Actor Fragmentation and Civil War Bargaining: How Internal Divisions Generate Civil Conflict

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It is well-established that wars within states are much more common than wars between them. When the cold war ended, 56 civil wars were ongoing, an additional 56 civil wars have begun since then.[1] As they have become more common and norms of sovereignty have eroded, the international community has devoted substantial attention to the resolution of these conflicts. Yet, even when civil wars have been "settled," they often have continued potential for conflict. Nearly half of civil wars see violent conflict surrounding the same issue at a later date.

Despite the prevalence of civil conflict, many disputes between states and dissidents do not result in war—rather, many remain completely non-violent or see only a limited use of militant political strategies. The Arab Spring of 2011 illustrates how civil discontent that centered over largely the same issues (economic stagnation and lack of political freedoms) emerged as violent civil war in some places, but mass civil disobedience in others. Likewise, many disputes over national self-determination (which constitute the most common reason for civil war in the past 20 years)[2] remain non-violent, or entail only a limited use of violence. Only about 45% of disputes between states and self-determination movements have experienced civil war since 1955.[3] Moreover, among the disputes that do escalate to civil war, violent challengers often begin as part of non-violent social movements attempting to gain greater local power. These disputes often vacillate between non-violent and violent, with periods of little violence even in cases such as Northern Ireland or the

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[1] Based on the Uppsala Armed Conflict Dataset (Gleditsch et al 2002). See Themnér and Wallensteen (2011) on recent trends in war.

[2] As a percent of wars, separatist disputes have overtaken international (state-to-state) war, wars based on ideology, and civil wars where actors vie for control of a state.

[3] Based on a comprehensive list of these disputes from the Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM) (Marshall and Gurr 2003).

Basques in Spain. What then explains why some disputes erupt into war while others do not?

A dominant theoretical approach to understanding the outbreak of civil war is rooted in the bargaining theory of conflict. Bargaining approaches to civil conflict focus on a set of actors (usually two) attempting to reach an agreement that makes each actor better off than fighting, and see their inability to do so as leading to violent conflict. While not the only way to conceptualize civil war onset, the bargaining framework has led us to a better understanding of two key causes of conflict – uncertainty about viable settlements due to a lack of information and an inability to make credible commitments – that have several advantages over other approaches. First, both mechanisms (uncertainty and credibility concerns) allow actors to be self-interested without being pro-conflict or irrational. Second, a strategic bargaining approach focuses our attention on the interaction between actors, rather than looking just at actor characteristics as determinants of their own behavior.

Bargaining approaches, however, are often limited by the assumption scholars make that actors engaged in the bargaining process are unitary. This assumption is made for parsimony, and few would argue that this is empirically true.[4] The unitary actor assumption in the more recent generation of civil war studies has persisted in large part because of the lack of data on the internal characteristics and complexity of the actors. Opening up the unitary actor assumption forces us to look beyond "rebel groups" and "states" as the totality of the actors involved in a dispute. Many civil conflicts involve both combatants (sometimes more than two) and organized non-combatants who try to influence the dispute and these organizations operate mostly on their own in the larger bargain. Internal divisions within the opposition have important consequences for bargaining.[5]

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[4] A number of scholars have examined the inner working of rebels in specific cases. See Kalyvas (2006), King (2004), Pearlman (2008/2009), Stedman (1997), Weinstein (2007), and Wood (2003).

[5] The "spoiler" literature has addressed the role of internal dynamics of actors in conflict most

In this paper, I build on the bargaining and conflict literature to explain how internal divisions in opposition movements increase the chance of conflict with the state. Internal divisions in opposition movements exacerbate information problems and increase uncertainty for states about what concessions might satisfy the movements. Moreover, because factions in opposition movements are typically not connected through political institutions that would regulate their interaction with each other and the state, there are substantial credible commitment problems for ex ante settlement of disputes. Thus, divisions within opposition movements exacerbate information and credibility problems we know to be associated with bargaining failure.

Bargaining theories are fundamentally dyadic, but most quantitative analyses examine the onset of civil war at the country-year level.[6] In this article, I look at variation in civil war onset between pairs of states and opposition movements, allowing these movements to vary in the extent to which they are cohesive or internally divided. In this way, I can examine how the characteristics of actors that could potentially engage in civil war affect whether or not we see conflict, rather than just examining the types of states that are prone to civil war.

This article, then, contributes to our understanding of the determinants of civil war in two ways. First, following on recent works, I examine civil war onset dyadically, by looking at a set of

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clearly, though these works typically center on the conflict resolution phase (Stedman 1997). Yet internal divisions in these movements play a role in the processes that lead to conflict, not just in preventing settlement once conflict has occurred. Work on outbidding (Horowitz 1985, Bloom 2005) does treat organizational competition as driving escalatory behavior, though these works look more broadly at competition in societies with multiple movements challenging the state.

[6] Several recent works have begun to address civil war onset as dyadic (see Lemke (2008), Cederman et al (2011), and Cederman et al (2009)).

disputes and examining whether and when these disputes escalate to civil war. Second, I abandon the unitary actor assumption and examine how variation in the internal structure of one type of actors—the non-state opposition movement—affects whether or not they engage in civil war with their host states. A number of existing works have moved in this direction by examining multiple actors in conflict with the state (Cunningham 2006, Findley and Rudolf forthcoming), and the role that connections between non-state actors plays in conflict processes (Atlas and Licklider 1999, Cunningham 2011, Bapat and Bond 2012, Nilsson 2008 and 2010, Cunningham et al 2012, Bakke et al. 2012, Christia n.d., Sambanis and Zinn n.d.). Moreover, theories based on reputation and precedent (such at Toft 2003 and Walter 2009a) examine fragmentation within states, by arguing that states facing more potential separatist movements will be more likely to fight these movements.

