)**	-0.167 (2.11)*	-0.158 (3.37)**		0.92
Oil exporter	0.709 (3.78)**	0.585 (1.89)	0.838 (3.70)**		0.50
Country size (log)	0.201 (4.23)**	0.494 (5.74)**	0.035 (0.63)		<0.01
Ethnic fractionalization	0.911 (3.40)**	1.566 (3.72)**	0.529 (1.58)		0.05
Decay function	1.901 (9.08)**	3.169 (9.69)**	0.890 (2.85)**		
Constant	-6.558 (10.31)**	-12.483 (11.60)**	-4.405 (5.88)**		
No. of conflicts	203	80	123		
N	5,411		5,411		
Log pseudolikelihood	-751.11		-846.32		

Robust z scores are in parentheses. The final column gives the probability that the variable estimates for the two alternative outcomes in Model 2 are similar. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

around the mid-values. Large, oil-rich, and ethnically fragmented states are also found to be disproportionately often involved in civil wars. The latter finding counters Fearon & Laitin's (2003) conclusion of no general impact of cultural factors. However, their study is limited to major civil wars and thus excludes several low-level conflicts in diverse countries such as India (fractionalization score of 0.89) and Ethiopia (0.69).

According to the state-capability argument, wealthy and institutionally consistent regimes enjoy certain instruments that effectively repress or discourage anti-regime activities. However, the economic sector of oil-dependent regimes often suffers from a lack of diversity and the state apparatus tends to be underdeveloped, which might suggest that these states host a disproportionately high share of revolutionary con-

flicts. In addition, country size and ethnic heterogeneity are expected to be more relevant in explaining territorial conflicts. Model 2 tests these presumptions empirically.

As theorized, the link between regime type and civil conflict is less straightforward than normally assumed. The well-known parabolic effect of democracy, as thoroughly documented by Hegre et al. (2001) and shown in Model 1, pertains only to conflicts over the central government. As regards secessionist rebellion, the most conflict-prone countries are in fact the democracies. Holding all else at median values, the risk of territorial conflict increases by roughly 30% if we replace autocracy with anocracy and no less than 150% when democracy is introduced. In relative terms, the anocracies have the highest estimated probability that the

next conflict will be over governance. This is consistent with the reasoning behind Hypothesis 1: institutionally weak regimes are particularly likely to be challenged over state power, as they are comparatively easy prey for antagonist groups.

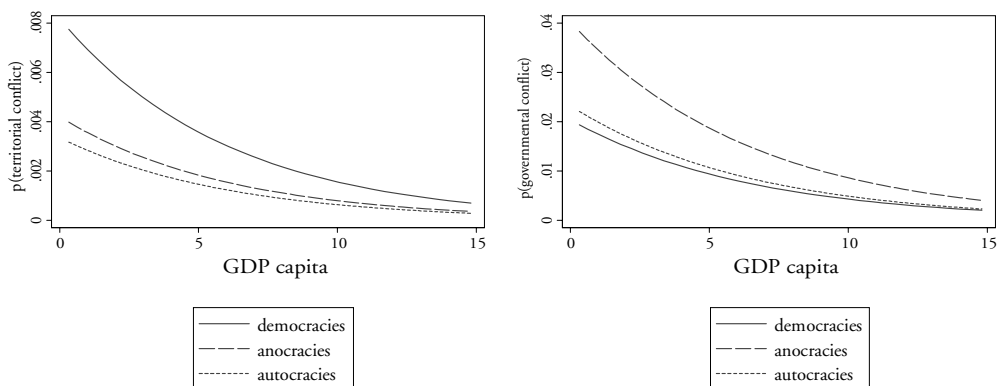
Model 2 further shows that economic development has almost identical negative effects on governmental and territorial conflict. A shift from the fifth percentile to the 95th percentile value of per capita income reduces the risk of conflict over territory by a factor of five, while the corresponding factor for governmental conflict is six (see Table III). Hence, the expectation that economic capacity behaves similarly to institutional capacity, whereby the least developed states have the highest share of governmental conflicts, is not supported. The joint impact of democracy and economic capacity is shown in Figure 2.

