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Why class inequality breeds coups but not civil wars

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Abstract

Does class inequality increase the risk of civil war? I posit that inequality between social classes affects civil wars through two pathways: (1) it heightens the risk of political violence by fueling distributive conflicts; and (2) it reduces structural coup-proofing, which, in turn, increases the capacity of the military to fight insurgents. Combining these effects implies that the net effect of class inequality on civil war is ambiguous. Although class inequality increases the propensity for violence, in unequal countries political violence rarely takes the form of wars because such countries have strong militaries. Class inequality, however, breeds other forms of political violence. In particular, it increases the likelihood of military coups. The two effects of class inequality reinforce each other in the case of coups: inequality simultaneously stirs distributional conflicts and increases the capacity of the military to mount coups by reducing coup-proofing. Using data on 128 developing countries between 1960 and 2008, I find that while class inequality fosters coups, it has no discernible effect on civil wars. I also provide evidence consistent with my causal mechanisms: (1) inequality creates greater threat to the rulers by fueling political instability; (2) inequality reduces structural coup-proofing; and (3) structural coup-proofing increases the likelihood of civil war.

Keywords

civil war, coup, coup-proofing, inequality

Introduction

Does inequality increase the risk of civil war? While inequality has been found to increase the likelihood that a country experiences diverse forms of political violence, such as coups, riots, demonstrations, and revolutions (Alesina & Perotti, 1996; Roe & Siegel, 2011), empirical studies about the effect of inequality on civil war have been largely inconclusive (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Fearon & Laitin, 2003).[1] The lack of a consistent relationship between inequality and civil war challenges the expectations of a celebrated literature which predicts that inequality makes war more likely notably because it fuels distributive conflicts (Davies, 1962; Gurr, 1970).

One of the main explanations for theses ambiguous results is that 'greed' (or opportunity) is a better predictor of conflict than 'grievances' (or motivation) (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). However, inequality does not only capture grievances. For example, at any income level, increasing inequality decreases the opportunity cost of potential recruits – who are typically members of the lower class. This, in turn, reduces the cost that political entrepreneurs – who are often (albeit not always) members of the economic elites – must pay to finance a rebellion. Hence, inequality creates motives and opportunities for insurgency.

I provide and test an explanation that accounts both for the absence of a consistent relationship between

[1] One exception is the literature on horizontal inequality (e.g. Cederman, Weidmann & Gleditsch, 2011), which I discuss below.

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inequality and civil war, and for the strong effect of inequality on other forms of political violence, particularly military coups. My argument focuses on the concept of interclass inequality, defined as inequality between the economic elites and the masses.[2] I posit that class inequality affects civil wars and other forms of political violence through two pathways. First, it heightens the risks of political violence – including civil wars – by generating conflicts over the distribution of resources. I refer to this as its direct effect.

Second, class inequality has an indirect effect, which operates through its influence on the structure of the military. This effect builds on the important work of Svolik (2012), who argues that unequal countries tend to have stronger militaries. Rulers of such countries are more likely to face threats from the population, which forces them to delegate more power to the military in order to quell unrest. This logic further suggests that class inequality reduces the ability of rulers to use structural coup-proofing tactics, since such tactics reduce the capacity of the military to repress. Structural coup-proofing refers to changes to the structure of the military, for example by dividing the military into multiple units, which inhibit its *capacity* to stage coups (Powell, 2012). Such tactics differ from non-structural coup-proofing strategies, such as increasing military expenditure, that do not reduce the capacity of the military to stage coups by altering its structure but instead increase the incentives of the army to support the regime.

The indirect effect has *different* implications on different forms of political violence. On the one hand, having a strong military reduces the likelihood of violence when, as for civil wars, the military is the main agent that fights *against* those that initiate violence. Militaries that are not weakened by structural coup-proofing are better at fighting wars, which deters potential insurgents. Thus, interclass inequality has two confounding effects on civil wars. It increases the propensity for conflict (direct effect) while simultaneously increasing the capacity of the military to fight insurgents (indirect effect), leading to an ambiguous net relationship.

On the other hand, class inequality should have a particularly strong positive effect on forms of violence that are *instigated* by the military, such as military coups. In such instances, the two effects of class inequality reinforce each other: it simultaneously stirs distributional conflicts (direct effect) and increases the capacity of the military to mount coups (indirect effect). This argument helps to explain why many unequal countries are more prone to coups than civil wars. For example, between 1950 and 2006, Bolivia – one of the world's most unequal countries – experienced nine successful and three failed coups but not a single civil war.[3]

This article contributes to the small but growing literature that treats the risks of coups and civil wars as related threats to the regime (e.g. Roessler, 2011; Bodea, Elbadawi & Houle, forthcoming). As pointed out by Fearon (2004: 289), 'both coups and peripheral insurgencies are strategies for using violence to take power'. Similarly, Roessler (2011: 303) argues that 'coups and insurgencies represent alternative antiregime technologies'. Roessler (2011) finds that ethnic exclusion increases the likelihood of civil war but reduces that of a coup. Bodea, Elbadawi & Houle (forthcoming), for their part, find that partial factional democracies are more likely to experience coups, civil wars, and riots. This article adds to this literature and suggests that as inequality increases, challengers become more likely to opt for coups as opposed to insurgencies.

I test this argument with a dataset covering 128 countries between 1960 and 2008. Using three indicators of inequality – two of which proxy for class inequality – I first show that while inequality increases the likelihood of coups, it has no discernible effect on war. Finally, I examine the causal mechanisms driving the aggregate relationships. Consistent with my argument, I find that: (1) inequality creates greater threats to rulers by fueling political instability; (2) inequality reduces the use of

[2] The terms elites and masses are borrowed from Acemoğlu & Robinson (2006) and Boix (2003). The elites are defined as the richest segment of the population, and the masses as the remaining members of the population, who are poorer. The masses are assumed to be more numerous than the elites. In most societies, the elites correspond to the owners of the means of production – for example, capital owners – and the masses to the laborers. Throughout the article, inequality thus refers to group-based inequality, and groups are defined along class affiliations. This concept differs from categorical inequality (because groups are not rigid) and horizontal inequality – in which groups are defined along cultural lines. It also differs from household and individual inequality that refer to the overall level of inequality in a society rather than inequality between specific groups. Moreover, the concept refers to inequality in income or wealth – although all my measures capture income inequality – rather than inequality in education or health, for example. Finally, it differs from the concept of inequality of opportunity that is more closely associated with social mobility. Predictions are driven by conflicts between the class that is in power and the one that is not.

