

# **International Aspects of Civil War: A State-Level Examination of the Interstate Conflict-Civil War Nexus**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The international aspects of civil wars are profound. Civil wars can result from conflict at the international level and civil wars can cause international conflict. However, existing research on the subject of civil war is limited in its treatment of these international factors. This paper focuses on the bi-directional relationship between civil war and international conflict at the state-level of analysis. To do this I use a decision-theoretic approach to examine the behavior of two key actors: the focal government and their opposition. The theoretical model that I develop involves three key variables; affinity, power and rivalry, which affect each of these actors' decision-making process. To test my theory I analyze all nation-states from 1820-1997. The results presented here examine the effect of civil war on the occurrence of international conflict and provide support for the influence of rivalry and power on international conflict.

*Paper presented at the 2008 Journeys in World Politics Workshop, University of Iowa,  
October 9-11, 2008*

## ***INTRODUCTION***

By all accounts the civil war currently underway in Iraq is devastating that country (Fearon 2007). The ethno-sectarian conflict that was dormant under the iron-fisted rule of Saddam Hussein is leading Iraq down a path of self-destruction (Baram 1997). While these domestic causes and effects of the civil war are noteworthy and egregious, the international aspects are equally important (Barak 2007; Wimmer 2003). What should not be overlooked are the international causes and the potential international effects of the Iraqi civil war.

The invasion by the U.S.-led Coalition forces and the subsequent removal of Hussein from power arguably created the sufficient conditions for a civil war to break out (Tripp 2002). Additionally, there are a number of issues related to the civil war that have the potential to lead to conflict with another state. For example, the United States has accused Iran on many occasions of aiding not only Shiite militiamen, but the Sunnis as well (Raghavan 2006). Also, Turkey is increasingly intolerant of the actions of Kurdish rebels in northern Iraq and has begun to retaliate militarily.

There are many reasons why these international aspects of civil wars are significant. For one, too often civil wars are viewed through the lens of “what is wrong with that state?” when in reality, states and their civil wars do not exist in a vacuum. The current situation in any state is also directly and indirectly affected by its interactions with other states. Civil wars can affect international relations and international events can affect civil wars. With the increase in interdependence in the international system, states have become increasingly interested in the internal affairs of other states.

Instability and conflict in one state can have potentially serious consequences for other states that, for one reason or another, are connected to the state in conflict.

While significant, the international component of civil wars is often overlooked. This is due in part to the current conventional wisdom that in the last half century (and some would argue since the end of the Napoleonic Wars (Stoll 2005) there has been a marked decrease in the frequency of international wars and a marked increase in the frequency of civil wars (preliminary evidence of this trend can be seen in Figure 1). Especially since the end of the Cold War and the accompanying threat of nuclear war, the fear of a catastrophic international war has been replaced with the fear of the devastating consequences of civil wars (Mueller 2003; Mueller 1989).

This trend seems to contradict much of the research on conflict and war. According to the diversionary theory of war, leaders experiencing domestic turmoil should attempt to divert the country's attention toward an external enemy. Following that reasoning, the growing number of states experiencing civil wars should be externalizing their internal conflict, creating more international conflicts. If this is not actually happening, then there is either a problem in the theory or a problem in the empirical testing of the theory. I argue that it is a little of both.

One important reason for this apparent disagreement is the fact that the majority of the research on this question is conducted using the state as the level of analysis, while the 'conventional wisdom' makes assertions at the system-level. In addition, focusing on the state-level is tantamount to saying that one state is solely to blame for any resultant external conflict. In fact, external conflict is at least a dyadic event and it is important at some point, to examine the relationship between states to understand more fully the

causes of interstate conflict (and its relationship to internal conflict) (Blainey 1988). These issues illuminate the need to investigate this relationship at multiple levels of analysis.

The international causes and effects of civil wars can be conceptualized as two sides of the same coin, that coin being the linkages between civil war and international conflict<sup>1</sup>. While the Iraq example is especially current, the questions it raises are neither new nor unique. Every civil war takes place in an international environment, but whether or not it is taken into consideration when analyzing a civil war varies greatly. Is there a systematic explanation why some civil wars have a greater international component than others?

In order to address this issue, my dissertation addresses a series of three sequential questions. Is there a relationship between civil war and international war? What is the nature of the relationship? Is the proposed relationship consistent across levels of analysis? The answers to these questions are not designed to develop a theory of civil war or international war, but rather a theory of the linkage between the two<sup>2</sup>. By analyzing the micro-foundations of the decision-making process I hope to develop a theory that can speak to multiple levels of analysis. This paper represents the first level

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<sup>1</sup> In order to investigate the international aspects of civil war it is necessary to define the phenomenon of interest very clearly. There are any number of ways in which to conceptualize 'international aspects', but for the purposes of this project I will be focusing on international conflict in the form of militarized interstate disputes. I focus on civil war as defined by the Correlates of War project (Small and Singer 1982) for a number of reasons. First, the conventional wisdom is explicitly focusing on the apparent inverse relationship between civil war and international war. In order to address this notion, it is necessary to focus on the relationship in question. Second, while I believe that there is future work to be done examining the relationship of lower levels of domestic conflict, the processes and mechanisms are not necessarily the same as for full blown civil wars.