Next, we consider the role of oil. Model 1 replicated earlier findings of a 'resource curse', in which major oil exporters have a substantially higher risk of civil war than otherwise similar non-exporting countries. The multinomial logit model (Table II) explores this association in more detail. In line with Hypothesis 3, we find that oil

dependence has a particularly hazardous influence on the propensity for state-centered conflict: the coefficient estimate is 40% larger and the z score roughly twice as large as those for territorial conflict. Yet, the difference in effect on the conflict outcomes is far from statistically significant. To some extent, this can be explained by the rare co-occurrence of oil and conflict. The sample contains a mere 17 observations of territorial conflicts and 27 onsets of governmental conflict among the 644 oil-exporting country-years. Therefore, Model 2 at best only provides suggestive evidence that rebel groups in oil-dependent states are particularly likely to seek state control.

The most powerful factor explaining territorial conflict and the variable that best distinguishes between the two conflict types is country size. Measured as the log of the country area, a country at the 95th percentile (equivalent to Australia) is more than 20 times more likely to host a secessionist movement than a country at the fifth percentile (Swaziland), assuming all other factors being identical. A similar increase in size is associated with a negligible change in the risk of governmental conflict. Hypothesis 4 is strongly supported.

Figure 2. Risk of Civil War by Democracy and Income



The figure shows the estimated probability of territorial (left) and governmental civil conflict as a function of GDP per capita income (in 1,000 USD) for the three regime types, holding remaining covariates in Model 2 at their median values.

Table III. Predicted Probabilities

	<i>Territorial</i>			<i>Governmental</i>		
	<i>5th p</i>	<i>95th p</i>	Δp	<i>5th p</i>	<i>95th p</i>	Δp
Democracy t_{-1}	2.05	5.07	2.5	15.97	14.24	1.1
Anocracy t_{-1}	2.05	2.64	1.3	15.97	27.89	1.8
GDP per capita t_{-1}	2.68	0.53	5.1	20.76	3.33	6.2
Oil exporter	2.05	3.61	1.8	15.97	36.46	2.3
Country size	0.47	11.24	24.1	14.44	18.31	1.3
Ethnic fractionalization	1.32	4.67	3.5	13.93	20.84	1.5

The table shows the predicted probabilities of territorial and governmental civil conflict for the 5th and 95th percentile values on the given variable, all other covariates held at their median (both regime types and the oil dummy equal zero). To facilitate reading, all probabilities have been multiplied by 1,000. Δp denotes the ratio of the highest predicted probability to the lowest for each variable. Calculations are based on estimates in Model 2.

The final explanatory factor to be tested here, ethnicity, also behaves according to expectations. Diverse societies are generally more prone to domestic turmoil than homogenous ones (Model 1), but Model 2 shows that this finding is driven mainly by separatist conflicts. The marginal impact of ethnic fractionalization on territorial conflict assumes a factor of 3.5, while the risk of revolutionary conflicts increases by a meager and insignificant 49% (Table III). This corresponds well to Horowitz's (1985) assertion that marginalized ethnic groups in fragmented states will seek self-determination. Moreover, the different effects of ethnicity offer some insight into why ethnicity has failed to produce consistent and robust results across studies of civil war in general and consequently demonstrate the value of distinguishing between types of conflict. Lastly, both models in Table II demonstrate considerable serial correlation, in which the likelihood of conflict is highest immediately after a state is established or a previous civil war has ended.

Robustness Checks

While the results presented above are mostly in line with the outlined expectations and potentially constitute a more comprehensive

explanation of the correlates of civil war, certain problematic issues call for further testing. First, the proxies for institutional capacity are overly crude and lump together series of countries that may in fact have few political characteristics in common. In Model 3, Table IV, the regime-type dummies are replaced with linear and quadratic democracy variables, drawn from the democracy–autocracy index of the Polity IV project.⁷ Again, we see that the reputed non-linear effect of level of democracy only pertains to state-centered conflicts: extent of democratic institutions has a positive and near-linear effect on the risk of territorial conflict. This adds further strength to our notion that democratic systems provide few excuses to attempt unconstitutional regime changes, while not being sufficiently repressive to dissuade violent claims of self-determination. Dissenting groups in inconsistent and transitioning regimes, however, more often view state control as the most viable objective. As expected, anocracies also have the highest relative risk of governmental conflict. Holding remaining regressors fixed at median values, Model 3 predicts that only

⁷ The linear term varies between -10 (consistent autocracies) and 10 (consistent democracies), whereas the squared term takes on values between 0 (inconsistent regimes) and 100 (consistent regime types).

one in 11 conflicts in inconsistent regimes concerns secession. The corresponding ratios for autocracies and democracies are 1/6 and 1/3, respectively. The remaining covariates in Model 3 reproduce the findings of the previous model.