This study moves the literature forward by exploring fragmentation of opposition movements beyond the existence of multiple rebel groups or many potential disputes in the same state. Previous studies typically focus on the number of rebel groups, cooperation or conflict between then, or splintering of rebels.[7] As such, these studies can only speak to the role of fragmentation in ongoing conflict.[8] Opposition movements, however, are more than the sum of armed groups working towards a similar cause (or sometimes just fighting over the same issue). Here, I explore fragmentation beyond armed actors, capturing the diverse character that opposition movements can take. Moreover, looking beyond rebel groups as the constituent unit of non-state actors allows me

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[7] Findlay and Rudolff (forthcoming) use a computational model, but focus on the process of fragmentation, rather than fragmentation as a characteristic of the opposition.

[8] Exceptions are Cunningham (2011), which examines the effect of fragmentation of self-determination movements on governmental accommodation, and Cunningham et al. (2012), which shows that fragmentation is associated with increased violence against the state and co-ethnics.

to focus on the role of fragmentation in the outbreak of civil war, which cannot be studied with a focus on rebels alone. Likewise, examining fragmentation of opposition movements, rather than the fragmentation in the state as a whole (such as the number, or potential number of opposition movements in the state), allows for examining how the characteristics of actors affect the propensity for civil war.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, I explain the outbreak of conflict as bargaining failure and elaborate how internal divisions in opposition movements affect the credibility of opposition factions and the level of uncertainty about what kind of settlement can resolve their dispute with the state. The central hypothesis is that more fragmented opposition movements will be more likely to engage in civil war. Following that, I provide empirical tests of this expectation on a set of disputes over self-determination, using detailed data on the structure of self-determination movements over time. The data on the internal structure of SD movements, including how many factions are making demands over self-determination at any point in time, allows me to move beyond the unitary actor assumption. I find that more fragmented SD movements are much more likely to see civil war begin and to be engaged in civil conflict. I conclude by discussing what the analysis tells us about civil war more broadly and suggesting implications for the behavior of states and other types of internally divided actors as well.

Conflict as bargaining failure

Disputes between states and opposition movements revolve around disagreement over some issue or set of issues. The issues under dispute often relates to the structure of governance (such as control of the government or regime type, or the devolution of power to a sub-state level). The specific demands made by opposition movements vary. For example, the Afar in Ethiopia generally seek greater autonomy, while the Arakan in Myanmar generally demand either autonomy or

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independence, and the Syrian opposition in 2011 seeks, at a minimum, the end of the Assad regime. In the presence of opposition demands, we can generally assume that states prefer to retain as much political power as possible. As such, these disputes essentially revolve around the question of power—with states preferring to maintain power and oppositions seeking to wrest it from the government entirely or transfer some power to other actors.

When states and opposition movements are unable to manage these disputes short of violence, they face costly, often difficult to resolve, wars. States bear direct costs of fighting by expending resources and incurring casualties. Civil wars also have lasting negative consequences for the state's economy. Additionally, violent conflict typically occurs in the territory occupied by the opposition, leading to loss of life, destruction of infrastructure, and other costs.

In attempts to resolve these disputes, representatives of opposition movements and state governments bargain. This bargaining process can be explicit and formal (carried out through official negotiations) or informal. In many instances, states and opposition movements have successfully negotiated compromises that avoid escalation to militancy. For example, though several factions have resorted to violence in Georgia (including those representing the South Ossetians and Abkhazians) others, such as the Adzhar factions, have successfully avoided conflict though negotiated compromise with the state.[9] Bargaining breaks down when the state is unable or unwilling to satisfy the demands of the opposition.

Bargaining theory explains when and why bargaining failure is likely to happen.[10] This

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[9] The Adzhar region has gained substantial economic and political autonomy from Georgia.

[10] Bargaining approaches are not the only way to understand civil war. Other influential approaches include those focused on grievances (including horizontal inequalities) (Gurr 1970, Cederman et al 2011, Østby 2008), political opportunity (Collier and Hoeffler 2004), and the microfoundations of

approach to civil war sees violence as the result of two or more actors failing to resolve their dispute before fighting occurs.[11] We assume that disputes are over some issue space and that actors choose to fight only when they believe they can achieve a better outcome through fighting than through negotiating a compromise deal. Because fighting is costly for both states and oppositions, these disputes can always be resolved if the actors know with perfect information what they could achieve by fighting (which determines the minimum deal they should settle for), if the issues under dispute are divisible, and if the actors can commit credibly to abide by a settlement into the future (Fearon 1995, Powell 2006).

In this bargaining framework, each side has an "ideal point," which is its preferred policy. The point at which either side will fight is set by its relative capabilities and resolve, as well as the costs it will incur by fighting. This outcome, minus the actual costs of fighting, defines the point at which an actor prefers to fight rather than strike a compromise deal (i.e. the actor's "reversion point"). Because fighting is costly for states and oppositions, each should be able to find a compromise acceptable if it is realistic about the outcome of fighting.

The difficulty in reaching an agreement that prevents fighting is that typically neither states nor the opposition know with certainty the capabilities and resolve of their opponent, and both sides have incentives to misrepresent this information to get a better deal though negotiations. Moreover,

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mobilization (Olson 1971, Scott 1975, Peterson 2001). One of the advantages of the bargaining approach is that it clarifies the conditions under which discontent will manifest into armed conflict, and addresses the ability and willingness of states to accommodate dissidents.