<sup>2</sup> While the focus of this study is on the effects of international conflict on the outbreak of civil war and vice versa, this is not to say that I believe that, for example, international wars are the only or even most important cause of civil wars. My goal is to demonstrate that in addition to the acknowledged forces at work in the outbreak of the two types of conflict, they can also influence each other as well.

of analysis; the nation-state. I will first present the relevant literature on the topic, followed by my theoretical argument, and conclude with the research design and preliminary results.

### ***LITERATURE REVIEW***

Many scholars note the fact that, in general, interstate wars are on the decline while intrastate wars are on the rise (Harbom and Wallensteen 2007; Stoll 2005; Fearon and Laitin 2003). Wright goes so far as to say that “the direct relationship between political revolution and war, whether as cause or effect, is in fact such a historical commonplace as to need no elaboration” (Wright and Wright 1965, 257). However, systematic examination reveals that the straightforward inverse relationship is complicated by the “complex relationships between war and revolution (and by extension, other forms of internal and external conflict); relationships whose contingencies must be clearly specified” (Starr 1994, 491). In specifying these contingencies, I argue it is possible to come to a more clear and coherent understanding of this decidedly complex relationship.

#### **No Relationship**

Arguably the earliest quantitative work on this question is Rummel’s (1963) study of 77 states from 1955-1957. Using factor analysis to create the internal and external conflict variables, he finds no meaningful relationship between the two types of conflict. Tanter (1966) replicates Rummell (1963), for the subsequent time period, 1958-1960 and adds six additional states. His analyses employ foreign conflict behavior as both dependent and independent variable. The findings indicate a very small positive relationship between domestic and foreign conflict which becomes larger when a time lag

is included. However, he does not make the expected direction of the relationship clear, or identify the causal mechanism investigated (Tanter 1966). Rummel (1963) and Tanter (1966) are both atheoretical works that are interested solely in determining what, if any empirical correlation exists between internal and external conflict.

In an attempt to further our understanding of the relationship, Wilkenfeld adds controls for nation type (essentially regime type) and time lagged variables to Rummel's original analysis (Wilkenfeld 1968, 1969). While he finds some small positive relationship between domestic and foreign conflict, he notes that "(t)he generally small size of the correlation coefficients, however, indicate that we have not explained a great deal of the variance in foreign conflict on the basis of domestic conflict, and vice versa" (Wilkenfeld 1969, 155). While the use of nation type as a control is not theoretically motivated, there is some discussion regarding possible explanations for the findings. The lack of any significant relationship for internal conflict precipitating external conflict in centrist nations is attributed to the fact that this type of nation is not necessarily concerned with any domestic reaction to foreign conflict. Additionally, for the polyarchic and personlist nations, the fact that internal and external conflict tend to work back and forth, indicates that these types of nations are more concerned with the impact of one type of conflict behavior on the other. These findings, while not framed as such, are essentially indicative of the diversionary theory of war.

Kiser, Drass, and Brustein (1994) are also interested in the relationship between internal conflict (specifically revolutions) and war. Their approach is to test the two key competing hypotheses, conflict-cohesion and diversionary theory of war, on four Western European states from 1400-1700, using quantitative and qualitative analyses. They

examine not only the straight-forward correlation between the two variables, but also the relationship between various types of revolts and wars. In their qualitative comparative analysis, they argue that if the conflict-cohesion hypothesis is correct, “war participation should decrease the extent of revolts as well as their frequency; revolts that did occur during war would be minor... Also, the effect on cohesion is greatest if the threat is a serious one to a group as a whole, so great power wars should decrease revolts than more minor wars” (Kiser et al. 1994, 307). Support for diversionary war theory would find that “wars fought during revolts will be initiated by the country experiencing the revolt. If the war is initiated mainly to suppress revolt, it should be one with a high probability of victory” (Kiser et al. 1994,307). However, their results do not support either hypothesis, except to note that “war weakened states enough to increase the frequency of revolts in peripheral regions” (Kiser et al. 1994, 305).

### **Positive Relationship**

Bueno de Mesquita et al. (1992) investigate the relationship between civil conflict and international war and are one of the few to study the direct impact of international war on violent regime change. The basic hypothesis proposed is that involvement in costly wars or simply losing wars increases the likelihood that the government will undergo a violent regime change. The argument states that regimes are held accountable for their foreign policies, and extremely detrimental policies are more likely to be punished by violent regime change. They find support for all three of their hypotheses; that the likelihood of violent regime change increases with a defeat, with rising costs of war, and depending on the role of the state. While the authors do not address the conflict-cohesion hypothesis, it is possible that it is not necessarily the costs per se that

induce violent regime change, so much as the fact that there was not a coherent group willing to tolerate the costs .