[3] Bolivia experienced multiple small conflicts, but none of them attained the threshold of a full-blown civil war (Political Instability Task Force, Marshall, Gurr & Harff, 2014).

structural coup-proofing; and (3) structural coup-proofing increases the likelihood of civil war. These findings suggest that the weak effect of inequality on civil wars may at least partially be explained by its effect on structural coup-proofing.

Apart from providing an answer to the puzzle discussed above, I contribute to the literature in multiple ways. First, some recent studies have found that inequality breeds civil war (Bartusevičius, 2014; Baten & Mumme, 2013). My findings on the effect of inequality on civil wars contribute to this ongoing debate. My tests differ from previous tests notably because they use measures of inequality that proxy for class-based inequality.

Furthermore, few authors have tested the effect of inequality on coups. Svolik (2012) finds that the relationship is inverted U-shaped, but his analysis is restricted to autocracies. Collier & Hoeffler (2005) test the effect of inequality on coups but their sample is limited to sub-Saharan Africa. Some authors show that inequality increases the likelihood of democratic reversals, which usually (but not always) take the form of coups (e.g. Houle, 2009). But, to my knowledge, this is the first article to test the effect of inequality on coups in a world sample that contains both democracies and autocracies. While testing my causal mechanisms, I also provide evidence that inequality fuels many forms of political instability, such as riots and revolutions. These findings corroborate those of previous studies using different measures of inequality, such as capital shares (e.g. Alesina & Perotti, 1996).

Finally, I contribute to the growing literature on the causes and consequences of structural coup-proofing. This is the first study to empirically demonstrate that inequality reduces structural coup-proofing. I also show that structural coup-proofing fosters war. Although Powell (2014b,c) reports a similar finding, my analysis differs from his in a number of ways. First, Powell's (2014c) analysis is limited to sub-Saharan Africa. Second, Powell (2014b) finds that structural coup-proofing only fosters civil war in autocracies that are facing a large coup threat. My analysis generalizes this finding to all regions and finds that the relationship is not conditional on the risk of a coup.

Previous literature on inequality and civil wars

The idea that inequality stirs political violence dates back to at least Karl Marx, who argued that inequality between the owners of the means of production and the laborers fuels class warfare. A similar argument was later restated and refined by the deprivation theory (e.g. Davies, 1962; Gurr, 1970) and other authors (e.g. Midlarsky, 1988; Muller, 1985; Russett, 1964). More recently, Boix (2008), whose argument explicitly focuses on class inequality, argued that inequality increases the likelihood that the masses initiate a civil war in order to install a regime in which they dominate.

There are two main groups of empirical studies testing the effect of inequality on civil wars. The first focuses on individual and household inequality (i.e. the overall level of inequality in the society), usually measured with Gini coefficients. The findings of these studies have been inconclusive. While some authors find no relationship (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Collier, Hoeffler & Rohner, 2009; Fearon & Laitin, 2003), others find a positive relationship (Bartusevičius, 2014; Baten & Mumme, 2013; Boix, 2008; Russett, 1964). Moreover, Besançon (2005) finds that inequality has a negative effect on ethnic wars but a positive effect on revolutions. Most studies that find no relationship use income Gini indexes, while those that find a positive relationship usually use non-income Gini coefficients. For example, Bartusevičius (2014) looks at inequality in education attainment and Baten & Mumme (2013) at inequality in physical height. Bartusevičius (2014) also provides evidence based on income inequality, but the estimated relationship is usually only significant at the 10% level.

Despite the differences in their findings, these empirical studies share several limitations. First, as explained above, most studies employ Gini indexes (whether based on income or not). One problem with using Gini coefficients is that they do not capture inequality between social classes – or between any particular groups – but individual and household inequality. The arguments of Marx, on which most of the literature (at least implicitly) builds, and many of the more recent studies (e.g. Boix, 2008) unequivocally center on the role of inequality between the masses and the elites. Gini indexes, however, are opaque and do not map neatly into any specific cleavage. Different income distributions can lead to the same Gini coefficient values. A high Gini coefficient could be the result of a high level of inequality between, say, the 30th and 10th percentiles of the income distribution or between the 99th percentile and the rest. These two types of income distributions may have very different consequences on political stability.

Moreover, most authors using income Gini indexes rely on datasets that employ national surveys.[4] The

[4] This problem is less severe for studies that use the Gini indexes of Solt (2009), which are standardized across sources.

problem is that different countries use different methods and definitions in their surveys, which renders cross-national comparisons unreliable. For example, some surveys are based on net and others on gross income. Finally, most authors use datasets with many missing values, often around 60% of the full population, which creates a serious sample-selection bias.

In response to studies looking at individual and household inequality, a second group of authors have examined the effect of horizontal inequality – inequality between culturally defined groups (usually ethnic groups) – on civil wars (e.g. Cederman, Weidmann & Gleditsch, 2011; Gubler & Selway, 2012; Houle, 2015; Østby, 2008). These studies tend to show that horizontal inequality does breed conflict. Of course, an ethnic group is not the same as a social class and so these studies do not answer the question of the effect of interclass inequality on wars. As discussed below, my argument about why inequality between the elites and the masses has little effect on conflicts is not directly applicable to the question of horizontal inequality. Among other contributions, the analysis below tests the effect of inequality on civil war using measures that more closely proxy for class inequality.

Class inequality, civil wars, and coups

I posit that class inequality has two effects on political violence: a direct and an indirect effect. Neither effect, on its own, is entirely new to the literature. Both draw heavily from existing studies. Taken together and applied to the question of the effect of interclass inequality on civil war, however, they offer an explanation for the absence of a consistent relationship between inequality and war. They also explain why inequality has a much stronger effect on other forms of political violence. Below, I explain these two effects and discuss inequality's net effect (the combination of the two effects).

Class inequality fuels distributive conflicts

As implied by the arguments of Marx and others, class inequality fuels distributive conflicts. I argue that class inequality fosters *all* forms of political violence through this mechanism. Below, I first focus on coups and then on civil wars.

