



POLI 150: Civil War

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Today's Class

- Bargaining & Iraq
- What is Civil War?
- Why Civil War?
- Civil War Responses



Bargaining Theory Review

- Because war is costly, a bargaining range always exists
- War between states occurs because of bargaining breakdown
- **Incomplete information, credible commitment problems**, and issue indivisibility are the main explanations of bargaining breakdown
- How well does it apply to wars in reality?



Two Cheers for Bargaining Theory

- Lake applies the insights of bargaining theory to the Iraq War with mixed results
- Applying the rationalist frame to this war does explain important parts, but the assumptions of the bargaining model are problematic
- Ultimately, he argues that it gives an inadequate explanation of the war



Iraq War: Information Problems

- Saddam believed that the US was a ‘paper tiger’ and would not pursue military action absent UN support
- The US hugely underestimated the costs of war
- Theory suggests that the US and Iraq should have sought out information to reach a settlement, but they did not



Iraq War: Credible Commitments

- Iraq could not credibly commit to not develop and use WMD in the future
- The US could not credibly commit to not invade Iraq if it disarmed
- However, the commitment problem existed for years before the war and Saddam did not signal benign intent even when they abandoned WMD during the 1990s
- Other states that Bush identified as part of the 'axis of evil' were not attacked



Lake's Conclusions

- Bargaining theory helps, but ultimately fails to explain the war
- Areas in which it failed: postwar governance costs, additional audiences, unitary actor assumption, cognitive biases
- Suggests the creation of a behavioral theory of war



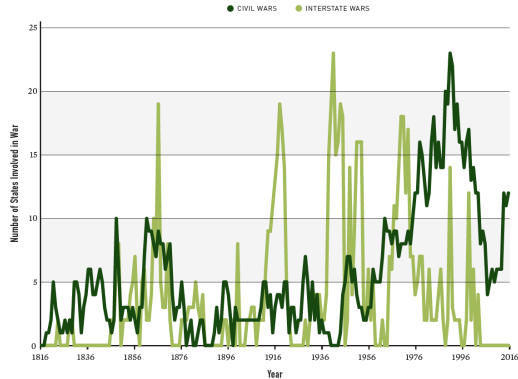
Nonstate Actor Violence

- Civil war is characterized by its participants and terrorism is a tactic used by many actors
- **Civil War:** armed conflict in which the main participants are within the same state and meets some threshold of severity
- **Terrorism:** the use of violence against noncombatant targets by individuals or nonstate groups for political ends
- Share some similarities, and terrorist attacks occur frequently in areas engulfed by civil war, but are distinct theoretical concepts



Interstate vs. Civil War

FIGURE 6.1 *Interstate and Civil Wars, 1816–2016*





Civil War & International Relations

- The explanations for civil wars are similar to the explanations for interstate war
- Additionally, civil wars are very seldom contained to single states
- International actors play a large role in how the war unfolds
- Conflict spillover is common



DRC & Internationalization of Civil War

- Following the Rwandan genocide, Hutu militants fled to Zaire to launch attacks against Tutsi-led Rwanda
- Rwanda armed Tutsis in Zaire, who allied to fight Zaire's government
- Rwanda, Angola, and Uganda intervened on behalf of the rebels to topple Zaire
- Newly-formed DRC fought against their old allies
- Overall: 25 different rebel groups backed by 8 different countries



Puzzles of Civil War

- Why do aggrieved groups rebel? When does it happen, and why don't belligerents settle before conflict?
- Why are civil wars so long?
- What can be done?



Interests: Grievances & Greed

- Civil conflict motivations are largely grouped into two categories: grievance and greed
- **Grievance:** interest incompatibility occurs because of government policies
- **Greed:** groups desire to control more of the state's economic resources
- When interests conflict, groups can attempt to leave, alter policies, or change regime



Territorial Civil War

- Territorial civil wars are incredibly common and usually fall into one of two categories
- **Separatist**: seeking to create an independent state (e.g. South Sudan, East Timor, U.S. Civil War)
- **Irredentist**: seeking to join another country (e.g. Northern Ireland, Ukraine)



Separatist Civil Wars

- Separatist civil wars are extremely bloody, but are commonly used to achieve self-determination
- Tons of groups exist that seek self-determination (e.g. Quebecois, Basques, Zanzibaris, etc.)
- Lots of challenges to confront: state's interests, heterogeneous populations, reputational costs
- Should all groups have states of their own? Where do we draw the line?



Altering Policy & Regime Change

- Individuals might have grievances about government policies
- Usually relating to political or cultural exclusion or autonomy
- Regime and control of central government also creates grievances
- Common in newly independent states like former colonies



Why Do Groups Rebel?