Gleditsch (2007) examines the transnational dimensions of civil war and finds a positive relationship between adjacent conflict and the outbreak of civil war. He notes two potential causal mechanisms that he refers to as non-actor-specific spillover effects and actor-specific effects (295). Non-actor-specific spillover effects are the ways in which ongoing conflicts in neighboring countries can increase the likelihood of civil war. The mechanism here is not well understood, but one possible explanation states that the ongoing conflicts allow for a more available and low cost supply of arms, which facilitates the organization of armed opposition (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). The actor-specific affects deal with the connection between outside actors and the opposition in another state. (Gleditsch 2007). These connections can provide the willingness for an outside state to intervene on behalf of the opposition, as well as the opportunity for an opposition group to initiate an internal conflict.

In an exclusively theory building endeavor, Weede and Muller (1998) argue that war involvement and campaign defeat have a direct effect on revolution, which is similar to the relationship and mechanism tested in Bueno de Mesquita et al (1992). They argue that “(A)rmed forces disloyalty may result from military defeat – it is only human for defeated soldiers to blame the political leadership and to withdraw their support from those who led them into catastrophe; or the condition of armed forces disloyalty may be replaceable by military defeat as a facilitating condition of revolution” (Weede and Muller 1998, 54). This direction of the causal arrow, a variant of the conflict-cohesion argument, is generally not what researchers in this area have previously examined. Those

that did look at directional hypotheses typically did so by lagging both the internal and external war just to see if one happened to predict the other better. These studies were mainly atheoretical and only proposed post-hoc explanations of the findings (Wilkenfeld 1968, 1969; Tanter 1966).

Dassel and Reinhardt (1998) investigate the opposite direction of the causal arrow. Their study focuses on the diversionary theory of war, specifically what effect the military has on decisions to initiate external force. They argue that the military will only support a diversionary use of force if it feels it is itself directly threatened by the domestic strife. As a proxy measure for threat to the military they use contested political institutions. They find contested institutions within a state lead to a higher likelihood of violence abroad, while regime type and regime change do not have any significant impact on external violence. This question is similar to that in Maoz (1996) and Davies (2002). However, Dassel and Reinhardt do not interact contested institutions with violent strife. Additionally, the causal mechanism driving the connection between contested institutions in Dassel and Reinhardt (impact on the military), is distinct from Maoz (1996) and Davies (2002).

Blomberg and Hess (2002) also investigate implications from the diversionary theory of war, but are additionally interested in the possible endogeneity issue involving the economy, internal conflict and external conflict. As such, they do not explicitly specify the causal mechanism as typically seen in the conflict-cohesion hypothesis. Instead, they focus solely on the effect of conflict on the economy and vice versa. Using a Markov probability model they find that when a state is experiencing a recession *and* external conflict, this raises the probability of an internal conflict. Also, a recession *and*

internal conflict considerably raises the likelihood of external conflict. However, internal and external conflicts alone do not significantly influence the likelihood of recession (Blomberg and Hess 2002).

Departing from the diversionary war theory, Stoll (2005) attempts to integrate the civil war experience of states into the more traditional realist framework. Stoll argues that given the considerably greater relative frequency of intrastate wars to interstate wars, it would be useful to investigate the impact of intrastate wars on interstate war in a realist framework. His work develops a computer simulation to examine how a state's civil war experience could potentially influence their likelihood of participating in an interstate war. The rules of the simulation mimic one of the key assumptions of realism – namely that states seek to maximize their power. The states are programmed to evaluate the relative power of neighboring states first. Then, if there is a state that it has a power advantage over it will initiate a conflict. By allowing a state's power to be a function of their civil war experience, Stoll is able to determine the effect civil wars have on interstate war.

Specifically, three sets of variables relating to a state's civil war experience are observed to determine how they impact the interstate war experience; one pair represents the cost to the state of preventing a civil war, another pair represents the number of previous civil war involvement, and the final pair represents the cost to the state of previous civil wars. The results of the simulation indicate that, almost across the board, there is a significant, positive relationship between the civil war experience variables and interstate war involvement. The one negative finding, which is in step with a balance of power-type explanation as discussed in Blainey (1988), is that if a state has won previous

civil wars, it is less likely to be a target of an interstate war. The ultimate conclusion of the author is that a “the civil war experience of a state has an impact on its interstate war experience in a realist world” (Stoll 2005, 32).

Tir (2005) examines the relationship between states in secession and the likelihood of future conflict between these two new states. He finds that states that had peaceful secessions subsequently had peaceful inter-state relations. While the manner in which domestic and foreign conflict is operationalized is not at the civil war and international war level, the implication remains; states that experienced violent domestic conflict are more likely to be involved in violent international conflict (Tir 2005).

Additionally, Tir’s (2005) argument regarding secessionist states is supported by Stoll’s (2005) computer simulation which finds that there is a significant relationship between losing civil wars and being an initiator of future interstate wars. Tir argues that a state that loses a secessionist civil war may create a “neighborhood” of weak states around its borders. In turn, this makes it more likely that the losing state will have neighboring weak targets in the future. Stoll identifies this type of conflict as a “war of reunification” (Stoll 2005, 31).

