

Barbara Walter:
Bargaining failures and civil war

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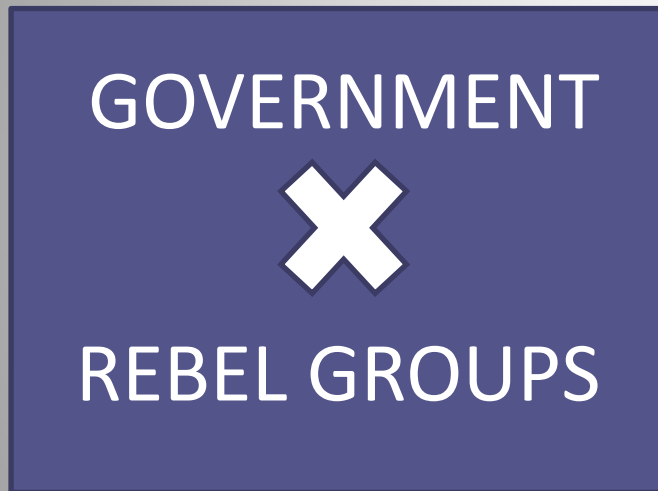
- it is more difficult to reach and implement bargains in civil wars than in interstate disputes
- if negotiated settlements are signed, less likely to be implemented
- if implemented, more likely to be break down

WHY?

Review of existing literature

- many studies about conditions that encourage groups to go to war (poverty, political instability etc.)
 - existing studies are limited, because they cannot explain:
 - 1) why governments do not sign more negotiated settlements
 - 2) variation in the outbreak of violence across countries
- > application of bargaining theory can help to answer**

Bargaining problems



- why civil war begins?
- why some last longer than others?
- why some recur and others do not?



- informational problems
- commitment problems
 - indivisible stakes

Outbreak of civil war

DEAL or WAR ?

- **informational problems**

- 1) rebel financing and capabilities

- which groups are able to fight and cause problems?

- > war can reveal the information about capabilities

- 2) governments resolve

- is the government determined to fight?

- > war may offer a better alternative to governments than multiple deals with multiple groups

Outbreak of civil war

DEAL or WAR ?

- **commitment problems**
 - credibility of promise to adhere to an agreement
 - 1) weak political and legal institutions - problems of treaty enforcement and executive control
 - 2) highly politicized and fixed cleavages - majority can override promises made to a minority
 - 3) high probability of shifts in power - favoring one group
- B. Walter: „*The civil war in Lebanon in 1975 was partly in response to the refusal of the Christian minority to renegotiate the distribution of political power to reflect the increasing percentage of Muslims in the country.*“

Duration of civil war

LONG or SHORT FIGHT before settlement ?

- **informational problems**
- duration depends on how much information the war uncovers about the combatants
- particularly slow types of war:
 - 1) guerrillas - unknown strength and location of the group may cause the war longer

H. Kissinger: „*the guerrilla wins if he does not lose*”

- 2) wars with multiple actors - takes time to reach deals that make everyone happy

Duration of civil war

LONG or SHORT FIGHT before settlement ?

- **commitment problems**
 - 2 cases:
 - 1) bargains are extended but then rejected
 - 2) settlements are signed but not implemented
 - imbalance of power reflected in the duration of a war
 - importance of third parties
- B. Walter and the case of Iraq: *„How can anyone assure minority Sunnis that they will not be permanently shut out of government once the US is no longer protecting them from the full force of the Shi'a government?“*

Recur of civil war

POSTWAR PEACE or CONFLICT TRAP?

- fights aggravate factors that encouraged the first war
- **informational problems**
- depends on information received in the first war
- short wars = less information
- decisive military victories = more information

B. Walter: „*Looking at all civil wars between 1945 and 1993, Licklider (1995) finds that 50% of negotiated settlements broke down into renewed war, in contrast to only 15% of decisive military victories.*“

- importance of clear balance of power

Recur of civil war

POSTWAR PEACE or FIGHT AGAIN ?

- **commitment problems**

decisive military victories

the winner simply
implements favored policies
- > longer periods of peace

negotiated settlements

former combatants can
challenge of enforcing the
terms over time

- robust assistance of third party -> higher probability of renewed civil war

Final suggestions

B. Walter:

„Significantly more work is needed to develop these ideas and then test the individual hypotheses.“

„Additional theorizing is needed, not only on the ways in which combatants determine each other’s “strength,” but also on the relative merits of withholding information at some times and not others.“

„Disputants are able to come up with creative ways to enforce terms but that these solutions are often not observed by outsiders because these are the disputes that are- settled quietly and out of the public eye.“

Critical reflection of the text

- better understanding of outbreak of the civil wars
- applicable theory
- contrasts with interstate disputes – asymmetric, sovereignty
- communication problem
- impassioned fights - role of the population, public opinion - greed, grievance and opportunities
- rationality of actors - importance of concessions and intents to fight
- unclear situation - government, rebels, elites, religious groups, ethnic groups, external actors

- **OUTBREAK**

War as a „better alternative“ ?

Costs / Legitimacy and morality

- **DURATION**

*Interventions of the third parties and
peacekeeping – good or bad?*

- **RECUR**

*How to ensure peace after negotiated
settlement?*



Thank you for your attention