[11] See Walter (2009b) for a review of the literature on bargaining failure and civil war. See also Blattman and Miguel (2010) for a summary of different approaches to the study of civil war, where they make an appeal for moving beyond the unitary actor assumption in civil war studies.

even if both sides find a compromise they can agree to, concerns about credible commitments by the state not to repress the opposition in the future, and by the opposition not to re-launch their challenge later on, can stymie a bargain.[12] Either side may lack credibility because of the time inconsistency problem – that is, what is in the actors' interest today may not be so in the future. Both sides may want to agree to a settlement that works today, but fear that their opponent will have incentives to challenge them again in the future when the balance of power between them has shifted. Conflict begins when attempts to resolve a disagreement through bargaining fail.

Divisions within the opposition

A key limitation in the application of this bargaining approach for understanding civil war has been the dominance of the assumption that the actors involved are unitary. This assumption may be appropriate when applied to state-to-state bargaining, since we may be able to reasonably assume that states will act as unitary in the actual bargaining process, though divisions in states can create constraints for them (Schelling 1960, Putnam 1988).[13] Yet opposition movements are, for the most part, not like states in this regard, because they typically comprise multiple factions that can

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[12] Another challenge to bargaining success is issue indivisibility. While Fearon (1995) suggests that this can be overcome by side payments and Powell (2006) argues that issue indivisibility is really a type of commitment problem, Toft (2006) argues that attachment to things like territory can lead to indivisibility and therefore to violence.

[13] See also Milner (1997) and Tarar (2001). These works demonstrate that domestic politics generates a set of constraints and opportunities for the larger international bargaining game. This approach, however, treats bargaining as a two-level game which, while likely appropriate for states, is not likely to capture the dynamics of decision-making in opposition movements.

and do act independently of one another in their dealing with the state.[14]

Civil wars typically break out over the issues of territory or government, and we can conceptualize opposition movements as a set of non-state actors engaged in dissent related to either of these issues.[15] A fragmented, or internally divided, opposition is a movement that includes multiple organizations (which I call factions) all of which pursue the same basic goal, such as secession or regime change. Factions have independent leadership from one another, but this does not preclude cooperation. An essential part of the conceptualization of fragmented opposition is that factions within an opposition are pursuing similar goals on behalf of the same population. The anti-apartheid movement in South Africa illustrates such fragmentation. The movement was dominated by the African National Congress, but also included other factions such as the Pan African Congress, all of which sought to win civil and political rights for blacks in South Africa. Fragmented oppositions, then, include multiple factions operating at the same time and in pursuit of a common goal. What is excluded from this are multiple oppositions seeking different goals, or working on behalf of different people (such as the existence of many nationalist movements in the same state which all seek self-determination for their own population).

The unitary actor assumption is problematic in this context because the number and behavior of factions within opposition movements affects the ability of the opposition and a state to reach agreements that prevent violent conflicts. Opposition movements with more internal divisions create greater information and credibility problems, leading to more frequent bargaining breakdown

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[14] The unitary actor assumption may also be inappropriate for weak states where, for example, the military may be able to act independently of government.

[15] This is not to say that there are only two issues over which civil war if fought, or that there are only two types of opposition movements, but that these are the most common.

and violent conflict. In the next section, I discuss how internal divisions affect bargaining.

How divisions affect bargaining between states and opposition movements

Information problems and uncertainty

In existing approaches to bargaining and conflict—where both sides are assumed to be unitary—information problems arise because each side has private information about its own capabilities and resolve and incentives to misrepresent this information (Fearon 1995). Without this information, either side can overestimate what it could get by fighting and thus refuse a bargained settlement that more accurately reflects what it could hope to achieve if war did occur.

Internal divisions in opposition movements exacerbate this information problem because, although opposition factions represent the same population and make collective demands on behalf of them, constituent factions typically can act independently of one another. In internally divided opposition movements, there are multiple factions making disparate claims (i.e. providing different information) about what the population they represent wants and the extent to which these demands are supported by that population base. Thus, divided opposition movements provide the state with multiple, competing, views of what the movement's reversion point is.

In order to strike a deal with the opposition that prevents fighting, states are trying to assess the movement's overall reversion point. States do this by observing the behavior of factions within the opposition and, at times, by negotiating directly with some or all opposition factions.[16] Different factions often have different ideal points. For example, in disputes over self-determination, it is common for some factions to prefer autonomy while others seek independence. Yet, because each

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[16] See Walter (2006) on how non-state challengers look at the past behavior of their opponent to try to predict the chance of settlement.

opposition faction has an incentive to overstate its demands, capabilities and resolve, it is extremely difficult for states to discern the opposition movement's reversion point.

Even if states can assess the preferences of the opposition with some accuracy (such as through a referendum), the distribution of capabilities across factions that represent those preferences will determine what the movement will settle. For example, if 20% of the opposition demands total reform of the state government, but a well-financed and highly armed faction represents them, this movement will have a different reversion point than a movement where the most militant elements seek more limited reform.[17] More internal factions make determining the preferences and capabilities of the movement more difficult for the state because each faction has an incentive to misrepresent its preferences and capabilities in an effort to get concessions from the state closer to its ideal point. Thus, in order to determine the opposition's reversion point, states need to have information about both the preferences and capabilities of each faction, as well as their willingness to fight together or apart. Moreover, competition between opposition factions can alter what the movement as a whole would settle for at any given time. Because these organizations draw from the same base of support, they compete for supporters and shifts in power among them can alter the movement's reversion point. This creates a considerable challenge for states in assessing what a divided opposition movement will settle for and when it will fight.