Imagine a situation in which a regime is dominated by either the elites or the masses. For the sake of the argument, let us assume that the regime represents the interests of the elites (although the logic of the argument is unaltered if it represents those of the masses). Moreover, the regime can either be democratic or authoritarian. For simplicity, I assume that it is authoritarian. A political entrepreneur can mount a coup. In order to successfully establish him/herself as the new ruler after a (successful) coup, he/she is assumed to have to form a political coalition that supports the new regime. That is, a new regime is more easily established and maintained when a political entrepreneur can rely on a solid source of support. No political regime, even if authoritarian, can be instated and maintained without a coalition (Bueno de Mesquita et al., 2003; Geddes, 1999).

Inequality between social classes widens the gap between the preferences over economic policies of members of the masses and the elites (Acemoğlu & Robinson, 2006; Boix, 2003, 2008). For example, the masses may want to increase redistribution or to adopt poor-friendly policies, such as public education and health, while the elites may oppose such policies. In the present example (in which the elites are politically dominant and the regime is authoritarian), interclass inequality creates incentives for members of the masses to support potential coup plotters in exchange for policies more in line with their own preferences. Class inequality can thus produce political coalitions on which coup leaders can rely. This, in turn, facilitates the establishment and maintenance of the new regime; hence increasing the likelihood of a coup.[5] Notice that the relationship is driven by the level of inequality between the class in power (here, the elites) and the one that is not (masses), not by the country's level of household/individual inequality, which also reflects inequality within each class.

Although the example above pertains to left-wing coups – staged to represent the interests of the masses – waged against autocracies, the argument extends to right-wing coups and coups staged against democracies. In fact, Boix (2003) and Acemoğlu & Robinson (2006) theorize that inequality between social classes induces right-wing coups against democracies. In a democracy the median voter is a member of the masses, and so the elites can stage a right-wing coup to reduce redistribution. A similar argument could be made that democracies that fail to redistribute sufficiently could fall victim to left-wing coups. Finally, although autocracies are usually ruled by the economic elites (Acemoğlu & Robinson, 2006; Boix, 2003), one could imagine a situation in which the dictator represents the interests of the poor. Interclass inequality increases the likelihood that such

[5] Coup leaders can rely on alternative cleavages (e.g. ethnicity) but interclass inequality provides a potential source of support.

regimes get overthrown by right-wing coups aimed at reducing redistribution. Examples of left-wing coups carried out against autocracies include Burkina Faso (1983), left-wing coups staged against democracies include Peru (1968), right-wing coups waged against autocracies include Peru (1948), and right-wing coups staged against democracies include Chile (1973) and Brazil (1964).

This is not to say that coups are always driven by class interests and that all coups are alike. Many coups are the results of purely intra-elites conflicts. In fact, the indirect effect discussed below pertains to how class inequality affects the strictly intra-elites dimension of coups. Instead, class inequality can produce conditions conducive to coups, notably by providing a source of support to coup plotters. Moreover, coup leaders need not be from the same social class as their supporters. They simply need to enact policies that are consistent with their preferences.

I identify three reasons why interclass inequality may have a direct positive effect on civil wars. The first is based on the argument of Boix (2008) and is closely related to the discussion on the effect of class inequality on coups above. Class inequality increases the gap between the preferences over economic policies between social classes, which increases the incentives of the class that is not in power to topple the regime through an insurgency and install a regime that would adopt policies more in line with its preferences. In other words, in the scenario above the class that does not hold office may simply resort to a rebellion rather than a coup. This reasoning is consistent with the quotes of Fearon (2004) and Roessler (2011) above, according to which coups and insurgencies are alternative strategies that political entrepreneurs can employ to usurp power.

My second argument is based on the mechanisms proposed by the deprivation theory and other authors discussed above (e.g. Russett, 1964) that theorize that inequality breeds grievances. In short, according to this argument, inequality creates resentment among the masses, rendering them more willing to join insurgencies.

Finally, not only does class-based inequality produce grievances and increase the gap between the preferences of different social classes, but it also creates opportunities for insurgency. At any income level, increasing interclass inequality decreases the opportunity cost of potential recruits (which are typically members of the masses). This creates a large pool of young people willing to join a conflict in exchange for food, a roof, a meager salary, and access to spoils. Keeping everything else constant, class inequality thus reduces the cost of hiring recruits, which decreases the cost of mounting a rebellion for political entrepreneurs, who are themselves usually members of the elites (Esteban & Ray, 2011). According to this argument, class inequality can fuel war even if the aim of the rebellion is not to install a more equitable regime, and if the regime in place already adopts poor-friendly policies.

Class inequality reduces structural coup-proofing

Class inequality has also an indirect effect on political violence that operates through its effect on the structure of the military. Here, I build on Svolik (2012). It is important to note, however, that Svolik (2012) does not discuss the effect of inequality on civil war (which is the focus of this article). Also, he does not consider the direct effect of inequality on coups, discussed above.

Svolik (2012) argues that, in autocracies, inequality increases the level of mass threat faced by dictators. When inequality between the elites – which are usually in power in autocracies (Acemoğlu & Robinson, 2006; Boix, 2003) – and the masses is high, the latter have more incentives to revolt and are more costly to coopt, for example, through a political party (since their preferences differ more widely from those of the elites). Moreover, as implied by the seminal work of Meltzer & Richard (1981), inequality increases the benefits (in terms of redistribution) associated with democracy for the masses. Consequently, in autocracies, inequality between the masses and the elites increases pressure in favor of democratization by the former (Acemoğlu & Robinson, 2006; Houle, 2009). Such threats to the rulers are not limited to (and, in fact, rarely involve) civil wars. Pressure for democratization, for example, almost never takes the form of a full-blown civil war.

Threats from below, in turn, push rulers to grant enough power to the military to quell mass opposition (Svolik, 2012). The same logic implies that class inequality precludes rulers from adopting structural coup-proofing measures – such as dividing the military into multiple units – because such tactics reduce the capacity of the military to repress. Structural coup-proofing has been demonstrated to substantially diminish the effectiveness of the military (Powell, 2014a, b, c; Pilster & Böhmelt, 2011, 2012). For example, a partitioned army is not as effective at repressing mass opposition as a united one. Paramilitaries can repress small-scale opposition. However, because of the sheer size of the masses, only the military has the manpower necessary to suppress the mass-based opposition. In the words of Svolik (2012: 127), 'when the opposition to a regime is mass based,

organized, and potentially violent, the military is the only force capable of defeating it'.[6] Therefore, structural coup-proofing, by weakening the military, reduces the capacity of the regime to suppress mass threats. This argument pertains to inequality between the elites and the masses, because smaller groups can, for example, be put down by paramilitaries. Moreover, individual and household inequality – which also captures within-class inequality – may not have the same implications.