Davies’ (2002) work tests the diversionary theory of war along with Mansfield and Syder’s (1995) claim that democratizing states are more likely to initiate international wars (Mansfield and Snyder 1995). Using a directed dyad unit of analysis, he finds that violent internal strife increases the likelihood of external conflict, but the interaction of violent strife and regime change has a weaker effect on the likelihood of external conflict than simply violent strife alone (Davies 2002). This contradicts Maoz’s findings discussed below (1989, 1996) that states that undergo a revolutionary political change

(essentially violent domestic conflict X regime change) are more likely to be involved in international conflict. However, this disagreement may be linked to the differences in sampling procedures (Davies - simply a sample of all non-events dyads, Maoz – PRIE), and the difference in level of analysis. Although non-violent domestic strife is not the key concept of interest, it is interesting to note that Davies results support Wilkenfeld's (1968, 1969) finding that when experiencing non-violent domestic strife, authoritarian regimes are the least likely to engage in external conflict.

Enterline (Enterline 1998a, 1998b) studies regime changes and the involvement in international conflict and finds that regime changes toward more autocratic regimes are more likely to initiate international disputes and slightly more likely to initiate international war. This finding is in contrast to Mansfield and Snyder (1995) which finds that the process of democratization, if done improperly, can lead to an increase in foreign conflict behavior. The domestic political composition of the neighborhood that a state finds itself in when it is undergoing regime change is also found to influence significantly the likelihood that the state will be involved in an international dispute.

Maoz's (1996) work on the relationship between internal and external conflict develops a model of the international consequences of political change (ICPC) that argues that there are significant differences between states that undergo evolutionary political change as opposed to revolutionary political change. These differences have implications for the internal-external conflict behavior at the state, dyad and system levels of analysis. This influence is due to the fact that when states undergo revolutionary political change, they essentially become new states and therefore see their situation in new and different ways; in addition to the international community seeing

them in new and different ways. Because of this, it is hypothesized that (1) states that undergo revolutionary political change are significantly more likely to be involved in international conflict, (2) dyads of states that have both undergone revolutionary political change are more likely to be involved in a dyadic dispute, and (3) as the number of states in the system that experience revolutionary political change increases, so does the aggregate amount of international conflict in the system.

The results from the empirical analysis of Maoz's (1996) ICSF/ICPC model indicate that the propositions at each level of analysis are strongly supported. First, he finds that revolutionary political change in an individual state significantly increases their involvement in external conflict, both as a target and an initiator. Second, dyads of politically relevant states that have both experienced revolutionary political change are more likely to engage in conflict. Finally, as the number of states in the system experiencing revolutionary political change increases, so does the aggregate level of conflict in system.

### **Negative Relationship**

Gleditsch (2002) addresses internal and external war at both the state and regional level. First, he finds that democratization in an individual state decreases the risk of interstate war and the changes in democracy (in a positive direction) also reduce the likelihood of interstate war (2002). He demonstrates a "limited positive relationship between democratization and the risk of civil war as well as a negative effect on the likelihood of interstate war" (111). This finding, he argues, is inconsistent with the externalization interpretation proposed by Mansfield and Snyder (1995b; 1995a; 2005). Gleditsch argues that when democratization occurs and a state moves from autocracy

towards democracy, the lack of fear of repression makes it more likely that opposition groups will challenge a weak, nascent democratic government. Additionally, the presence of the constraining institutions associated with democracy will make new democracies less likely to become involved in interstate wars (Gleditsch 2002).

While Mueller (1989) does not make the link between internal and external conflict explicit, he likens the “romanticism about the violence of war and revolution” (255) when he argues that “(t)here are severe grievances over turf, nationalism, religion, ideology, and control of the state” (254) in both the developed and developing world. The problem, according to Mueller, is that while the developed world has grown to view violence and conflict as appalling, there are many “outside the developed world (who) still think that war and violence can improve the situation” (255). The implication being that while major war (and revolutionary war for that matter) is all but obsolete in the developed world, in order to see a similar phenomenon in the developing world, “it will be necessary both for such romanticism about war and revolution to die out or at least decline, and for the seeming efficacy of violence to wane” (256).

However, in a separate work, Mueller (2003) argues that a substantial amount of the current internal conflict is being perpetrated by “packs of criminals, bandits, and thugs who engage in warfare... as mercenaries recruited or dragooned by weak (or even desperate) state governments or as warlord gangs developed within failed or weak states” (Mueller 2003, 507). If this argument is correct, it may be the beginning of an explanation for the ‘conventional wisdom’ of an increase in internal conflict and a decrease in external conflict.

Given that a large number of current internal conflicts are the result of weak, deteriorating states dealing with criminal type internal violence, then traditional diversionary behavior becomes both difficult (if not impossible) as well as ineffective. Even if a weak or failing state does manage to prevail, it will be in no position, nor have any interest in pursuing external conflict. Indeed, as Levy notes “Third World political leaders not only give primacy to domestic interests over external security interests but even conceive of security primarily in domestic terms, so that maintaining domestic political stability and their own positions of power often take precedence over all other things” (Levy 2001 , 20). Additionally, in light of Mueller (1989) and Gat’s (2006) arguments regarding the decline of international war, it is unlikely to see outside states encouraged to pursue these failing states as a target.