All this leads to a great deal of uncertainty over potential settlements for both states and opposition factions. Internally divided oppositions create uncertainty for the state over their reversion points in two ways – unclear capabilities and unclear preferences. This means that

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[17] The reservation point is determined by the expected utility of an actor. This is defined as the value the actor places on the outcome it could impose by force, multiplied by the probability of victory, minus the costs of fighting.

bargaining between states and opposition movements can fail not only because they do not know each other's capabilities, but because the state does not know the preferences of the movement with certainty, and the intersection of preferences and capabilities determines the force the opposition can bring to bear on the state. Moreover, the dynamic competition and potential for independent action by opposition factions means that the reversion point can shift quickly.

Credibility problems

The internal characteristics of opposition movements also affect their ability to make credible commitments that can prevent the outbreak of conflict. It is difficult for opposition factions to make credible promises about the behavior of other factions in the future, or about their ability to reign in factions with more extreme demands because opposition factions can act independently of one another. Empirically, few opposition factions appear to exercise a large degree of authority over other factions claiming to represent the same interests of the same set of individuals. For example, the extent to which the Palestinian Liberation Organization can exercise authority over other factions like Hamas is questionable despite the widespread recognition of the PLO as a legitimate representative of Palestinians both inside and outside Palestine at various times.

Both the capability and legitimacy of a particular faction to exert authority over others is difficult for states to assess. This exacerbates credibility concerns because it is unclear whether any specific faction within the opposition can "deliver" its movement and implement the terms of any agreement made with the state. There are a number of reasons that some opposition factions might resist a particular compromise deal even if it involved substantial concessions. Some opposition factions may have greater influence over politics by resisting settlement than transitioning to a new

arrangement.[18] Opposition factions that negotiate a deal with the state can try to persuade or force other factions to comply once it has been made.[19] However, the state and other opposition factions will be uncertain whether they can achieve compliance with a new deal.

Moreover, many opposition movements also lack a clear and uncontested leader in any faction that can make a commitment about the future behavior of all factions in the movement. Stedman (1997) sees the possibility of leadership change as potentially positive if the leader of a spoiler faction is replaced by a less hard line individual. Yet, the potential for quick leadership change means that opposition factions, and thus the larger opposition movement, may not have the internal continuity necessary to make longer-term commitments about future behavior. This can occur two ways. First, competition among opposition factions can result in particular factions dominating others at different times. This can happen through cooperation among factions, or through intimidation and coercion among factions. Second, individual opposition factions do not typically have consistent and stable processes for selecting leaders. Problems of succession and struggles for power within factions can create unstable leadership in opposition factions.

In sum, internal divisions in opposition movements affect the two primary mechanisms leading to bargaining failure and, eventually, conflict in the bargaining approach to understanding war. Multiple factions in opposition movements create acute information problems that increase uncertainty about what the movements would settle for and exacerbate commitment problems for opposition factions.

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[18] See Pearlman (2008/2009) on the incentives for spoiler (or peace-breaking) behavior.

[19] This can be done by offering compensation, eliminating opposition factions, or by decreasing their strength to the point that they cannot prevent agreement implementation on their own.

When will we observe civil wars?

While the bargaining process is interactive, influenced by both actors, I focus here on the characteristics of the opposition, holding the state constant. Ceteris parbius, divided oppositions are more likely to cause information and commitment problems, and thus we should expect dyads with fragmented oppositions to have more frequent bargaining breakdown. Abandoning the unitary actor assumption and examining the effect of internal divisions in opposition movements leads to two central predictions about civil war. First, because of the acute information and credibility problems created by internal divisions in these movements, bargaining failure will be more likely, and consequently civil wars will be more likely to begin when movements are more divided.

Hypothesis 1: Opposition movements with more internal divisions are more likely to see the onset of civil war with their host states.

Second, if more opposition factions create credibility and information problems that prevent ex ante settlement, they are likely to prevent bargains during fighting as well. This suggests that not only will civil wars be more likely to begin, but that disputes characterized by fragmented opposition will be more likely to be in civil war at any given point in time than disputes characterized by more coherent oppositions.

Hypothesis 2: Opposition movements with more internal divisions are more likely to be involved in civil war with their host state.

Evaluating this approach in disputes over self-determination

Are disputes between states and more divided opposition movements more likely to experience civil war? Assessing this requires detailed data on the degree of internal divisions in opposition movements before conflict has broken out. To date, these data have not existed. In fact, it is likely that that these movements have continued to be treated as unitary in quantitative studies

of civil war, not because we believe that they are in fact unitary, but because we have lacked the data to address this empirically.

I test Hypotheses 1 and 2 using new data on the number of factions on a yearly basis for all opposition movements focused on achieving national self-determination from 1960 to 2005. I focus my analysis on disputes over self-determination (SD) because they offer a convenient (and substantively important) testing ground. Movements for self-determination mobilize around existing collective identity, despite particular grievances these movements may have. As such, I can identify factions representing the self-determination movement in the absence of either mass mobilization or, importantly, the outbreak of conflict. This allows me to identify the degree of fragmentation of the opposition prior to conflict, and with greater certainty that I have included the relevant factions than in other cases of rebellion (such as those focused on regime change).