A second issue that should be considered when assessing the reliability of the results is the source of conflict data and the corresponding operationalization of the dependent variable. This analysis is based on the Uppsala/PRIO Armed Conflicts dataset, which uses a casualty threshold of just 25 annual battle-deaths. Accordingly, the parameter estimates are generated from a considerably larger number of conflicts – many of which are quite small – than is the case in most comparable investigations. This raises the question of whether the reported findings are an artifact of choice of conflict data. To answer this question, Model 3 was re-estimated with Fearon & Laitin's (2003) data on civil wars. They define a civil war as fighting between a state and an organized non-state actor that resulted in at least 100 casualties on each side and at least 1,000 in total. Of particular relevance to this study, the authors have classified each conflict as concerning either government control ('center') or autonomy/secession ('exit').⁸ The results are given as Model 4 in Table IV.

As expected, the smaller number of conflicts leads to larger standard errors and less significant estimates on most covariates. This also means that the Wald test of coefficient similarity between exit and center conflicts generally produces higher *p* values (i.e. they are less likely to be different). Even so, the performance of most variables is consistent with earlier findings. Assuming everything else is similar, separatist civil wars should occur most often in democratic countries.

⁸ The terms 'exit' and 'center' conflicts occur only in their replication data, not in the article. Some conflicts are categorized by Fearon & Laitin as mixed or ambiguous. They were included in the 'center' category in this analysis, although results do not change dramatically if they are treated differently.

Revolutionary wars, however, feature most prominently in inconsistent regimes and the insignificance of the squared term indicates an autocratic peace as much as a democratic civil peace. The complementary aspect of state capacity, which failed to meet expectations in the previous models, receives moderate support from the more restrictive civil war data. Wealthier regimes are overall less likely to face armed opposition groups, but they are particularly unlikely to foster large-scale revolutionary movements. In fact, whereas the median country is about six times more likely to fight a governmental civil war than a territorial one, Model 4 predicts that a given conflict in a rich (95th percentile) but otherwise similar country is equally likely to concern territorial issues.

Country size remains the most powerful regressor on territorial conflict and the factor that best discriminates between the two conflict outcomes. Ethnic diversity, too, has a much larger, positive effect on the risk of separatist conflict, even if the 95% confidence interval in Model 4 includes a weak negative association. Hence, Fearon & Laitin's (2003: 75) assertion that 'it appears *not* [italics original] to be true that a greater degree of ethnic or religious diversity ... by itself makes a country more prone to civil war' needs to be revised. The variable that is most affected by the choice of conflict data is the proxy for major oil exporters. With the Uppsala/PRIO intrastate conflicts (Models 2 and 3), the analysis indicated a slightly stronger link between oil dependence and governmental conflict. When Fearon & Laitin's data on major civil wars are used, the analysis clearly reveals that oil-rich states are predisposed to secessionist rebellion. This remarkable discrepancy is caused by a simple statistical fact: while oil-exporting countries account for approximately one-fifth of both territorial and governmental conflicts (Uppsala/PRIO, at least 25 deaths), they participate in one-third of Fearon & Laitin's 'exit' wars but in only one-eighth of the 'center' wars (at least

