Archaic slaughter or strategic violence?
Causes and Solutions of Ethnic Civil Wars from a Social Science Perspective

Syllabus

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Overview

Civil wars and their consequences dominate the daily headlines. Despite the interest in the subject, questions on the root causes of violence remain mostly unanswered. Instead, violence is oftentimes portrayed as being 'inexplicable' and 'blind', caused by 'greedy' elites or 'primitive tribalism'. Such simplified discourses ignore the interests of the conflicting parties involved and thus make the sustainable pacification of conflicts more difficult. Commonly proclaimed solutions to civil wars such as democratization, the fight against corruption and international interventions may thus sometimes be based on a lack of understanding of the underlying causes of a conflict and might therefore be counterproductive.

Such simplified discourses stand in contrast to the knowledge on the logics of political violence emerging from the last decades of conflict research conducted in various social sciences. Our working group at the Summer Academy 2017 in Leysin aims to tap into this knowledge with a special focus on the emergence and pacification of ethnic civil wars. After an introduction to the basic concepts and theories of political violence, the working group aims to discuss recent research on the topic, always with an eye on current conflicts and different scholarly perspectives. In addition to the substantive discussions, we also want to arouse an interest in empirical social science research.

We divide the seminar into three parts. After a first clarification of basic concepts (one session), we discuss classical theories as well as recent studies on the outbreak of civil wars (four sessions). Afterwards, we touch upon recruiting strategies and different forms of violence that are used in an instrumental manner during civil wars (two sessions). Lastly and in light of the previous sessions, we discuss the feasibility of different solutions to civil wars (three sessions).

This breakdown leads to the following sequence of topical discussions. At the beginning of the seminar, we introduce the basic concepts of (politicized) ethnicity, nationalism, and civil war. This introduces the general themes of the seminar and provides participants with a conceptual toolkit for understanding the texts and case studies discussed below.

In the next step, we will discuss structural causes of civil wars. Here, we first address the question whether armed conflicts are a concomitant of modern state formation and whether currently observed state collapse represents only an intermediate step in this process. Next, we take a look at the role of weak states that facilitate the organization of armed uprisings and address political and economic inequalities between ethnic groups as motivational factors. The following two sessions focus on prominently discussed extensions of these macro-theories. First, we discuss the influence of natural resources and the oil curse. Second, we examine the extent to which

European colonialism has contributed to state weakness and ethnic inequality, thereby constituting a root cause of today's conflicts.

The second thematic block of the seminar deals with conflict dynamics and the strategies of the warring actors. First, we discuss the individual motivations to join a rebel movement. In a second step, we discuss to what extent crimes in the form of ethnic cleansing and sexual violence are used in an instrumental manner.

We dedicate the last three sessions to the sustainable pacification of civil wars. In particular, we address strategies of ethnic power sharing, regional autonomy or even secession, as well as democratization. The political inclusion of ethnic elites has the potential to reduce inequalities between groups, but carries the risk of cementing political identities. Regional autonomy allows for a better representation of interests and local self-determination, but often leads to calls for complete independence. A secession at first sight solves the root causes of many civil wars, but often entails new conflicts in a young and thus weakly institutionalized state. Democratization and elections enable a wider population to hold its politicians and elites accountable. However, elections alone do not guarantee a fair distribution of political power and economic resources. In some cases, election campaigns culminate in ethnic mobilization and violence.

Organization of the seminar

From our own experience as participants of various summer academies, we know that an intensive and relatively free discussion of the readings by participants and lecturers is most productive for all. We therefore see our role above all in providing the conceptual framework that guides through the seminar, as well as in moderating the joint discussion and, whenever helpful, briefly adding topical inputs. The bibliography below contains the readings for each session that serve as the main input to our discussions. In order to facilitate the start of the discussion, from the second session onwards, two participants will each present one text and relate it to a self-chosen conflict example. To ensure that the interplay between presentations and free discussion runs smoothly, we expect all participants to engage with the texts before each session.

Presentations

Language: German

Extent: 10 to 15 minutes

Contents: Combine the core insights from the text with a self-chosen example

Choice of topics: Each participant sends us a preference order of the three texts that he/she would like to present. We then divide the texts so that as many preferences as possible are taken into account.

Some of the texts in the bibliography are demanding in terms of content and/or methodology. Please do not be discouraged when preparing for your presentation as well as when reading the other texts. We do not expect a literal summary of each detail or a sound methodological critique of empirical results. Instead, you should aim for identifying the core messages and discuss their consistency and relevance with examples. All (technical) aids are allowed and we have a beamer, projectors, etc.

The following questions can guide your reading of the texts:

- What is the core issue of the text? Which research question does it try to answer?
- Which basic concepts does the author define and/or use (for example, democracy, opportunity cost, ethnic inequality ...)?
- What theoretical argument does the text make? What are the core hypotheses?
- Which empirical data and methods are used to test the plausibility of the theoretical argument?
- What is the relevance of the text for the current or historical conflict examples you chose?
- Do you find the text convincing? What are its strengths and weaknesses?