Ultimately, the majority of the findings indicate that there should, if anything, be a positive relationship between internal and external conflict. However, different studies support different hypotheses regarding the direction of the causal arrow. The work of Bueno de Mesquito et al (1992) suggests that violent internal conflict is a real concern for states involved in international wars (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1992; Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson 1995; Kiser et al. 1994) while others suggest various explanations as to why states that have recently experienced a domestic strife or civil war may be more likely to be involved in an international dispute (diversionary theory of war and the ICPC model ) (Blainey 1988; Dassel and Reinhardt 1999; Davies 2002; Enterline 1998a, 1998b; Maoz 1996; Walt 1992).

## ***THEORETICAL ARGUMENT***

### Effect of Civil War on International War

To understand the mechanisms at work in the civil war-international war relationship at the state and dyad level I use a decision theoretic approach (the system level dynamics are derived from the state and dyad level). In order to approach the question in this way I begin with the following basic assumptions regarding the state level of analysis.

1. There are two actors, the government ( $G_i$ ) and the opposition ( $O_i$ ).
2. The key goal of the government is to stay in power.
3. Government has different strategies for developing a winning coalition
  - a. Repression ----- Consensual
4. The key goal of the opposition is to assume power.
5. Opposition has different strategies for obtaining goals (inclusion in government?)
  - a. Fighting ----- Playing by the rules

At the state level, the government of the focal state ( $G_i$ ) must evaluate the situation and choose an action. This decision making process is laid out formally in Figure 3. Initially, the government is faced with an opposition group whose goal is to remove the government from power and assume control of the state. Since the government's goal is to remain in power they must choose a strategy to deal with the opposition that will provide the highest probability of attaining that goal. One option is to respond in a consensual manner where the government offers to negotiate or include the opposition in the government. A second option is to respond in a repressive manner in an attempt to use violence to quell any opposition<sup>3</sup>.

Once the government has chosen its response, the opposition must then respond as well. If the government has chosen a consensual strategy, the opposition can choose to reject the offer and fight for full-fledged control of the government which results in a

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<sup>3</sup> For this project I treat the government's decision as exogenous. However, the government's decision to repress an opposition group is clearly important to understand in its own right. For work that looks at the process of this decision see for example Gartner and Regan (1996) and Regan and Henderson (2002).

civil war. Alternatively, the opposition can choose to accept the government's offer of cooperation and there is no civil war. If the government has chosen a repressive strategy, the opposition again has the decision to fight or play by the rules. If the opposition chooses to resist the government's attempt to quash their challenge, a civil war results. However, the opposition may choose to fold under the repressive action of the government.

In the following period/stage I focus on the government's international actions in the two instances where a civil war results. They can either choose to initiate a conflict with a second state ( $G_j$ ) or not. Keeping in mind that the goal of  $G_i$  is to remain in power, the only reason they would initiate an international conflict is if it would increase the probability of  $G_i$  remaining in power. In the midst of a civil war, the only benefit of initiating an international conflict would be if it succeeded in effectively increasing internal cohesion and political centralization, ending the civil war. This notion is exemplified by Starr:

“...governments...require resources for continued survival or viability. Government leaders can identify alternative, more or less substitutable, sources - domestic and foreign. Hence, the single aim of survival, given alternative strategies for obtaining resources, might result in “apparently incommensurable behaviors.” That is, revolution or war might occur from whom one tries to extract those resources.” (Starr 1994, 486)

The first instance is where the government initially attempted a consensual strategy which was rejected by the opposition and a civil war erupted. At this point, according to diversionary theory, the government would consider whether or not to attempt to divert the attention of the country onto an external enemy by initiating a conflict. I argue that there are certain factors that the government will take into account

when deciding if initiating an international conflict will be useful in their attempt to remain in power; affinity and power and rivalries.

A state that is attempting or willing to work with the opposition but is being met with opposition *may* be more willing to engage in diversionary behavior. In an attempt to convince the opposition to cease fighting, the government may initiate an international war in the hopes of generating a ‘rally ‘round the flag’ effect. This is especially likely if the state has a rivalry with another state.

In the situation where the government has chosen a consensual strategy due to the fact that they are weak or unable to mount an effective repression strategy then they would also be unable to mount an effective international offensive. However, if the government saw diversionary action as their only option and had a rival, they may be tempted to target a considerably weaker rival.

If the opposition ( $O_i$ ) has an affinity with the government of another state ( $G_j$ ), it is possible that  $O_i$  will look to  $G_j$  for support, or that  $G_j$  will extend support to  $O_i$ . Therefore, if the  $G_i$  assesses that  $O_i$  has an affinity with another state, they will be less likely to initiate a conflict out of fear of not only fighting a new conflict, but intensifying the civil war as well.

If the government’s goal is to stay in power and they initially responded to the opposition with a repression strategy, it is unlikely that the government would change its mind and suddenly decide that an international conflict was a better option to accomplish its goal. A state that has invested resources in first repressing the opposition and then fighting a civil war may be less inclined to initiate an international conflict. If they see

the opposition as a threat that warrants a costly, repressive response, it is less likely that they will find an outside threat worth the additional cost of fighting two conflicts.