Table IV. Multinomial Logit Regression, Alternative Specifications

	<i>Model 3</i>		$p(\beta_T = \beta_G)$	<i>Model 4</i>		$p(\beta_E = \beta_C)$
	<i>Terr.</i>	<i>Gov.</i>		<i>Exit</i>	<i>Center</i>	
Democracy level t_{-1}	0.055 (2.90)**	0.004 (0.21)	0.04	0.061 (2.06)*	0.016 (0.69)	0.24
Democracy squared t_{-1}	0.001 (0.23)	-0.010 (2.97)**	0.03	-0.003 (0.53)	-0.010 (2.18)*	0.43
GDP per capita t_{-1}	-0.178 (2.08)*	-0.143 (3.01)**	0.72	-0.204 (1.75)	-0.346 (3.16)**	0.37
Oil exporter	0.604 (1.93)	0.877 (3.88)**	0.46	1.228 (3.29)**	0.132 (0.32)	0.04
Country size (log)	0.498 (5.78)**	0.035 (0.64)	<0.01	0.441 (2.58)**	0.086 (1.08)	0.06
Ethnic fractionalization	1.557 (3.72)**	0.486 (1.45)	0.04	1.070 (1.67)	-0.015 (0.03)	0.16
Decay function	3.130 (9.71)**	0.896 (2.88)**		2.456 (4.84)**	1.286 (2.93)**	
Constant	-12.176 (10.95)**	-3.782 (5.18)**		-11.356 (5.23)**	-4.406 (3.91)**	
No. of conflicts	80	123		33	66	
N	5,411			5,414		
Log pseudolikelihood	-846.16			-490.62		

Robust z scores are in parentheses. Model 4 uses Fearon & Laitin's (2003) data on major civil wars. The third and final columns give the probabilities that the variable estimates for the two alternative outcomes in Models 3 and 4, respectively, are similar. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

1,000 deaths). This might be taken as an indication that separatist insurgencies in oil-rich countries tend to develop into severe civil wars, whereas armed challenges to the state apparatus in these regimes are particularly swift. However, different casualty thresholds is not the sole explanation for this remarkable deviation. A model with the Uppsala/PRIO data limited to major armed conflicts shows a similar trend, where oil dependence exerts a significant impact only on the territorial conflict model, but the deviation between the estimates is far less dramatic and not significant.⁹ While intriguing, it is outside the scope

of this article to pursue this finding further here.

Finally, the reported results are robust to the exclusion of any one conflict and country. Preliminary analyses also included a dummy variable marking off the initial five years of the post-Cold War period (1989–94) to account for the shocks associated with the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, and, even though it contributed significantly to the fit of the model, it had little impact on other covariates. The independent variables were further evaluated in a series of more parsimonious models, since the inclusion of too many regressors may introduce complex correlation structures and other statistical problems (see e.g. Achen, 2002; Ray, 2003). Overall, H2 and H3 at best only received modest support as the empirical evidence in favor of the propositions is sensitive to model specification and

⁹ Only conflicts that reached the maximum intensity threshold of 1,000 battle-related deaths *per calendar year* in at least one year during the course of the conflict are considered 'major armed conflicts'. This definition is thus even more rigid than the one employed by Fearon & Laitin, the number of conflicts is reduced further, to 33 territorial and 48 governmental wars in the sample period, and the regression estimates are correspondingly weaker.

sample selection criteria. H1, H4, and H5 were all strongly supported by the statistical analysis.

Concluding Remarks

This article has argued that civil wars in weak states are likely to concern government control, whereas capable states are relatively more likely to face secessionist claims. This theorizing rests on two assumptions. First, state control constitutes the ultimate prize, meaning that non-state actors who are willing to use force to change the status quo will seek government office whenever feasible. At the end of the day, capturing the state apparatus means securing unlimited access to the country's resources and the authority to instigate favorable political arrangements, which will be of greater value than controlling any subregion of the country. Second, capturing the state apparatus will also require more strength than exerting authority over a limited area. What determines the objective of a rebel group, then, is not as much the nature of the motivation as the rebels' ability to inflict serious damage on governmental forces and pose a threat to the regime at large. The stated objective might not be the preferred goal by all insurgents, just as the prime motivation for joining the rebellion is bound to differ within the group. However, the rebels are presumably primarily concerned with improving on current conditions, and the aim of the rebellion – seeing through a regime change or gaining increased levels of self-determination – is most of all a means to achieve this end.¹⁰

The empirical evaluation of the expectations was conducted through a series of multinomial logit models of onset of territorial and governmental conflict, 1946–99.