Literature

1.) Concepts: Ethnicity, nationalism, and civil war (no presentation)

Weber, M. (2002). *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie [5. Auflage]*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Gellner, E. (1983). *Nations and Nationalism.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Melander, E., Pettersson, T. & Themner, L. (2016). Organized violence, 1989-2015. *Journal of Peace Research, 53*(5), 727-742.

2.) State building and conflict

Tilly, C. (1985). War making and state making as organized crime. In: Evans, P., Rueschemeyer, D. & Skocpol, T. (eds.). (1985). Bringing the State Back. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Weber, E. (1976). *Peasants into Frenchmen: The modernization of rural France, 1870-1914*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Olson, M. (1993). Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development. *American Political Science Review*, *87*(03), 567-576.

Additional

Sanchez de la Sierra, R. (2014). On the origin of states: stationary bandits and taxation in Eastern Congo. *Unpublished working paper*.

3.) Macro theories of the causes of civil war

Fearon, J. D. & Laitin, D. D. (2003). Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War. *American Political Science Review, 97*(1), 75-90.

Cederman, L.-E., Gleditsch, K. S. & Buhaug, H. (2013). *Inequality, Grievances, and Civil War.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

4.) The oil curse

Ross, M. L. (2015). What Have We Learned about the Resource Curse? *Annual Review of Political Science, 18(2015),* 239-259.

Humphreys, M. (2005). Natural resources, conflict, and conflict resolution: Uncovering the mechanisms. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *49*(4), 508-537.

Additional

Hunziker, P., & Cederman, L. E. (2017). No extraction without representation: The ethno-regional oil curse and secessionist conflict. *Journal of Peace Research*, *54*(3), 365-381.

5.) Colonialism and conflict

Michalopoulos, S., & Papaioannou, E. (2016). The long-run effects of the scramble for Africa. *American Economic Review*, *106*(7), 1802-48.

Wucherpfennig, J., Hunziker, P., & Cederman, L. E. (2016). Who inherits the state? Colonial rule and postcolonial conflict. *American Journal of Political Science*, *60*(4), 882-898.

Additional

Roessler, P., Pengl, Y., Titlow, K., Marty, R. & van der Walle, N. (2016). The Empty Panaroma: Colonial Origins of Spatial Inequality in Africa. *Unpublished working paper.*

6.) Individual participation in violence

Blattman, C., & Annan, J. (2016). Can Employment Reduce Lawlessness and Rebellion? A Field Experiment with High-Risk Men in a Fragile State. *The American Political Science Review*, *110*(1), 1.

Wood, E. J. (2003). *Insurgent collective action and civil war in El Salvador*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

7.) The repertoire of violence in civil war

Cohen, D. K. (2013). Explaining rape during civil war: Cross-national evidence (1980– 2009). *American Political Science Review, 107*(03), 461-477.

Kocher, M. A., Pepinsky, T. B., & Kalyvas, S. N. (2011). Aerial bombing and counterinsurgency in the Vietnam War. *American Journal of Political Science*, *55*(2), 201- 218.

Additional

Lyall, J. (2009). Does indiscriminate violence incite insurgent attacks? Evidence from Chechnya. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 53*(3), 331-362.

Weidmann, N. B. (2011). Violence "from above" or "from below"? The Role of Ethnicity in Bosnia's Civil War. *The Journal of Politics*, *73*(04), 1178-1190.

8.) Solutions: Power sharing

Roessler, P., & Ohls, D. (2015). The Societal Orignins of Powersharing: Ethnic Geography, Threat Capabilities and Horizontal Accountability in Weak States. Unpublished working paper.

Rothchild, D., & Roeder, P. G. (2005). Dilemmas of state-building in divided societies. In: Rothchild, D. & Roeder, P. G. (eds.). (2005). *Sustainable peace: power and democracy after civil wars*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

9.) Solutions: Regional autonomy or even secession?

Kaufmann, C. (1996). Possible and impossible solutions to ethnic civil wars. *International security*, *20*(4), 136-175.

Sambanis, N., & Schulhofer-Wohl, J. (2009). What's in a line? Is partition a solution to civil war? *International Security*, *34*(2), 82-118.

Additional

Cederman, L. E., Hug, S., Schädel, A., & Wucherpfennig, J. (2015). Territorial autonomy in the shadow of conflict: Too little, too late? *American Political Science Review*, *109*(02), 354- 370.

10.) Solutions: Democratization and elections

Burgess, R., Jedwab, R., Miguel, E., & Morjaria, A. (2015). The value of democracy: evidence from road building in Kenya. *The American Economic Review*, *105*(6), 1817-1851.

Mansfield, E. D., & Snyder, J. (2002). Democratic transitions, institutional strength, and war. *International Organization*, *56*(02), 297-337.