Predicting the Evolution of Intrastate Conflict: Evidence from Nigeria [☆]

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Abstract

Modern-day intrastate wars are complex and often involve multiple actors. In these cases, the relationship between two actors might depend not only on characteristics of each actor in the pair but also on how others actors interact across the system. Yet, most research on the drivers of intrastate violence is rooted in a country-year or government-rebel dyadic design. We argue that: (1) actions occurring in the system are not independent of one another and (2) conflict systems are affected by the entrance of new actors. Accordingly, we conceptualize intrastate conflict as a "network" problem and apply a novel network-based approach to predict the evolution of battles between armed actors in Nigeria. Our network approach yields insights about the effects of civilian victimization and key actors entering the conflict and significantly outperforms more traditional dyad-group approaches at predicting the incidence of conflict.

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