Although these forms of threats are often short-lived, they have lasting implications for the role of the military in a country's domestic politics. Once a ruler chooses to rely on the military to eliminate a threat, he and his successors become 'trapped': they cannot undermine its power without putting themselves at risk of a coup. While it is possible for a ruler to reduce structural coup-proofing to counter mass-based threats, in the short term it is much riskier (albeit possible) to increase it. Such policies necessarily threaten the interests of top military officials. A military that has the capacity to stage a coup may opt to do so if a ruler attempts to undermine its power. Consequently, the capacity of the military to intervene domestically and the extent to which a country relies on structural coup-proofing are largely (though not completely) exogenous to any particular ruler. Countries that are unequal are likely to have a tradition of militaries that are involved domestically and that are not weakened by structural coup-proofing. Rulers can always adjust the strength of the military and structural coup-proofing in a manner that reduces the level of mass threat they face. However, making the equivalent adjustments for coups is more difficult, since the very measures that reduce the capacity of the military to stage coups may themselves trigger a coup in the short term.

Although, according to this argument, strong militaries originate while countries are authoritarian, even after democratization the army is likely to retain its capacity to intervene domestically (Cheibub, 2007; Svolik, 2012).[7] Attempts at weakening the military may trigger coups no matter whether the ruler is democratically elected or not. As argued by Svolik (2013: 770), 'not only dictatorships but also new democracies that inherit such empowered militaries will therefore be at a higher risk of military intervention'. Cheibub (2007) also demonstrates that democracies with strong military legacies are more likely to experience coups because armies retain their strong position after democratization.

The indirect effect has *different* implications on different forms of political violence. On the one hand, when the military is the main actor fighting against those that initiate violence, as in the case of civil wars, having a strong military reduces the likelihood of violence. Militaries that are not undermined by structural coup-proofing are also better at fighting civil wars, which decreases the likelihood that they will be instigated. As discussed above, structural coup-proofing has been shown to reduce the capacity of the armed forces to fight against international and domestic opponents. For example, Pilster & Böhmelt (2011) demonstrate that structural coup-proofing increases causalities in the domestic army during conflicts. Moreover, Powell (2014b,c) shows that structural coup-proofing increases the probability of civil war, albeit, as pointed out above, only under some conditions.

On the other hand, when it is the military that instigates violence, as in the case of military coups, interclass inequality increases the likelihood of violence through its indirect effect. The military is more likely to stage a coup if it is not weakened by structural coup-proofing. For example, Powell (2012) demonstrates that coup-proofing reduces the probability of coups. The indirect effect is thus about how class inequality affects the intra-elites dimension of coups. Importantly, class inequality may even affect coups that are not directly motivated by class interests, though only indirectly by enhancing the capacity of the military to carry them out.

Although the indirect effect builds on Svolik (2012), my prediction about how inequality's impact on the structure of the military affects coups differs from his: he expects the relationship to be inverted U-shaped, whereas I expect it to be monotonic and increasing. It seems unlikely that countries with middling structural coup-proofing levels are more at risk of coups than those with no or few coup-proofing measures. Moreover, my predictions about inequality's net effect on coups are the product of the combination of the direct and indirect effects, whereas Svolik (2012) only considers the indirect effect.

But, why would rulers ever empower the military if it means that they become more vulnerable to coups, especially since coups are the most common threat they face? Although for most rulers military structures are largely inherited, some do reduce coup-proofing and strengthen the military. I argue that rulers are likely to do so under

[6] Table A47 (Online appendix) shows that countries with more structural coup-proofing are more vulnerable to riots, demonstrations, and revolutions (Banks, 2014).

[7] Results are unchanged when democracies are omitted from the analysis, however (Tables A37–A38, Online appendix).

two sets of conditions. The first is when mass opposition imperils the survival of the regime in the very short run. Second, a ruler may also opt to empower the military if it is a prerequisite to the establishment of the regime. Establishing an autocracy in spite of mass opposition may simply be impossible without the support of the military. Repressing mass opposition is a prerequisite to establishing a dictatorship, in which a few rule over the majority. In short, rulers may be willing to trade off the risk of being eventually ousted by the military in exchange for being able to establish their rule in the first place and/or remain in power when faced by immediate mass threats.

Combining the direct and indirect effects helps explain why results on the effect of inequality on civil war have been largely inconclusive. While class inequality increases the overall propensity for violence by breeding distributive conflicts (direct effect), it simultaneously deters potential insurgents by increasing the capacity of the military to fight (indirect effect), meaning that its net effect is ambiguous. The two effects, however, reinforce each other in the case of coups: class inequality, by accentuating grievances, creates coalitions on which coup plotters can rely (direct effect), and produces opportunities for coups by reducing structural coup-proofing (indirect effect). The net effect of class inequality on coups should thus be positive.

My argument does not necessarily contradict the findings of authors working on horizontal inequality and conflicts. While the direct effect is also relevant to horizontal inequality, the indirect effect is less directly applicable. It is not because a specific ethnic group is much poorer or much richer than the rest of the country that rulers will necessarily be forced to allocate extensive power to the military. This is particularly clear in the cases of small ethnic groups that can, for example, be repressed by paramilitary forces. The masses, however, because of their sheer size, do impact the need to use the military. The indirect effect may be relevant in special cases, such as under ethnocracies in which a large group that is excluded from power is much poorer or much richer than the group in power. But, more generally, we should expect horizontal inequality to affect civil wars primarily through the direct effect, explaining why it has been found to foster war.

Data

The unit of analysis is the country-year. The main sample covers 128 countries between 1960 and 2008. The sample only covers non-Western countries, although results are unchanged when Western countries are included (Tables A29–A32, Online appendix).[8] Summary statistics and data sources for all variables are presented in Tables A2 and A3 of the Online appendix, respectively.