### Effect of International War on Civil War

In examining the effect of interstate conflict on civil war at the state level, I again begin with the following assumptions.

1. There are two actors, the government and the opposition.
2. Goal of the government is to stay in power.
3. Government has different strategies for developing a winning coalition
  - a. Repression ----- Consensual
4. Goal of the opposition is to assume power.
5. Opposition has different strategies for obtaining goals (inclusion in government?)
  - a. Fighting ----- Playing by the rules

In this scenario, the focal state ( $G_i$ ) and the opposition ( $O_i$ ) find themselves in one of four situations, as illustrated in Figure 4. There are two possible situations where the government chooses either a consensual or repression strategy, but the opposition plays by the rules and there is no civil war. In the event that an interstate conflict breaks out (I treat this as an exogenous event), what effect will the conflict have on the opposition that has initially chosen not to fight? I argue that in this scenario, if the opposition judged the focal state ( $G_i$ ) to be weakened considerably by the interstate conflict or the state's extractive capacity begins to create a burden, then the result would be an increase in the likelihood of a civil war, with the opposition shifting to rebellion. The decrease in  $G_i$ 's power due to the interstate conflict could provide the opposition with the incentive to initiate a civil war and take advantage of the new power differential. An increase in the extractive capacity of  $G_i$  will create an opportunity for the opposition to find support in the population.

However, if the conflict is against a rival it is less likely the opposition will shift to rebellion. This is due to the fact that a rival, in most cases, would be viewed by the entire country as an adversary and the opposition would not want to make the country weaker by initiating a civil war. Instead, a conflict with a rival should increase internal cohesion. The exception to this would be in the instance where  $G_j$  was a rival of  $G_i$  but also had an affinity with an opposition group ( $O_i$ ). This situation would then lead an increase in the likelihood of  $O_i$  initiating a civil war<sup>4</sup>.

## ***RESEARCH DESIGN***

The central analysis of the relationship between interstate conflict and intrastate war will encompass data from 1820-1997 for all states, as identified by the COW project system membership dataset. In the future, as a robustness check, additional analyses with alternative measures will cover a more restricted time period, 1946 to 1997.

### **I. Nation-State Level of Analysis**

At the nation-state level of analysis, the unit of analysis is the *nation-state-year*. The cases under consideration are all states for every year they were independent, as identified by the COW project ("State System Membership List, v2004.1." 2005).

#### **IA. Civil War → Interstate Conflict**

**Hypothesis 1:** Given that a state ( $G_i$ ) is experiencing a civil war (CW), it is *more* likely to initiate an interstate conflict (IC):

A) if it has a strategic rival (R)

B) as the number of rivals increases during the civil war time period ( $t_{cw}$ )

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<sup>4</sup> The remaining two scenarios result when the opposition chooses to fight which results in a civil war. While the question of the effect of international conflict on civil war termination is an interesting one, this particular question is not the focus of the current project. However, I do intend to revisit this subject in subsequent research.

C) as the duration of the rivalry prior to the outbreak of CW increases ( $R_D$ )

D) their relative capabilities are strong compared to all rivals ( $\Sigma R_C$ )

**Hypothesis 2:** A state ( $G_i$ ) is *less* likely to initiate an interstate conflict if the domestic opposition ( $O_i$ ) shares affinity with another state ( $G_j$ ).

I will use multiple dependent variables to test these hypotheses. The first is the initiation of a militarized interstate dispute (MID). This is a dichotomous measure, indicating whether the state initiated or joined in a conflict (1) or was either the target or there was no MID (0) based on the COW project coding (Ghosn et al. 2004). The second will be the number of MID dyads that a state is involved in. Third, I examine MIDs that escalate to war, and finally, if the state was involved in a war.

The key independent variables for the set of actors noted above are rivalry, power, and affinity. The concept and measure that most closely represents my theoretical construct of rivalry is the Thompson (2001) strategic rivalry measure<sup>5</sup>. The success of diverting the nation's attention away from domestic conflict and onto a rival is largely dependent on the rival being known and holding a level of fear or threat for the population. This fear or threat can exist without any militarized confrontation having occurred. Thompson's reliance on the statements of foreign-policy decision makers as opposed to the number of militarized interstate disputes represents this notion of fear, which I argue is necessary for diversionary behavior to succeed. This measure is a

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<sup>5</sup> Other rivalry measures, such as Klein et al (2004) and Hewitt (2005) offer a slightly different concept and measure of a rivalry. The Klein et al definition uses a dispute-density measure that contains the four components: (1) spatial consistency, (2) duration, (3) militarized competitiveness, and (4) linked conflict. By only focusing on the rivalries that resulted in militarized competitiveness ignores a large number of rivalries that never resulted in militarization yet could have been used by leaders in a diversionary manner. The Hewitt measure uses a crisis-density measure based on the International Crisis Behavior project.

dichotomous variable that indicates whether or not a dyad of states was found to be strategic rivals for a given year. Hypotheses 1A – 1C use this dichotomous variable to identify rivals.