To identify the population of SD movements, I used the CICDM Peace and Conflict Report (Marshall and Gurr 2003), which lists 146 movements (in 77 countries) seeking greater self-determination from their host states, approximately half of which have experienced civil war at some point in time.[20] These movements span all regions of the world, and occur in wealthy and relativity

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[20] CICDM's list of SD movements originates from the Minorities At Risk (MAR) project. Because the MAR project includes "politically active ethnic groups," there is some potential bias in which movements are included in this study. By relying on this list, my study speaks most directly to the propensity of politicized ethnically identified movements to end up in civil war. Yet, because opposition movements are self-identifying (i.e. they demand publically some change from their government), we can assume that some degree of political activism would be required for any identification of an opposition movement. Moreover, movements such as the Flemish in Belgium (which has mild grievances compared to many movements in the study) are included, suggesting that

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poor countries. Both the number of SD movements, and the number of states facing them, has increased steadily over time.[21] Table 1 shows the global distribution of self-determination movements and civil wars onsets over self-determination.

Table 1 about here

Within this set of SD movements, I identify factions actively making demands over self-determination in every year for each movement. I define a SD faction as an organization that represents the SD movement and makes demands related to self-governance. This broad definition allows me to include a variety of different types of factions (such as social pressure organizations, political parties, and armed militants). By examining many types of factions, I can capture with greater precision the fragmentation of the movement as a whole and how this varies over time without restricting this evaluation contingent on the use of certain types of tactics.

In creating this dataset, I identified 1188 factions representing their respective SD movements that make demands related to the status of the movement (such as greater autonomy, independence, or union with another state). Empirical examples of SD factions include the Socialist Forces Front in Algeria, who demand cultural autonomy for the Berbers, the Revolutionary Front for East Timor (FRETILIN), who demanded independence for East Timor from Indonesia, and Heimatbund, who demand independence from Italy for South Tyrol or reunion with Austria. I used both aggregated information (including the MAR project and the Uppsala Conflict Database) and the news sources Lexis Nexis Academic (which includes thousands of news papers) and Keesing Record of World Events to collect the data. Factions were identified using search terms focused on

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the list includes not just severely aggrieved populations.

[21] The prevalence of SD movements has increased markedly after the end of the Cold War, though scholars disagree on the influence of its end on nationalism (See Ayres 2000 and Ellingsen 2000).

the dispute rather than specific well-known factions operating in the dispute. Inclusion in the dataset does not require that factions use violence or be engaged in a movement for self-determination that has included the use of violence by any factions. The Supplementary Information includes a detailed description of the coding procedures.

An initial look at trends in SD movement structure shows that the assumption that these movements are unitary is empirically wrong the vast majority of the time. Over 90% of the SD movements in the sample are characterized by one or more internal divisions at some point during the dispute. Moreover, over 85% of these SD movements experience changes in the number of internal factions over time. For example, the Tuaregs in Niger were represented by the Liberation Front of Air and Azawad in the early 1990s. The Coordinated Armed Resistance (CRA) mobilized in 1992 and 1993, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Sahara mobilized to push for self-determination from 1994 to 1997. Divided movements also exhibit a high degree of variation in the extent to which they are internally divided. The average number of internal factions within a movement over the length of the observation ranges from 1 to 16.[22] Across all observations in the study, SD movements are unitary in about 30% of the dyad-years. Among the observation with divided SD movements, there is a great deal of variation. Table 2 shows the frequency for different values on the number of factions for all SD movements.

Table 2 about here

I have argued here that the relationships between factions in opposition movements are relatively unstructured, that these factions can operate on their own. Yet, this does not imply that there are no connections between factions, and empirically we see this in SD disputes. Cunningham at al (2009) identify "political wings" in about 40% of rebel groups. Moreover, there are numerous

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[22] The Kashmiri Muslims in India have the highest average number of divisions.

reports of short-term alliances between rebel groups, some of which lead to the merging of factions. Yet, it is not clear the extent to which these connections will constrain factions in either their negotiations with the state or their choice to pursue violence and this is a key area for further research.[23]

To test whether the assumption that opposition movements are always unitary actually limits our understanding of conflict, I examine the effect of this fragmentation of SD movements on civil war. Using these data on internal divisions in SD movements I construct a logged count variable of the number of SD factions active in each year of a dispute because the effect of an additional faction when movements are unitary or slightly divided should not be the same as that of an additional faction in a highly divided movement. The logged SD factions variable ranges from 0 to 3.66, with a mean of 0.87.

Are divided self-determination movements more likely to get into civil war?

If internal divisions in opposition movements create more uncertainty for states and opposition factions, and if divided oppositions have more difficulty making their commitments credible, than a higher number of internal factions in SD movements should be associated with a greater probability of civil war. To evaluate this prediction, I employ multivariate logit models of civil war onset and incidence and cluster the standard errors on the SD movement/state dyad. The unit of analysis is state-SD movement dyad years, covering all years where the SD movement made demands related to self-determination. Civil war onset is coded using the Uppsala Conflict Data Project (UCDP)/Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) Armed Conflict Dataset (Gleditsch et. al. 2002). A civil war onset occurs when at least 25 battle deaths occur in a state-SD movement dyad in

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[23] See Bakke et al. (2012) on the role of the connection between factions.

a given year and when at least two years of peace have occurred prior to that year. Civil war incidence is every year where the conflict reached 25 battle deaths.

