Civil War

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ABSTRACT
This study shows the problem is that researchers will continue to arrive at conclusions based on different cases, which erodes the ability to broadly apply the lessons learned from these studies. Much progress has been made, and civil war research is not the only field that faces questions about the concept under investigation.

Keywords-- Civil studies, Civil wars, Astronomers

I. INTRODUCTION
Since the end of World War II, there have been 5 times as many civil wars as interstate wars and at least 5 times as many deaths due to civil wars as due to interstate wars (Singer & Small, 1994). For various reasons, the relative peace among the members of the state system did not seem to elicit a similar effect within the members of the state system during the six decades after World War II. It is perhaps not surprising then that scholarly literature on civil wars has grown substantially—and substantively—in the 21st century. Scholars ostensibly accept that civil wars are social phenomena distinct from interstate wars, which implies that civil wars likely have causes, correlates, and outcomes that are substantively different from the causes, correlates, and outcomes of interstate wars.

II. WHAT IS CIVIL WAR?
Civil war is defined in two ways: conceptually and operationally. The latter definition is subordinate to the former in that the latter attempts to make the former definition empirically useful. As will become clear, the disagreements among scholars about operational definitions can be traced to divergent opinions about what civil wars are conceptually. It is thus necessary to commence with the conceptualization of civil war prior to discussing alternative operational definitions.
A. Civil Wars Versus Interstate Wars

B. Civil Wars versus Other Types of Internal Political Violence

III. MEASURING CIVIL WARS
In order to use civil wars as an empirical concept, not only must researchers isolate civil wars conceptually; scholars also must find ways to populate cases from which data can be collected. And for all the progress the literature has made in isolating civil wars conceptually, problems still persist in the operationalization of civil war. For example, the conflict between the Colombian government and the Marxist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) fits most of the elements of the civil war definition given in the previous section. Recent developments, though, have led FARC rebels to begin to base their operations out of neighboring Ecuador. The retreat of rebels to neighboring states (Sahleyan, 2007) is but one part of a trend in which civil wars have begun to take on international dimensions (Gleditsch, 2007). Indeed, some fighting between the Colombian government and FARC rebels has taken place in Ecuador. The problem this poses for the present conceptualization is that the FARC rebels no longer live within the recognized borders of the state they seek to depose, nor is all the fighting contained within Colombia, yet the conflict is a widely cited case of insurgency, which suggests the above definition ought to be altered some. But to relax the definition would be to begin to blur the conceptual lines between civil and interstate wars again. This case thus illustrates that endemic problems persist, which makes producing a standard set of civil wars difficult and explains why myriad sets exist. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that each set tends to favor the idiosyncrasies of its author’s research goals (Sambanis, 2004).

IV. THEORIES ABOUT CIVIL WAR
A. Greed
Proponents of the greed explanation argue that rebels fight only when there is something to be gained by...
winning and when the probability of winning is sufficiently high (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). In other words, civil wars are thought to occur because rebel groups have something economically tangible to gain by winning and have reasonable expectations of winning. The theories within this category therefore tend to focus on variables related to rebels’ opportunities.

B. Grievance

The alternative rebel-based theory of civil war incidence is based on grievances. It argues that what drives rebellion is the desire to reform or remake the extant sociopolitical order because of its apparent lack of fairness. According to this theory, rebels fight to rectify social injustices they face. The causes of rebellion, then, are the factors that contribute to perceived social injustices. For this reason, inequality—in a variety of forms—and relative deprivation are the two main foci of the grievances explanation.

C. State-Based Explanations

Much of the literature on why or how rebels fight takes for granted the state’s role in civil wars. States tend to be treated as a constant in the civil war calculus. Yet states have many components, and it is not unreasonable to build theories of civil war based on differences in these components. For instance, it could be that certain types of states tend to produce relatively high degrees of inequality or that certain state characteristics tend to yield more and greater opportunities for rebels to finance their operations. Whatever the case may be, there is little doubt that differences in state characteristics exert some effect on the incidence of civil wars. Consider the following examples of state strength and democratization.

D. Policy Implications

Understanding the nature of, and causes of, civil wars has profound implications for policy. Presumably, the better scholars understand what factors most likely contribute to civil war, the more likely it is that policies aimed at addressing those factors can be authored and implemented. For instance, consider Horowitz’s (1985) discussions about how to resolve ethnic conflict. The resolution directly addresses what Horowitz found to be an important cause of ethnic division, namely, that political fates are often tied to ethnicity. Even democracies can be rife with ethnic conflict if parties form along ethnic lines because again political fate will be directly tied to ethnicity. To resolve this dimension, Horowitz proposes that certain institutions be in place that bring about political parties that cut across rather than reinforce existing ethnic cleavages. That is, parties should be introduced that reflect sociopolitical interests that put coethnics at political odds with each other.

V. CONCLUSION

The scholarly understanding of civil wars is undoubtedly growing. Researchers are now able to wed rebels’ motivations and opportunities with theories about state characteristics and civil war onset. For the advancements to continue, however, there needs to be more focus on a standard conceptualization and subsequent operationalization of civil wars. The problem is that researchers will continue to arrive at conclusions based on different cases, which erodes the ability to broadly apply the lessons learned from these studies. Of course, much progress has been made, and civil war research is not the only field that faces questions about the concept under investigation: Astronomers argue about what makes a planet a planet; physicists still cannot agree on the correct specification of the atom; and literary scholars still debate the identity of Shakespeare. So to say that the concept of civil war needs refinement, then, is not a harsh criticism at all. Rather, it is recognition that better conceptualization and operationalization could lead to discoveries that become significant contributions to the human pursuit of progress and peace.

REFERENCES