In addition to the presence, number and duration of a rivalry, the capabilities of ones rivals are also an important consideration. In evaluating its international environment, a state will compare its own capabilities with its rivals to determine if it has an advantage. Using the CINC scores from the COW project National Material Capabilities Data (Singer 1988) I calculate a power ratio for each focal state and their rivals using the following equation, modified from Bapat (2007):

$$\frac{\text{Focal state CINC}}{\text{Focal state CINC} + \sum \text{Rival CINC}}$$

This provides the proportion of power the focal state has compared to its rivals, ranging from 0 to 1. The higher the proportion, the more of a power advantage the focal state has over its rivals.

Using the Maoz religion and language datasets, I will create two variables to measure the concept of affinity (a shared feeling of identification or similarity between two groups). Each will be a dichotomous variable that indicates if the opposition in the focal state ( $O_i$ ) is of the same religion or uses the same language as the government of another state ( $G_j$ ). I will use the Goemans, Gleditsch, and Chiozza (2009) dataset of political leaders to identify the leaders of each state and then research their respective language and religion. Using the COW intrastate war, I will research and identify the language and religion of the opposition groups involved in the civil war. In the situation where there may be multiple languages or religions within an opposition group, in order

to be identified as having an affinity relationship, at least one element of the opposition group must share linguistic or religious affinity with  $G_j$ .

An alternative operationalization of the affinity concept is to combine both the language and religion variables. This will be an ordinal variable that will represent the number of states ( $G_j$ ) that the opposition ( $O_i$ ) has affinity with.

### **IB. Interstate Conflict → Civil War**

**Hypothesis 3:** Given a state's ( $G_i$ ) involvement in an interstate conflict (IC), the likelihood of a civil war (CW) **increases:**

- A) as the political capacity of a state **increases**.
- B) if the domestic opposition ( $O_i$ ) shares affinity with the adversary in the international conflict ( $G_j$ ).

The dependent variable for this model is the outbreak of civil war. This is a dichotomous variable coded as yes/no. For the full model examining the post-WWII time period I will use the COW definition. (I will conduct analyses using the PRIO and Fearon definitions as robustness checks for the post-1945 period).

To measure a state's political capacity I use their defense burden and human burden. The defense burden of a state is measured using the following equation for each nation year:

$$\frac{\text{Military expenditures}}{\text{Gross Domestic Product}}$$

This measure represents the proportion of the national product used on military spending. The military expenditure variable is one component of the CINC measure from the COW

project (Singer 1988) which represents the annual total military budget of each state.<sup>6</sup>

The source of the GDP data is the Maddison (2003) project.

The human military burden of a state is measured using the military participation ratio:

$$\frac{\text{Military personnel}}{\text{Total population}}$$

This variable represents the proportion of the states population serving as active troops.

Both the military personnel and total population variables are components of the CINC measure from the COW project (Singer 1988).

I will use the Maoz language and religion datasets to create the affinity measure. However, since there is no active opposition, I assume that the groups within the focal state ( $G_i$ ) that do not share linguistic or religious affinity with the government are latent or potential opposition groups. I then identify and generate a dummy variable if any of these latent opposition groups share linguistic or religious affinities with the adversary in the active international conflict.

### ***PRELIMINARY RESULTS***

The initial analyses presented here focus on the effect of civil war on interstate conflict at the nation-state level of analysis. Future work will analyze the reverse causal arrow, looking at the effect of international conflict on the outbreak of civil war.

Additionally, at present I am in the process of collecting data for the religious and linguistic affinity variables and therefore these variables are not included in the preliminary results presented here. Based on the above discussion of the research design, I evaluate the following basic model:

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<sup>6</sup> In measuring this variable it is noted that it was often difficult to identify and exclude appropriations of a non-military nature. This results in many values including items such as domestic/national police forces. While this is seen as a possible error by the COW project, for the purposes of this project, it is not.

International Conflict =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1\text{Rivals} + \beta_2\text{Rivalry Duration} + \beta_3\text{Power Ratio} + \beta_4\text{Controls} + \varepsilon$

## **INSERT TABLE 2 HERE**

The results presented in Table 2 correspond to the four models employing alternative specifications of the dependent variable representing international conflict. Overall, the results are encouraging for my argument regarding the influence of rivals and power on the likelihood of a civil war state initiating or joining a conflict. The coefficient for the number of rivals remains significant across all four models. This indicates that the more strategic rivals a civil war state has, the more likely they are to initiate or join an international conflict, to have increasing numbers of MIDs, to have a conflict escalate to the use of force, and to escalate all the way to war. In addition, the power ratio between the civil war state and its rivals has a significant positive influence on the initiating or joining a conflict as well as increasing the likelihood of the conflict resulting in a use of force.

## ***CONCLUSION***

This project focuses on the relationship between international conflict and civil war across levels of analysis. It aims to answer two key questions: (1) Under what conditions and to what extent does civil war lead to international conflict?, and (2) Under what conditions and to what extent does international conflict lead to civil war? While these questions have been posed, the answers fall short in their ability to illuminate the fundamental relationships at work between these two extremely important phenomena in international relations. I argue that the analysis of the connection between civil war and

international conflict across levels of analysis will provide for a more coherent understanding of this subject.