Dependent variables

Civil wars are large domestic conflicts involving casualties and fighting between organized non-state actors and the state. I use two indicators. The first is that of the Political Instability Task Force (PITF) (Marshall, Gurr & Harff, 2014). To qualify as a civil war a conflict must oppose the government and a politically organized group, and involve at least 1,000 combatants on each side. The conflict also needs to cause at least 1,000 battle-related deaths over its course and 100 battle-related deaths per year. I also use the indicator of the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), which uses a battle-related death threshold of 25 (Gleditsch et al., 2002). Powell & Thyne (2011) report that 38 of the armed conflicts included in the PRIO dataset are actually coups. Since coups are different from civil wars – coups are staged by regime insiders, while civil wars require the participation of the masses – I purged the PRIO dataset from the coups identified by Powell & Thyne (2011).

To measure coups, I use the dataset of Powell & Thyne (2011), which includes both failed and successful coups. Coups are defined as 'illegal and overt attempts by the military or other elites within the state apparatus to unseat the sitting executive' (Powell & Thyne, 2011: 252). To summarize, coups are driven by regime insiders, whereas civil wars necessitate the participation of outsiders (although they can also involve insiders).

I measure structural coup-proofing with the dataset of Pilster & Böhmelt (2012), which is an indicator of counterbalancing. The indicator gives the number of branches into which the military and paramilitary are divided. It covers only ground units. During a coup, any branch of the military or paramilitary could oppose the group carrying out the coup. Creating multiple military/paramilitary units magnifies the coordination problem that is inherent to mounting a coup (Belkin, 2005; Geddes, 1999).

There are other coup-proofing tactics that rulers can rely upon. Rulers could, for example, directly take command of the military. However, counterbalancing is the type of coup-proofing strategy for which data are most

[8] Western countries are defined as Western Europe, the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia.

widely available and that has been studied most closely (Belkin, 2005; Pilster & Böhmelt, 2011, 2012; Powell, 2014a, b, c). According to Belkin (2005), counterbalancing is the key component of most coup-proofing strategies. Pilster & Böhmelt (2011: 338) also argue that '[a]lthough leaders may substitute different techniques to a certain degree, the counterbalancing of forces is likely to be an element of any coup-proofing approach'. Section 8 of the Online appendix employs alternative measures of coup-proofing. It also explains why using measures of non-structural coup-proofing, such as military spending, would not be appropriate to test my argument.

Tests on structural coup-proofing only include non-democracies (anocracies and autocracies) because counterbalancing is rarely employed in democracies, which use different tactics (Pilster & Böhmelt, 2012). Countries with a Polity score below 6 are classified as non-democracies (Marshall & Gurr, 2014). However, results are largely unchanged when democracies are included in the sample (Tables A33–A34, Online appendix).

Independent variables

I use three measures of inequality, two of which are meant to proxy for class inequality. The first is the capital share of the value added in the manufacturing sector compiled by Ortega & Rodriguez (2006) and extended by Houle (forthcoming). The dataset has been constructed from data collected by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). Capital shares give the proportion of the value created within specific firms that accrues to the owners of these specific firms, as opposed to the laborers. Low capital shares indicate low levels of class inequality. The capital share is a measure of inequality between the owners of the means of production (capital) and the laborers. In the words of Acemoğlu & Robinson (2006: 59, emphasis added), 'when the major conflict is between the rich and the poor, one variable that captures *inter-group* inequality is the share of labor income [one minus the capital share]'.

Although this measure of inequality has yet to be used in the literature on wars and coups, it has been used in the literatures on regime transition and redistribution (Acemoğlu & Robinson, 2006; Dunning, 2008; Haggard & Kaufman, 2012; Houle, 2009, forthcoming; Przeworski et al., 2000; Rodrik, 1999). According to Dunning (2008: 143), 'capital shares represent the best available cross-national indicator of private inequality'. Unlike Gini coefficients, capital shares are not calculated based on national surveys but on surveys distributed directly by the UNIDO to firms using similar definitions and methods for all countries. Therefore, capital shares are comparable across countries. Finally, the capital shares dataset has a lower proportion of missing values than other inequality datasets.[9]

My second measure of inequality is the top 1%'s share of total income from Solt (2009). It captures inequality between the rich and the rest of the population rather than, for example, between the middle class and the poor. It thus closely corresponds to the notion of inequality between the elites and the masses. One potential problem with this dataset is that, like Gini coefficients, it is calculated from national surveys. However, Solt (2009) uses an algorithm to standardize the observations and increase comparability. Although this method remains imperfect, it is an important improvement over unadjusted data.

I also use the net income Gini indexes of Solt (2009), which is (arguably) the most reliable dataset on Gini coefficients available on a wide range of developing countries. Solt (2009) uses the same algorithm as for the top 1%'s share to standardize observations. Again, Gini indexes may not proxy for the concept of interest as well as the other measures I employ. While the two other measures of inequality are group-based measures of inequality – in which groups are defined along class affiliations – the Gini index is a household-based measure that does not capture class inequality.

Control variables

I include controls that are usually employed in models on civil wars and coups and that could be related to inequality: GDP per capita in purchasing power parity dollars logged (Treisman, 2015), growth in GDP per capita, income emanating from oil and gas production per capita logged (Ross, 2012), trade openness (sum of exports and imports divided by total income; World Bank, various years), and ethnic fractionization (Przeworski et al., 2000). Moreover, I include a dummy variable (*Instability*) indicating whether a country has experienced a regime transition over the last three years. Since partial regimes have been found to be more unstable, I add the Polity score and its square. I also include a dummy variable for the Cold War period.

The models on civil wars include two additional controls: the proportion of the country that is mountainous

[9] Section 1 of the Online appendix provides more detail on capital shares and responds to some potential objections against using capital shares to measure inequality.

