

On the Relationship Between Military Aid and Violent Intrastate Conflict

Introduction and Significance

My general area of academic interest lies in how violent and nonviolent forms of intrastate and interstate conflict begin, develop, and end. For this research specifically, I am interested in examining the factors which determine why some revolutionary conflicts are resolved through nonviolent political action, while other revolutionary conflicts become violent civil wars. While much research has been done to determine what factors are associated with the outbreak of revolutionary movements, it is generally derived from two separate fields of study. Information on nonviolent revolutionary conflict is drawn predominantly from the field of peace studies, while the study of civil war is more the purview of international security studies. There has been little emphasis in either of these fields of study on the relationship between level of foreign military support and the outbreak of civil war. Examining this relationship between foreign military support and the outbreak of civil war will be my contribution to the broad discipline of political science.

The significance of this research promises to be far reaching. From the level of pure academic theory, this research addresses an oft overlooked relationship which falls between the two subfields of the discipline of political science. From a more practical standpoint, an understanding of the relationship between foreign military support and the outbreak of civil war may be utilized by states in determining what

foreign policies to pursue, in order to further the goal of maintaining international security.

Theory

There are myriad factors which cause civil wars. It is generally accepted that political instability, economic and social and economic inequality, government repression, levels of militarization and access to weapons, and tensions between religious and ethnolinguistic groups contribute in some capacity to the outbreak of civil wars. Many of these factors are also commonly attributed as vital factors in the spread of nonviolent action, which themselves can lead to the peaceful regime changes or the alteration of legal codes. At first glance, it seems that many of the underlying causes for discontent which lead to nonviolent action also lead to civil war. These similarities are exemplified when contrasting the various outcomes of the Arab Spring movements, which variously ended in peaceful transfers of power and constitutional changes, and civil wars, such as that experienced in Syria. These differences are further exemplified in the similar circumstances which led both to the Orange Revolution, and the current violence in Ukraine.

Research Question/Hypothesis

Given these similarities in circumstances, it becomes imperative to understand what circumstances lead to the onset civil wars, where otherwise nonviolent action may have occurred. I hypothesize that, other factors being similar, the presence or absence of foreign military support from regional or global powers competing to dominate

regional power structures are a decisive factor in whether or not intrastate violence will occur, and the extent of that intrastate violence. Specifically, as foreign military support increases, the probability of onset, duration, and intensity of civil wars will also increase.

Literature Review

This research draws broadly upon two categories of literature: the first being about civil wars and other violent revolutionary and intrastate conflict, and the second dealing with nonviolent revolutionary and intrastate conflict. Initially it would seem that these two bodies of literature should be a unified body of literature, as they both deal with intrastate revolutionary conflict, and in fact, there is some level of crossover between the two fields of research. However, by and large the two are considered to be wholly separate fields which share minimal levels of research. Due to the separation of the two bodies of research, this literature review will be divided into two separate portions, one portion addressing the work which is primarily about civil wars and other violent intrastate conflict, and the second portion which predominantly deals with non-violent intrastate conflict.

Literature on Civil Wars and Other Violent Intrastate Conflict

There are some factors that are generally accepted as contributing to violent civil conflict; political instability, economic instability, ethnic and racial tensions, and competition for resources due both to necessity and greed. There are several hypotheses as to what precisely the underlying causes of civil war are. Laitin and

Fearon found that the major factors associated with intrastate violence by promoting or permitting the recruitment and training of insurrectionists include: extreme poverty, political instability, large populations, rough terrain, and external financing.¹ Azam and Mesnard data suggest that although ethnic tensions are correlated with the occurrence of civil war, these tensions are more symptomatic of the problem. The primary underlying factors, their data suggest, are economic inequality, the relative fighting forces of the government and the rebels, the level of integration of ethnolinguistic minorities in the government military force, and the lack of credibility of the government.² Critically, Azam and Mesnard's model uses the fractionalism of the excluded ethnolinguistic group as a proxy for fighting power, and does not directly assess the group's access to foreign military aid. Regan and Norton in contrast, in studying the onset of protest, rebellion, and civil war, found that a combination of economic discrimination, heterogeneous ethnolinguism, and past government repression of political expression, including repression of action, are the key indicators of civil war.³ They found further that extractable resources decrease the likelihood of civil war's onset, but once a civil war has begun, tend to extend the duration, which is directly in contrast to the findings of Fearon and Laitin. Although they do not include foreign military aid in their study, Regan and Norton's data do seem to suggest a valid alternate hypothesis as a possibility, given that some economic and political indicators

¹ Fearon, James, and Laitin, David. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American Political Science Review*, Vol 97, No 1. Feb 2003. Pp 75-90.