One of the difficulties of this kind of analysis is that the outbreak on civil war is not likely to be independent of previous conflicts in the same state-SD movement dyad. To deal with temporal dependence of recurrent conflict, the data is structured as a binary time-series cross-section, and I include a measure of the number of years since a civil war (onset or incidence) with cubic splines (Beck, Katz, and Tucker 1998).[24] Thus, the analysis accounts for the amount of time since the last civil conflict broke out or was active. There are 104 onsets in the sample of 3898 dyad years. Excluding the years with ongoing civil war in the dyad (655 years), the sample is 3257 dyad years.[25] There are 760 years of civil war in the data set.

In the models presented here, I control for factors likely to influence both the extent of division in the SD movement and the onset of civil war. These include previous concessions to the movement, whether the host state is a democracy, and whether the movement has geographically close kin. Concessions to SD movements suggest that the state is actively attempting to manage the SD movement's demands and may decrease the chance of an armed challenge. In addition, concessions may satisfy some factions' demands and lead them to exit the dispute. Open competition in democratic states and the norm of respecting citizen demands could lead to SD movements having more factions. Additionally, democracies are generally expected to be less likely to experience civil war.[26] Movements with kin in an adjoining state may be more likely to form

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[24] Using time since civil war in the civil war onset model returns similar finds to those in Table 3.

[25] Excluding years with ongoing civil war in the dyad is appropriate because onset cannot occur in these years (see Fearon and Laitin 2003 and Hegre and Sambanis 2006).

[26] There are a number of potential reasons that democracies may be less likely to experience civil

factions linked to these kin that seek to influence politics in their homeland. The existence of a

neighboring state with ethnic kin may also affect the state's or movement's willingness to use force

(Jenne 2006).[27] Table 3 reports the results of my analyses of civil war onset and civil war incidence.

Table 3 about here

As predicted in Hypothesis 1, the coefficient on the logged SD movement factions variable

in model 1 is positive and significant. The more divided SD movements are in a given year, the more

likely a civil war onset is. Previous concessions to the movement and the country being a democracy

both reduce the chance of civil war, while the existence of kin in a neighboring state increases it.

The substantive effect of divisions in SD movements is large. Moving from the minimum to

maximum values of the logged SD factions variable leads to a 23% increase in the probability of civil

war onset in a year. This is much larger than the effect of previous concessions or being a

democracy (both of which lead to an about two percent decrease in the chance civil war will begin in

a given year) or having kin nearby (which leads to a two percent increase in the chance of war).[28]

The results in model 2 show support for Hypothesis 2—SD movements with more internal

divisions are not only more likely to see the onset of civil war, but are more likely to be engaged in

civil war in any given year. This suggests that bargaining is more difficult between states and divided

SD movements both before and during civil war. Dyads where the country is a democracy are less

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war. They are less likely to generate high levels of grievance through repression, have large

systematic inequalities, and reside in relatively peaceful democratic neighborhoods. Democracies are

coded as countries with a Polity 2 score greater than six (Marshall and Jaggers 2000).

[27] This is coded from MAR using *numsegx*.

[28] All predicted probabilities are calculated using CLARIFY and holding all other variable at their

mean, median, or mode (King, Tomz and Wittenberg, 2000).

likely to see civil war in any given year. The effect of increasing divisions is substantively quite large—moving from the minimum to maximum values on the logged SD factions variable leads to a 37% increase in the likelihood that a SD movement will be in civil war in a given year. The difference in probability of civil war in any given year for democracies verses non-democracies is about a 1.5% decrease.

Figure 1 about here

Figure 1 shows a steady increase in the probabilities of civil war onset and incidence as the number of internal factions increases.[29] The majority of disputes that are characterized by internally divided SD movements have two or three internal SD factions. In these dyads, civil war onset is nearly three times as likely as those where the SD movement is cohesive. Likewise, there is a steady increase in the probability that a state and SD movement will be in civil war in any given year as the number of internal factions in the SD movement increases.

These tests support my hypotheses that disputes characterized by more fragmented oppositions are more likely to see the onset of civil war, and are more likely to be in civil war in any given year. I have presented relatively parsimonious models, designed to evaluate the effects on fragmentation of the opposition. In further analysis, I test the robustness of these findings, with particular attention to the potential issue of endogeneity of conflict and fragmentation.

Further analyses

The results presented in Table 3 are robust to the inclusion of a number of additional control variables likely to be associated with the degree to which movements can and are likely to

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[29] Figure 1 shows the probability of civil war for the bulk of the data (i.e. to 15 factions). The trend continues upward through the full range of the data.

challenge the state militarily. These include measures that capture the relative power of the

movement vis-à-vis the state (the movement's relative size and whether it has a territorial base),

factors that make insurgency easier for movements (percent of mountainous terrain in the country

(logged), whether the country is an oil exporter, and a dummy for political instability),[30] level of

grievance of the SD movement population,[31] and state characteristics associated with civil war (state

population (logged),[32] gross domestic product per capita (logged), military expenditure per capita,

and the number of ethic groups in the state[33]). The complete analyses are reported in the

Supplementary Information. Additionally, the Supplementary Information includes details on a

number of other robustness checks related to temporal and regional effects, state characteristics

(such as ethnic diversity), the degree of militancy of the dispute, civil war as a rare event, variation in

state capacity, and alternative coding of the SD factions variable. In every case, the logged SD

factions variable is positive and statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

While the analyses in Table 3 provide strong quantitative support for the hypotheses

presented here—and these hold up in many robustness tests—there is an important question about

potential endogeneity of the fragmentation of the challenging movement and the outbreak of

conflict. One of the challenges in studying any kind of conflict process is the endogenous nature of

many of the things we are interested in. For example, the possibility of a settlement between a state

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[30] Fearon and Laitin (2003) argue that each of these factors make insurgency easier or more

profitable, making civil war onset more likely.