Table I. Effect of inequality on civil wars

	PITF			*PRIO*		
	(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*	*(6)*
Cap. share	0.010			0.011		
	(0.011)			(0.009)		
Share 1%		−0.047			−0.032	
		(0.030)			(0.024)	
Gini			−0.018			−0.011
			(0.016)			(0.013)
GDP pc (logged)	−0.469*	−0.302	−0.345	−0.409**	−0.411*	−0.523**
	(0.188)	(0.219)	(0.214)	(0.150)	(0.197)	(0.192)
Growth	−0.005	−0.021	−0.023	−0.010	0.003	0.009
	(0.016)	(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.013)	(0.018)	(0.019)
Oil/gas inc. pc (logged)	0.120*	0.125	0.116	0.130**	0.147**	0.162**
	(0.056)	(0.067)	(0.071)	(0.042)	(0.051)	(0.053)
Instability	0.139	−0.069	−0.203	0.065	0.101	0.055
	(0.359)	(0.418)	(0.446)	(0.275)	(0.283)	(0.291)
Mountains	0.196**	0.086	0.129	0.171**	0.188*	0.192*
	(0.074)	(0.093)	(0.096)	(0.061)	(0.078)	(0.078)
Population	0.158**	0.146**	0.159**	0.202**	0.159**	0.162**
	(0.044)	(0.050)	(0.052)	(0.037)	(0.039)	(0.038)
Trade open.	−0.001	−0.008*	−0.007	0.001	−0.003	−0.001
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Ethnic frac.	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.009*	0.011*	0.011*
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Polity	−0.002	0.015	0.009	0.025	0.043*	0.038
	(0.020)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.016)	(0.020)	(0.019)
Polity sq.	−0.012**	−0.017**	−0.014*	−0.006	−0.006	−0.004
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Cold War	0.423	0.668	0.427	−0.158	−0.090	−0.063
	(0.391)	(0.452)	(0.460)	(0.322)	(0.351)	(0.365)
Time last war	−0.117	−0.139	−0.183	0.058	0.081	0.080
	(0.076)	(0.103)	(0.107)	(0.070)	(0.080)	(0.082)
Spline1	−0.001	−0.001	−0.002	0.002	0.003	0.003
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Spline2	0.000	0.001	0.001	−0.002	−0.002*	−0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Spline2	0.000	−0.000	−0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	4,708	3,278	3,167	4,742	3,270	3,157
Log-lik.	−461.735	−300.783	−285.818	−633.051	−448.403	−430.306

Logit estimations. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Includes decade dummy variables. $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$.

(Gubler & Selway, 2012) and population (World Bank, various years). I also include the time since the last coup/war along with cubic splines of the time since the last coup/war. All models include decade dummy variables.

Empirical results

In this section, I first show that while inequality increases the likelihood that a country experiences a coup, it has no discernible effect on civil war onset. I then turn to the causal mechanisms driving the aggregate relationships. Finally, I discuss several robustness tests presented in the Online appendix.

Effect of inequality on civil wars and coups

Table I reports logistic regressions of the effect of inequality on civil war onset along with robust

Table II. Effect of inequality on coups

	Successful coups						*All coups*		
	(7)	*(8)*	*(9)*	*(10)*	*(11)*	*(12)*	*(13)*	*(14)*	*(15)*
Cap. share	0.031**			0.047			0.021**		
	(0.009)			(0.101)			(0.007)		
Cap. share sq.				−0.000					
				(0.001)					
Share 1%		0.056*			0.246*			0.052**	
		(0.023)			(0.120)			(0.017)	
Share 1% sq.					−0.007				
					(0.005)				
Gini			0.030*			0.218*			0.031**
			(0.014)			(0.106)			(0.009)
Gini sq.						−0.002			
						(0.001)			
GDP pc	−0.264	−0.655**	−0.742**	−0.265	−0.656**	−0.656*	−0.324**	−0.572**	−0.612**
(logged)	(0.162)	(0.244)	(0.232)	(0.162)	(0.243)	(0.243)	(0.117)	(0.165)	(0.161)
Growth	−0.018	−0.045**	−0.046**	−0.018	−0.045**	−0.045*	−0.031**	−0.046**	−0.046**
	(0.013)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.013)	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.010)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Oil/gas inc. pc	0.037	0.139*	0.190**	0.037	0.139*	0.139	0.087**	0.101*	0.129**
(logged)	(0.043)	(0.059)	(0.057)	(0.044)	(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.032)	(0.044)	(0.043)
Instability	0.043	0.039	−0.262	0.041	0.046	0.046	0.291	0.224	0.104
	(0.299)	(0.368)	(0.378)	(0.300)	(0.366)	(0.366)	(0.208)	(0.256)	(0.262)
Trade open.	−0.004	−0.003	−0.004	−0.004	−0.004	−0.004	−0.004*	−0.003	−0.003
	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)
Ethnic frac.	−0.002	−0.003	−0.005	−0.002	−0.004	−0.004	−0.001	−0.000	−0.002
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.004)
Polity	−0.000	0.004	0.032	−0.000	0.001	0.001	0.002	−0.001	0.016
	(0.018)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.018)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.013)	(0.017)	(0.017)
Polity sq.	−0.013**	−0.013**	−0.015**	−0.013**	−0.013**	−0.013*	−0.013**	−0.015**	−0.015**
	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Cold War	1.431**	0.999*	1.097*	1.430**	0.970	0.970	0.795**	0.812*	0.908**
	(0.493)	(0.494)	(0.512)	(0.493)	(0.500)	(0.500)	(0.275)	(0.317)	(0.331)
Time last coup	−0.084	−0.162*	−0.134	−0.084	−0.154*	−0.130	−0.147**	−0.170**	−0.145**
	(0.055)	(0.075)	(0.079)	(0.055)	(0.074)	(0.079)	(0.041)	(0.054)	(0.056)
Spline1	−0.000	−0.001	−0.001	−0.000	−0.001	−0.001	−0.001*	−0.001*	−0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Spline2	−0.000	0.000	0.000	−0.000	0.000	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Spline3	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	−0.000	−0.000	−0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	5,004	3,341	3,228	5,004	3,341	3,228	5,004	3,341	3,228
Log-lik.	−591.382	−316.84	−295.299	−591.369	−315.722	−294.261	−965.773	−538.5	−508.507

Logit estimations. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Includes decade dummy variables. $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$.

standard errors. All explanatory variables are lagged. Inequality never attains statistical significance. In four of the six estimations, inequality actually *reduces* the likelihood of war (although the relationship is not significant). Although these results are in line with those obtained by many previous authors, they contribute to the literature by showing that, even when we use better measures, inequality has little effect on civil war. Moreover, as discussed above, some recent authors do find a positive relationship between inequality and war (Bartusevičius, 2014; Baten & Mumme, 2013).