² Azam, Jean-Paul, and Mesnard, Alice. "Civil War and the Social Contract." *Public Choice*, Vol 115, No 3/4. Pp 455-471. June 2003

³ Regan, Patrick and Norton, Daniel. "Greed, Grievance and Mobilization in Civil Wars." *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol 49, No 3. Pp 319-336. June 2005.

proved statistically significant in determining rebellion, some in determining civil war, and some in determining protest, especially that while significant levels of discrimination increased the likelihood of civil war dramatically, similar levels of discrimination did not appear to impact the likelihood of nonviolent protest.

Literature on Nonviolent Conflict

Many of the same factors which are associated with the outbreak of civil war are also commonly associated with the outbreak of nonviolent political action. These sources of conflict include: social and economic inequality, political and economic instability, and ethnic and racial tensions. Making these general associations requires a somewhat broader familiarity with the body of literature on nonviolent intrastate conflict compared with the body of research on violent intrastate conflict. This is due to the fact that, in general, the study of civil wars and other forms of violent intrastate conflict tends to be dominated by statistical analysis, while the study of nonviolent intrastate conflict heavily leans toward qualitative analysis, with an emphasis on case studies and historiographies. Because these studies are not generally rooted in quantitative analysis, it is more difficult to do statistical analysis on nonviolent conflicts. This trend may be changing. In 2011 Chenoweth and Stephan published *Why Civil Resistance Works: the Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*, which is among the first serious efforts to statistically analyze nonviolent conflict generally.⁴ Chenoweth and Stephan's research is particularly pertinent in this research, because their data suggests that

⁴ Chenoweth, Erica and Stephan, Maria. *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*. Columbia Press. 2011.

where nonviolent conflict establishes change, civil war is less likely to erupt. Their findings also indicate that violent and nonviolent conflict have different relative success rates, dependent upon what type of outcome is sought by each party, with nonviolent forms of conflict being generally more successful than violent conflict.

Methodology

The research for this essay blends quantitative and qualitative research techniques. The quantitative aspect of this research involves the statistical analysis of data on the indicators of intrastate conflict, and will be drawn from a number of datasets. This information will inform the selection of specific case studies, which will be examined for focused analysis of the hypothesis in conflicts which occurred in similar circumstances, but differed in the level of foreign military support and level of violence of the conflict.

Databases utilized for Quantitative research

The Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes (NAVCO) Data Project examines the success rates of major violent and nonviolent resistance efforts from 1900 until 2011.⁵ Especially pertinent to my research, the NAVCO Data Set examines a wealth of variables, including official foreign support for both the existing regime and the opposition forces and level of relative peacefulness or violence utilized during the resistance. What the NAVCO dataset fails to do is distinguish between military and

⁵ Chenoweth, Erica and Lewis, Orion *et. al.* Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes Dataset. University of Denver. 2011-2017.

nonmilitary support to the resistance group, although they do distinguish between support from states, diasporas and .NGO's.

Housed at Uppsala University's Department of Peace and Conflict Research, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) is actually an aggregation of several datasets.⁶ The datasets vary in their level of granularity, with several related datasets differing only in whether they deal with conflict in terms of years, months or days. Two of UCDP's datasets are of special interest to my research. The UCDP/PRIO (Peace Research Institute Oslo) Armed Conflict Dataset version 4-2016, which compiles data on violent conflicts in which at least one belligerent was a state's government, and which details, among other things the duration and intensity of violent conflict, as well as what outside countries supported each side of the conflict, though again they do not divide this support into strictly military support or nonmilitary support.⁷⁸ The UCDP External Support - Primary Warring Party Dataset includes each primary warring party in a violent conflict by year, the nations which offered those groups support, and the types of support that were offered. Vital to my research, these divisions include, among others, a level of support given in the forms material, logistics, and training; and in the form of troops provided as a secondary combatant.⁹

⁶ Department of Peace and Conflict Research. Uppsala Conflict Data Program. Uppsala University. 2016. Accessed on 4 Feb. 2017. Accessed at <http://www.pcr.uu.se/data/>

⁷ Melander, Erik and Petterson, Therese, and Themner, Lotta. "Organized Violence, 1989-2015." *Journal of Peace Research* 53(5). 2016.

⁸ Gleditsch, Nils Petter, Peter Wallensteen, Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Sollenberg, and Havard Strand. "Armed Conflict 1946-2001: A New Dataset." *Journal of Peace Research* 39(5) 2002.

⁹ Högladh, Stina, Therése Pettersson and Lotta Themnér. "External Support in Armed Conflict 1975-2009." Presenting new data. Paper presented at the 52nd Annual International Studies Association Convention, Montreal, Canada, 16-19 March, 2011.