[31] Which Gurr (1970) suggests will increase the chance of rebellion.

[32] Raleigh and Hegre (2009) show that larger populations attract more conflict.

[33] Toft (2003) and Walter (2006) argue that states may fight to stake a reputation, and a greater

number of potential future challengers may make conflict more likely.

and opposition movements might engender new opposition factions that would rather fight. If these factions resort to force and can draw the state into conflict, a higher number of opposition factions would appear to be associated with the outbreak of conflict, but the fragmentation of the movement would not lead to bargaining failure the way it has been presented here. Moreover, new SD factions may emerge in the same year that a civil war begins, but in response to the outbreak of conflict rather than preceding it.

To address the potential for endogeneity, I have run a number of alternative specifications of the models in Table 3. First, I used a one year lagged measure of the number of SD factions to capture the effect of the extent of divisions in the previous year on the likelihood of civil war. Second, I recoded the number of factions to exclude any SD faction that may have emerged directly in response to concessions made by the state in a year when concessions were made.[34] Third, I recoded the number of factions to exclude factions that split off of existing factions in the year of a civil war onset.[35] In each case, the size, direction, and significance of the coefficients on the adjusted SD factions variables were similar to the models presented in the preceding section.

In many cases, civil war recurs between the same state and challenger, and this process may also influence the cohesion of an opposition. I ran three additional specifications of the models in Table 3 to assess whether the findings only hold up in disputes with recurrent civil war. The results were robust to including a control for the number of previous civil war onsets, examining only first onsets, and the exclusion of all cases with multiple civil wars. Tables of each of these analyses are presented in the Supplementary Information.

Fragmentation of a SD movement is robustly associated with a higher chance of civil war.

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[34] Recoding this entailed the exclusion of 50 SD factions.

[35] Recoding this entailed the exclusion of 7 SD factions.

Moreover, including fragmentation in the study of civil war improves our understanding of the outbreak of war. Using receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curves, I can compare the performance of two models of civil war onset, one of which includes factors typically associated with civil war onset, and one that additionally includes my measure of SD movement fragmentation. An ROC curve shows the ratio of true positive to false positives and can be used to evaluate the performance of different models and we can compare the area under the curve (AUC) of the two models to assess predictive performance (King and Zeng 2001, Weidmann and Ward 2010). An AUC of 1 would be perfect prediction. The model with fragmentation reaches an AUC of 0.70, while that without fragmentation has an AUC value of 0.63, suggesting that we gain significant predictive power by using a model that includes the fragmentation of the SD movement.

Conflict and cooperation among opposition factions

In this article, I focus on the number of internal factions in opposition movements, showing that a greater number of factions in self-determination movements increases the chance of civil war between the movement and the state. Yet, the interaction between factions within an opposition movement are also likely to affect information and commitment problems associated with bargaining with the state.

Conflict among opposition factions could both reveal information to states about different factions' preferences and capabilities, but may also exacerbate challenges to making commitments by the opposition credible. Cooperation among factions could help to signal opposition preferences to the state, as well as the likely aggregation of different factions' capabilities should they challenge the state violently. Factional cooperation could also ameliorate opposition commitment problems, but the extent to which cooperation would do either of these things likely depends on the depth and type of cooperation. Some existing studies examine these dynamics in the context of civil wars (Atlas

and Licklider 1999, Bapat and Bond 2012, Bond n.d.), yet this remains an area for further exploration for opposition movements more generally.

Conclusion

While most cross-national studies of relations between states and opposition movements treat these actors as unitary, the internal structure of the opposition clearly matters. This study focuses empirically on self-determination movements as a subset of opposition movements where I can evaluate the effects of opposition fragmentation. I demonstrate that movements with more internal factions are more likely to get involved in civil war and to be in conflict in any given year. Ignoring internal structure by treating opposition movements as coherent, even unitary, actors severely limits our understanding of when disputes are likely to degenerate into armed conflict.

These empirical findings are important because they shed light on which opposition movements are likely to fight the state and when they are likely to do so. Existing approaches that examine civil war often look at features—such as terrain, the presence of primary commodities, the number of ethnic movements and levels of fractionalization in the state—that largely do not change. As such, they can only explain differences between cases. But, the internal characteristics of opposition movements change over time. Focusing on this, I have been able to explain outcomes like when fighting is likely to occur in self-determination disputes, rather than just what type of states are more prone to civil war. Understanding which disputes are likely to turn to conflict can help policy-makers target their effort toward conflict prevention. Acknowledging the information and credibility problems associated with divided oppositions can help policy-makers to design mediations to address these challenges more directly.

Abandoning the unitary actor assumption and examining the internal structure of opposition movements creates the opportunity for further analysis that should strengthen our understanding of

these actors. In this article, I have measured the number of factions across time and essentially treated all internal factions as equivalent to one another within and across cases. Yet there are likely to be meaningful differences among factions that can increase our understanding of the role they play in conflict processes. For example, some factions are essentially military organizations, while others constitute social pressure movements or political parties. Moreover, some factions are "political wings" or "armed wings" connected to one another to varying degrees. How do the connections between factions, or different types of factions, matter for bargaining with the state? How does the extent to which factions work together affect their ability to bargaining effectively? The data that I have here identifying all of these factions, by year, provides an opportunity for further research that examines how characteristics of opposition factions matter.