¹⁰ Booty hunters, mercenaries, and certain non-combatant actors who make huge fortunes from the conflict may of course have an interest in not reaching a peaceful resolution.

The analysis produced mostly supportive evidence, and several noteworthy patterns were uncovered. First, the well-known parabolic association between democracy and civil war is accurate only in its depiction of governmental conflicts. Level of democracy is found to have a positive and near-linear effect on the risk of territorial conflict, where consolidated democracies are most at risk. This is consistent with Hypothesis 1 and suggests that democratic systems are particularly well designed to avoid widespread public discontent directed towards the regime. Yet, even democracies may host groups with deviating identities, possibly strengthened by transnational linkages. Such groups may be willing to use arms to achieve their desired independence, as repeatedly demonstrated by the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Basque Homeland and Freedom movement (ETA).

Second, economic capacity, measured as GDP per capita, is inversely related to conflict propensity, and the peaceful effect on the two conflict types is generally comparable. However, wealthier states appear to be relatively better at maintaining state-centered conflicts at low casualty levels. In line with Hypothesis 2, per capita income has a considerably larger negative influence on governmental than territorial conflict when only major civil wars are considered.

Further, the analysis revealed that the measure for oil dependence is sensitive to casualty thresholds and choice of conflict data. Using the inclusive Uppsala/PRIO Armed Conflict dataset, oil-rich states were found to be slightly less prone to territorial than governmental conflict, relative to other countries. With Fearon & Laitin's (2003) major civil wars, however, the analysis shows that oil exporters are considerably more likely to experience separatist conflict. Since longer conflicts are generally more severe in terms of battle-related deaths, this suggests that oil-exporting regimes are less able to strangle separatist attempts – or less willing

to grant demands – before the unrest turns into bloodshed. The comparatively low share of oil producers among countries with major governmental civil wars implies that these regimes are either particularly easy to topple or especially able to rapidly fight off revolutionary attempts. I shall not elaborate on an ad hoc explanation of this finding but rather recommend that this be explored further in future research.

The analysis also offers some insight into why previous studies have failed to demonstrate a robust link between ethnicity and civil war: ethnic fractionalization affects only the probability of separatist conflict, where diverse societies are found to be significantly more at risk. Since most civil wars are state-centered contests, the estimated impact of ethnicity will diminish considerably unless the research design captures the distinction between different types of conflict. Although some other studies of low-intensity intrastate conflicts have found ethnicity to be significant (see Hegre & Sambanis, 2006), analyses that are restricted to major conflicts are not likely to find a strong effect. This has important consequences for studies of civil war in general that dismiss the role of culture (e.g. Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004).

Of all tested covariates, country size is the factor that best explains why some countries are prone to separatist movements while others experience revolutionary conflicts. Controlling for state capacity and ethnic diversity, size does not significantly affect the propensity for violent regime change. On the other hand, larger countries are substantially more at risk of territorial conflict. This is consistent with Hypothesis 4 and may reflect that size is positively associated with the number of peripheral and marginalized groups, whose only remedy when all else fails is to claim self-determination by military means. Besides, larger countries contain hinterlands that are favorable to rural insurgency. Small countries

offer limited opportunities for guerrilla warfare and the state apparatus may appear as the only viable objective.

In all, this article has shown that distinguishing between territorial and governmental conflicts provides additional insight into the correlates of civil war. While increasing wealth is generally associated with a lowered risk of any type of domestic conflict, political system, country size, and ethnic configuration are linked to these types in different ways. The comparably poor performance of the governance models further implies that there is a shortage of good predictors of coups and revolutions. Perhaps governmental conflicts, to a larger extent, are caused by case-specific factors, such as characteristics of the political elite, that are harder to measure in large-N studies. Be that as it may, the broad conclusion of this article is that we need to return to the drawing board and develop theoretical schemes that are better able to explain various *subsets* of civil wars. Only then will we be able to generate more precise quantitative measures of interest and, eventually, accumulate a richer understanding of the underlying causes of civil war.

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- HALVARD BUHAUG, b. 1972, PhD in Political Science (Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2005); Senior Researcher, Centre for the Study of Civil War (CSCW), International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO, 2006–). Current research interests include disaggregated aspects of civil war and the application of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to conflict research.