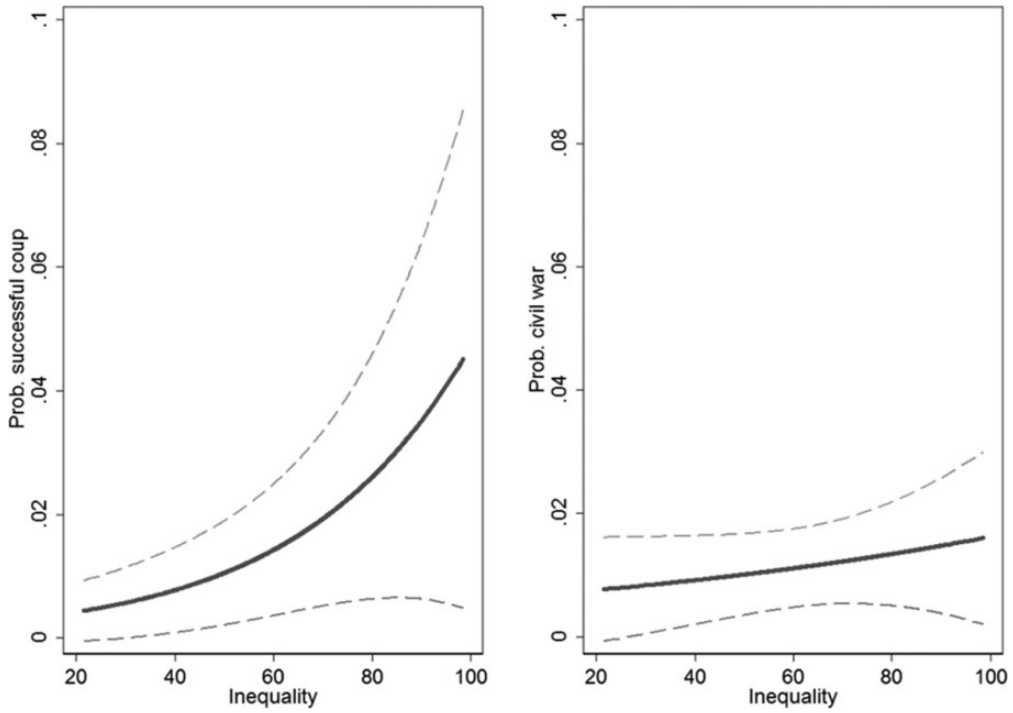

Figure 1. Effect of inequality on coups and civil wars
Dashed lines give 95% confidence intervals. Uses capital shares.

Next, I test the effect of inequality on coups in Table II. Columns 7–12 use only successful coups. Results show that inequality breeds coups. Models 10–12 test the hypothesis of Svolik (2012) that the relationship is inverted U-shaped by including inequality squared. The relationship would be inverted U-shaped if the coefficient on inequality were positive and that on inequality square negative. In all regressions, the two coefficients are of the expected signs. However, the relationship is weak and the coefficient on inequality squared is never significant. Therefore, on balance, results point toward a monotonic positive relationship. Columns 13–15 reproduce Models 7–9 with both failed and successful coups. Results are unchanged.

Figure 1 gives the predicted probabilities of successful coups (left panel) and wars (right panel) at different levels of inequality along with 95% confidence intervals. The probability of a coup increases sharply with inequality, whereas that of a war is largely unaffected. Based on Figure 1, increasing capital share from 25 (e.g. Macedonia) to 90 (e.g. Bolivia) raises the likelihood of a successful coup from 0.49% to 3.51% *every year*. The same change in inequality only increases the likelihood of war from 0.80% to 1.48%. Figure 1 uses capital shares. When using the two other measures, inequality reduces the likelihood of war.

Most control variables have the expected effect. As found by previous authors, GDP per capita decreases the likelihood of coups and wars (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Countries with large populations, those that produce a lot of oil and gas, and those with large mountainous areas are more likely to see conflicts (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Finally, ethnic diversity fuels war, but only when one is using the PRIO indicator.

Causal mechanisms

I now test three of the key assumptions on which my argument relies. First, I estimate the effect of inequality on diverse forms of political instability: general strikes, riots, revolutions, and demonstrations (Banks, 2014). Because of space constraints, results are reported in Section 6 (Table A6) of the Online appendix. On balance, results suggest that inequality leads to political instability. In Table A7 of the Online appendix, I also show that inequality is positively associated with an aggregated conflict index, also taken from Banks (2014). It combines information on the four indicators used in Table A6 along with assassinations, guerillas, major government crises, and purges. These results provide evidence that class inequality creates threats to rulers. They are also consistent with the assertion that interclass inequality fuels distributive conflicts, as implied by the direct effect.

Table III. Effect of inequality on coup-proofing

	(16)	(17)	(18)
Cap. share	−0.003**		
	(0.001)		
Share 1%		−0.013**	
		(0.003)	
Gini			−0.013**
			(0.002)
GDP pc (logged)	0.018	0.034	0.009
	(0.021)	(0.030)	(0.029)
Growth	−0.001	−0.001	−0.003
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Oil/gas inc. pc (logged)	0.009	0.032**	0.030**
	(0.005)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Instability	−0.044	−0.081	−0.064
	(0.062)	(0.066)	(0.066)
Trade open.	−0.001**	−0.001	−0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Ethnic frac.	−0.003**	−0.004**	−0.003**
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Polity	0.005	0.008	0.011*
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Polity sq.	−0.002**	−0.002*	−0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Cold War	0.110**	0.120**	0.125**
	(0.039)	(0.045)	(0.045)
Time last coup	0.010**	0.006**	0.006**
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
N	2,675	1,727	1,672
R2	0.120	0.124	0.130

OLS estimations. Includes only non-democracies. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Includes decade dummy variables. $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$.

Tables III and IV provide support for the indirect effect of class inequality. Table III tests whether inequality is associated with less structural coup-proofing. In all specifications, inequality decreases the extent to which non-democracies rely on structural coup-proofing and the relationship is significant at the 1% level. This constitutes evidence that inequality impedes the ability of rulers to adopt such tactics. This article is the first to show that unequal countries rely on less structural coup-proofing.

Table IV estimates the effect of structural coup-proofing on civil wars (Models 19 and 20) and coups (Models 21 and 22). Non-democracies relying on structural coup-proofing are much more likely to experience a civil war, which supports my assertion that structural coup-proofing reduces the capacity of the military to fight wars. With the PRIO indicator, the predicted probability of a war is 1.91% per year in a country with a unified military but 7.18% in a country in which the military is divided into four branches.

As shown in Models 21 and 22, although structural coup-proofing reduces the risk of coups, its effect is not significant. The weakness of the relationship is most likely due to endogeneity: autocracies that face a serious coup threat are more likely to coup-proof, hence biasing the relationship downward. In fact, Powell (2012) finds that coup-proofing reduces the incidence of coups.