Although the empirical focus here is on relations between states and SD movements, the theoretical framework centers on relations between actors in a variety of contexts. The unitary actor assumption is not unique to civil war studies, and in fact remains a dominant one in many studies that consider strategic interaction between actors. States, rebel groups, political parties, economic classes, and religious groups have all been treated as unitary—with unified preferences and strategies—in different strategic contexts. Moreover, while this article focuses on the effect of fragmentation on bargaining with the state, opposition fragmentation is also likely to influence or be influenced by other factors that we care about, such as the strategy choices made by dissidents, the horizontal inequality of movements vis-à-vis the state, and potential for mass mobilization to name a few. Greater attention to the structure of non-state actors, including both better data on a larger range of types of opposition, and more exploration of the interaction between internal factions, will advance our understanding of how and when opposition movements challenge states.

Table 1. Global distribution of self-determination movements and SD civil war onset

Region	SD movements	SD civil war onsets
West	15% (22)	5% (5)
Eastern Europe	21% (32)	13.5% (14)
Latin America	5.5% (8)	0% (0)
Sub-Saharan Africa	23% (33)	26% (27)
Asia	30% (43)	45% (47)
North Africa & Middle East	5.5% (8)	10% (11)
Total	100%	100 %

Table 2: Frequency of internal divisions in SD movements by year

Number of SD factions	Frequency	Percent
1	1,267	33%
2	843	22%
3	545	14%
4	376	10%
5	264	7%
6	169	4%
7	125	3%
8	105	3%
9	59	1.5%
10-19 factions	128	3%
greater than 20 factions	17	0.5%
Total	3,898	100%

Table 3. Logit models of civil war onset and incidence in state-SD movement dyads, 1960-2005

Variable	Civil war onset Coef. (s.e.)	Civil war incidence Coef. (s.e.)
Logged SD factions	1.01**	0.69**
	(0.20)	(0.14)
Previous concessions	-0.48**	-0.15
	(0.24)	(0.22)
Democracy	-1.04**	-0.58**
	(0.29)	(0.25)
Kin in adjoining state	0.43*	0.09
	(0.26)	(0.21)
Years since civil war onset	-0.06	
	(0.08)	
Years since civil war incidence		-1.46*
		(0.10)
Constant	-3.49**	0.74**
	(0.42)	(0.22)
Number of obs	2625	3254
Psuedo R2	0.09	0.56

** Statistically significant at the 0.05 level, * significant at the 0.1 level in two-tailed tests
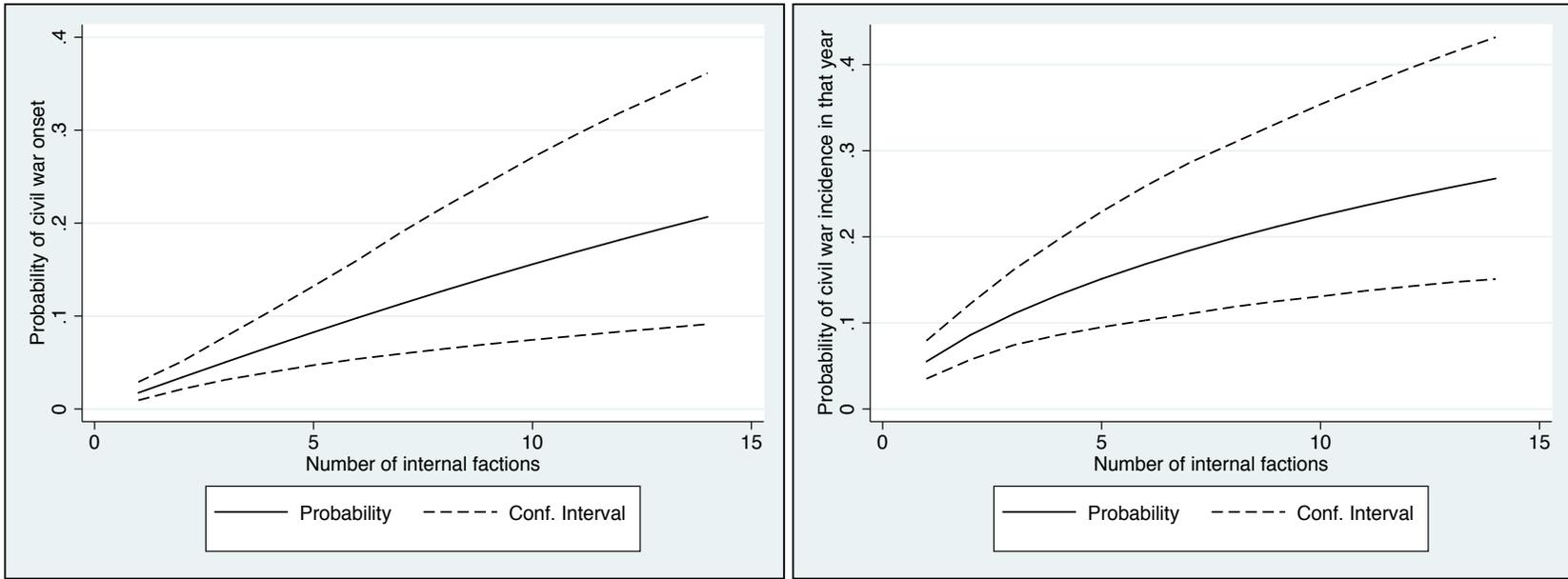
Figure 1. Predicted probability of civil war onset (left panel) and civil war incidence (right panel)

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