The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research's Conflict Barometer, examines the elements of political conflict, specifically the personnel, casualties, refugees, destruction, threat to existence, including personal destruction, and the means, consequences and intensity of the conflict. The Conflict Barometer distinguishes into five types of conflict; disputes, nonviolent crisis, violent crisis, limited war, and war, and studies how these conflicts evolve over time.¹⁰ Of particular note, the Conflict Barometer differentiates between interstate, intrastate, substate and transstate conflicts. Where substate conflicts involve only non state actors, "transstate conflicts involve both state and non state actors and meet the criteria of political conflict for at least two sovereign states."¹¹ The Conflict Barometer is also of special note because it has been published since 1991.

The Fund for Peace's Fragile States Index details the indicators in which a state is unstable politically, militarily, economically and socially.¹² This is broken down into several subcategories: Poverty and Economic Decline, and Human Rights and the Rule of Law; which are then broken into distinct indicators such as Unemployment, and Political Freedoms. This data will be especially useful in identifying and controlling for the similar levels of instability between states when selecting states for case studies. This data may be of limited use, since although it is compiled annually, it only began in 2005, which will limit the span of time that this research can cover if other comprehensive data on the instability of states is not discovered. At the time of

¹⁰ Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research. Conflict Barometer. Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research. 2015.

¹¹ Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research. Barometer (2015). Pg 8.

¹² The Fund for Peace. Fragile States Index. The Fund for Peace. 2017.

proposal, I have not found an equally rigorous look at the fragility of states preceding the Fragile States Index.

Case Studies

The data drawn from these several databases will be analyzed in an effort to differentiate the conditions which lead to violent conflict and those which produce nonviolent conflict. This analysis will then be relied upon to select between two and six intrastate conflicts to examine as case studies. These case studies will be selected with special attention to four main variables: the level of military support each side of the conflict received from foreign states; the level of instability of the states in which the conflict occurred; the use or lack of violence during the conflict; and the intensity of that violence.

In order to test the hypothesis that increased foreign military support increases the incidence and intensity of violent intrastate conflict, case studies will be selected because they had differing levels of foreign military support, while having similar levels of political, economic and social instability. This will make the UCDP External Support data, which indicates levels of foreign military support, and the Fragile States Index, which examines the indicators of instability in a state, integral to selecting appropriate case studies. The cases will then be thoroughly examined to assess whether the level of foreign military support affected the outbreak and/or intensity of violent conflict.

As of the time of this proposal, the data suggest that two sets of comparative case studies will be promising. The first is the comparison between the nonviolent Ukrainian Orange Revolution and the current fighting in Ukraine's Donbas region,

supported by the Russian Federation. The second set of cases which at this time look promising is a comparison between two of the Arab Spring revolutions, specifically the peaceful Tunisian revolution and the Syrian Civil War which is still ongoing, in which multiple factions received military support from various foreign powers, including the United States, Iran, and the Russian Federation. Further analysis of the indicators of instability and levels of military support may suggest that other conflicts should be examined as well or instead.

Ethical Concerns and Role of Researcher

Although I am the sole researcher on this paper, the hypothesis is founded in the research of those scholars, journalists and statisticians who preceded me in my field, and this research is based in publicly accessible databases and scholarly articles. This research has no environmental or human impact, and does not utilize hazardous materials, therefore, no special permits are required to undertake this research. No experimentation will be conducted on living subjects, including humans. Therefore the approval of an ethics review board is not required.

Timeline

The following is my timeline of research for this project. I shall continue compiling quantitative research in order to determine the most appropriate cases for study, and select proposed cases by 10 April. I shall present the proposed cases for study to my advisor at that time, and finalize my decision in regard to cases for study by 24 April. I

shall then work with my advisor to identify the research necessary for the case studies by 8 May; after such meetings research into the cases will continue, and a revised bibliography tailored to the cases to be studied will be submitted. Continuing to research the cases, I shall compose a literature review and construct a chronology for each case study by 26 June before further analyzing the case studies and beginning to write them no later than 14 August, submitting the literature review for the case studies by 28 August. Upon completion of the literature reviews for the case studies, I will begin writing the analysis of the case studies themselves, and present a draft of my analysis to my advisor no later than 18 September. After submission of analysis, my introduction and conclusion chapters will be written. By 25 September I will meet with my advisor concerning any necessary revisions to the analysis chapter and submit the introduction and conclusion.. I shall make any necessary revisions and submit my thesis to my committee by 10 October. By 16 October, the committee will advise me of any necessary revisions and evaluation of the thesis is. Submission of my revised thesis will be no later than 23 October, after which time I will stand before my committee to defend my thesis. Final submission of my thesis to the honors department will be no later than 10 November.