Tables III and IV only include autocracies, but results are largely unchanged once democracies are included (Tables A33 and A34, Online appendix). Furthermore, while the results reported in Tables A6 and A7 and III and IV are consistent with my causal mechanisms, they are not definitive. Because we only observe the aggregate relationship between inequality, wars, and coups, we cannot directly test the direct effect. The findings shown in Tables A6 and A7 do suggest that class inequality creates distributive conflicts. However, we cannot be sure that distributive conflicts are also central to coups and conflicts. Despite these limitations, combined together, these results provide evidence suggesting that my causal mechanisms at least partially explain the weakness of the relationship between inequality and war.

Finally, Section 7 of the Online appendix employs a mediation analysis (Imai et al., 2011) in order to provide further evidence in favor of my causal mechanisms. I use structural coup-proofing as my mediation variable. As predicted by my argument, in the civil war model (Table A8) the mediation effect is negative and the direct effect positive, while in the coup model (Table A9) both effects are positive (although some of the effects are not significant). Importantly, the mediation effect (or indirect effect) in the civil war model is significant at the 5% level.

Robustness tests

The Online appendix presents several additional robustness tests. Tables A39–A42 redo the analysis while only controlling for income per capita (logged). Inequality may only be relevant to class-based conflicts (Besançon, 2005). Therefore, Table A27 redoes Table I with only class-based conflicts.[10] One could argue that my argument applies more directly to non-democracies. Tables A37 and A38 show that the results are robust to the exclusion of democracies.

[10] Class-based civil wars are those that are classified as 'revolutionary wars' (as opposed to 'ethnic wars') by the PITF.

Table IV. Effect of coup-proofing on civil wars and coups

	Civil wars (PITF)	*Civil wars (PRIO)*	*Successful coups*	*All coups*
	(19)	*(20)*	*(21)*	*(22)*
Coup-proofing	0.419*	0.459**	−0.205	−0.024
	(0.196)	(0.167)	(0.238)	(0.160)
GDP pc (logged)	−0.608**	−0.534**	−0.140	−0.309
	(0.215)	(0.201)	(0.244)	(0.172)
Growth	0.005	−0.003	−0.023	−0.039**
	(0.020)	(0.018)	(0.015)	(0.013)
Oil/gas inc. pc (logged)	0.132*	0.137**	−0.051	−0.010
	(0.063)	(0.052)	(0.061)	(0.044)
Instability	0.413	0.399	−0.155	0.189
	(0.527)	(0.481)	(0.587)	(0.382)
Mountains	0.162	0.238**		
	(0.091)	(0.079)		
Population	0.091	0.018		
	(0.064)	(0.046)		
Trade open.	−0.001	0.003	−0.004	−0.002
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.002)
Ethnic frac.	0.002	0.010	0.007	0.008*
	(0.007)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.004)
Polity	0.154**	0.080	0.031	0.035
	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.053)	(0.034)
Polity sq.	0.013	0.006	−0.003	−0.001
	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.009)	(0.006)
Cold War	0.745	0.151	0.706	0.430
	(0.497)	(0.401)	(0.473)	(0.313)
Time last war	−0.082	0.135		
	(0.090)	(0.095)		
Time last coup			−0.238**	−0.234**
			(0.081)	(0.059)
Spline1	−0.000	0.003*	−0.001	−0.001*
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Spline2	0.000	−0.002*	0.000	0.001
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Spline3	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
N	2,476	2,483	2,652	2,652
Log-lik.	−284.281	−362.203	−295.56	−503.384

Logit estimations. Includes only non-democracies. Robust standard errors in parentheses. Includes decade dummy variables. $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$.

Tables I and II use different sets of control variables and slightly different samples. In order to fully compare the effects of inequality on coups and civil wars, Table A5 reruns the two baseline coup models (Models 7 and 13) using the same control variables and sample as in the main civil war model (Model 1). It is possible that the effects of inequality on the structure of the military differ in military and non-military autocracies. Tables A43–A46 redo the analysis with a dummy variable for military regimes (Banks, 2014).

One way in which rulers can moderate inequality is through social expenditure, such as public health and education expenditure. Therefore, Section 9 redoes the analysis while controlling for different measures of social spending. Governance may matter more than the regime type in fueling conflicts. Consequently, Section 10 of the Online appendix redoes the analysis while controlling for indicators of the quality of governance.

Finally, Section 4 of the Online appendix employs a descriptive analysis. This analysis increases our

confidence that the results are not driven, for example, by the estimation techniques or the particular model specifications employed.

Conclusion

This article proposes an important addition to the literature on the effect of inequality on civil war. I posit that class inequality has two offsetting effects on civil war: while it increases the propensity for conflict, it also increases the capacity of the military to fight insurgents. Using three indicators of inequality, I find that while inequality fosters coups, it has little effect on civil conflict outbreaks. I have also provided evidence consistent with my causal mechanisms.

These findings have many important implications. First, they provide a rationale for the weak effect of inequality on civil war that moves away from the dominant explanation, according to which greed-based factors (e.g. cost of recruits, terrain, and state capacity) are more important than grievance-based factors (e.g. inequality and ethnic/religious divisions). Furthermore, the finding that inequality fosters coups and many other forms of instability suggests that policies promoting economic equality may be effective at reducing instability. Moreover, my findings have important implications for the study of the causes and consequences of structural coup-proofing, which is an emerging field of inquiry. I have shown that class inequality is associated with less structural coup-proofing and that structural coup-proofing increases the likelihood of war.

Finally, the findings imply that the literatures on diverse forms of political violence ought to be more closely related. As suggested by the quotes of Fearon (2004) and Roessler (2011) above, political actors dispose of diverse means to attain similar aims. The factors that explain why, for example, they tend to resort to coups in some countries may also explain why insurgencies are unlikely in these countries, and vice versa. This article suggests that class inequality transforms the structure of the military in a way that renders countries less likely to endure civil wars but more likely to experience coups. Future research about how different factors – apart from interclass inequality – affect the forms of violence that countries are likely to face is a promising avenue for future research.

Replication data

The dataset and do-files for the empirical analysis in this article, as well as an Online appendix, can be found at http://www.prio.org/jpr/datasets. All analyzes were conducted using STATA.

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