- Greed and/or grievance are necessary conditions for civil war, but not sufficient
- What explains why groups actually organize and arm?
- Group-level factors, country-level factors, and international features



Group-Level Explanations

- The biggest barrier to rebel group formation is the collective action problem
- Group factors that facilitate collective action are key
- Ideology, ethnicity, tribal motivations
- In the absence of these ties, groups can use material incentives or forced-recruitment



Regime Type & Civil War

- Which type of regime is most likely to incentivize civil war?
- **Autocracy:** individuals are more likely to be aggrieved and excluded
- **Democracy:** a democratic state has less repressive capacity
- **Anocracy:** lack both the avenues for participation and repressive capacity



Other Country-Level Factors

- Wealth: impoverishment leads individuals to be more desperate and poor states are usually weaker than rich countries
- Population: more populous countries have a larger recruitment pool
- Size: the larger the area, the harder to police
- Terrain: mountainous or jungle terrain makes hiding from the state easier



International Factors

- States often support rebel groups with common interests in a variety of ways
- Can also support rebels who are fighting countries with which they are fighting, leading to proxy wars
- Diaspora groups can also lend economic support to groups (i.e. Irish Americans supporting the IRA)



Example: Libya in 2011

- Group factors: tribal ties, profits from oil
- Country factors: able to 'hide' in Eastern region
- International factors: Western intervention



Civil War as Bargaining Failure

- Why do states and rebels fight rather than reach negotiated settlements?
- Rational explanations for war help to explain civil wars as well
- Commitment problems abound!



Information Problems in Civil War

- Difficult to gauge rebels capabilities
- Less pre-war diplomacy is possible, meaning that less information is shared
- However, given how long civil wars tend to last, scholars are skeptical about the importance of information problems



Commitment Problems in Civil War

- Shifting power: downturns in economy create incentives for rebels to fight now
- States cannot credibly commit to honor the terms of an agreement once the rebels disarm
- Rebel leaders cannot fully control their members, so cannot credibly commit to the cessation of violence
- These commitment problems make peace agreements that end civil wars rare and require third-party enforcement



Issue Indivisibility in Civil War

- Territory often has cultural significance
- States have incentives to claim that its entire territory is indivisible
- The chain-store paradox applied to civil conflict suggests that states have incentives to fight rather than settle to deter future challenges



Why Do Civil Wars Last So Long?





Strategies of War





Civil War Duration

- Long durations largely due the strategy of insurgency, in which small lightly-armed units engage in hit-and-run attacks
- Well suited for groups that are small and weak
- Undermines confidence in governments and seek to provoke attacks to increase recruitment pool
- Rebels can blend in with civilians, making them hard to find

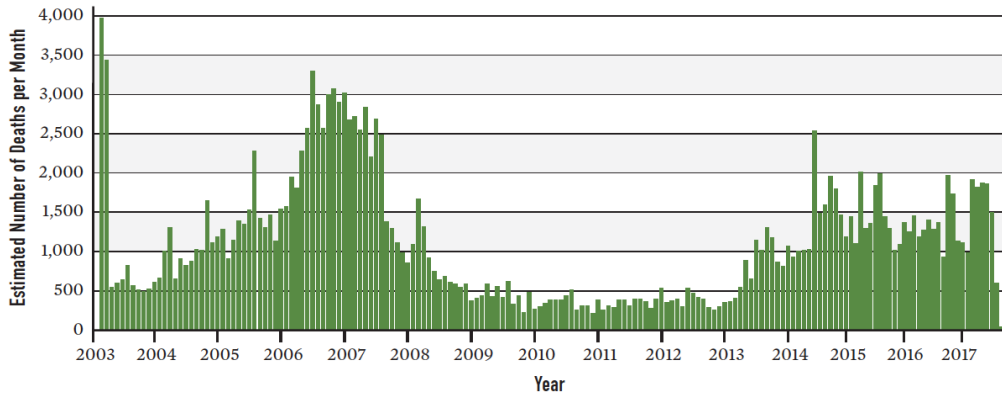


Indiscriminate Attacks & COIN

- One option for countering insurgency is indiscriminate violence
- Has evidence of working (e.g. LTTE), but can alienate civilians
- Another option is counter-insurgency (COIN); a “hearts and minds” approach
- Gives the population an interest in the government, and has been somewhat effective for the U.S.



COIN in Iraq





What Can Be Done?

- International institutions can help in a number of ways
- Intervention to impose costs on civil actors using force is tough to achieve
- Helping maintain peace following the cessation of violence has been possible
- Cutting off finances of rebel groups (e.g. Kimberly Process)
- Encouraging development of domestic institutions is best to prevent conflict, but is a tricky proposition