Additionally, there remains an inconsistency between the bulk of the findings regarding the relationship and the empirical regularity regarding the increase in civil wars and the concurrent decrease in international wars. I propose a unified theory that identifies the specific characteristics of civil wars that make them more likely to lead to international conflict, as well as the specific characteristics of international conflicts that make them more likely to lead to civil wars. By addressing the key weaknesses and gaps in the current research, this project will advance our collective understanding on this topic.

Preliminary analysis at the nation-state level provides initial support for my theoretical argument that there are specific conditions within a civil war state that make it more likely to become involved in international conflict. In the near future when I have completed the data collection process for the religion and language variables I anticipate additional encouraging results. The addition of the dyadic and systemic levels of analysis will allow for a much more complete understanding of the mechanisms that drive the relationship between civil war and international conflict.

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*Appendix: Tables and Figures*

Table 1  
Relative frequencies of interstate and civil wars, 1816-1997

Years	Interstate Wars		Intrastate Wars	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
1816-1918	40	31.2	88	68.8
1919-1945	15	40.5	22	59.5
1946-1989	22	21.8	79	78.2
1990-1997	1	4.0	24	96.0

Note: adapted from Stoll (2005)

Table 2  
Logit and Poisson Analysis of International Conflict Interventions

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Initiate	No. of MIDS	Use of Force	War
No. of Rivals	0.1870 (3.71)**	0.2910 (18.77)**	0.1520 (3.17)**	0.2980 (4.34)**
Length of rivalry	-0.0010 (0.4200)	0.0040 (4.27)**	-0.0020 (0.9200)	-0.0030 (0.7200)
Power ratio	0.7200 (2.29)*	-0.1960 (1.3900)	0.9140 (3.08)**	0.7880 (1.6500)
Polity Score	0.0030 (1.0700)	-0.0020 (1.3400)	0.0000 (0.1400)	-0.0020 (0.4600)
Contiguity	0.1290 (5.48)**	0.1070 (13.33)**	0.0570 (2.63)**	0.0750 (2.21)*
Constant	-1.9430 (10.48)**	-1.0840 (13.76)**	-0.8680 (5.41)**	-3.3550 (11.21)**
Observations	935	935	935	935

Note: Cell entries for model 1, 3, and 4 are logit coefficients.

Cell entries for model 2 are Poisson coefficients.

Absolute value of z statistics in parentheses

\* significant at 5%; \*\* significant at 1%

Fig. 1  
Number of Civil Wars (1816-2007)

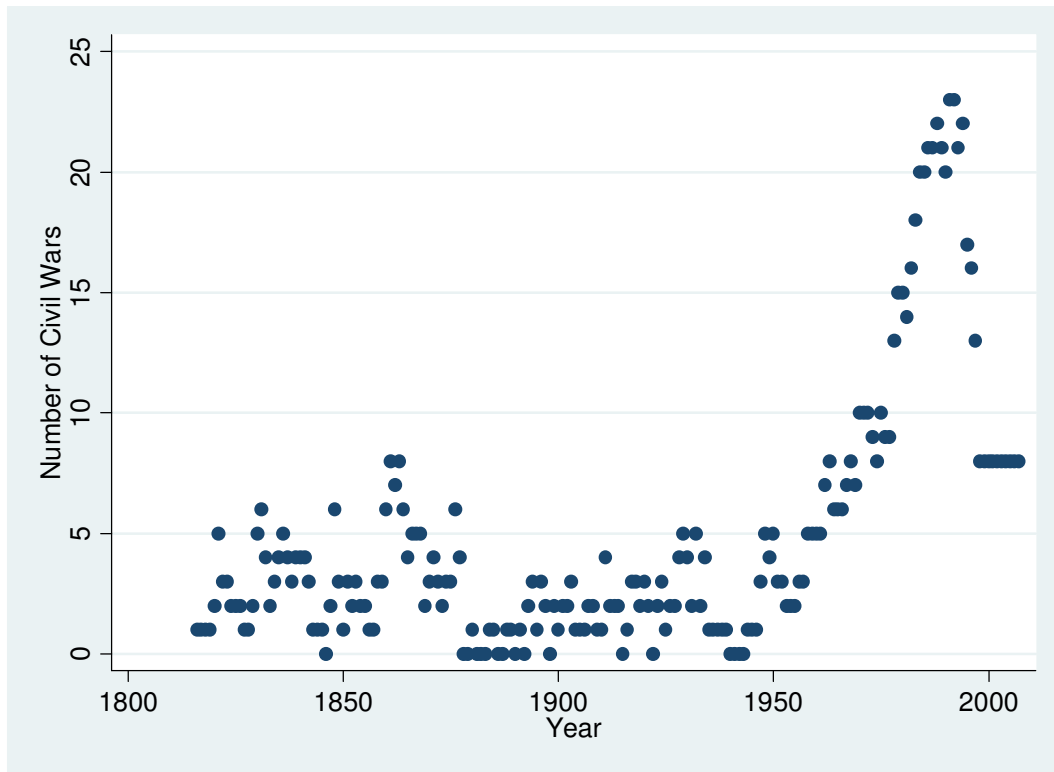
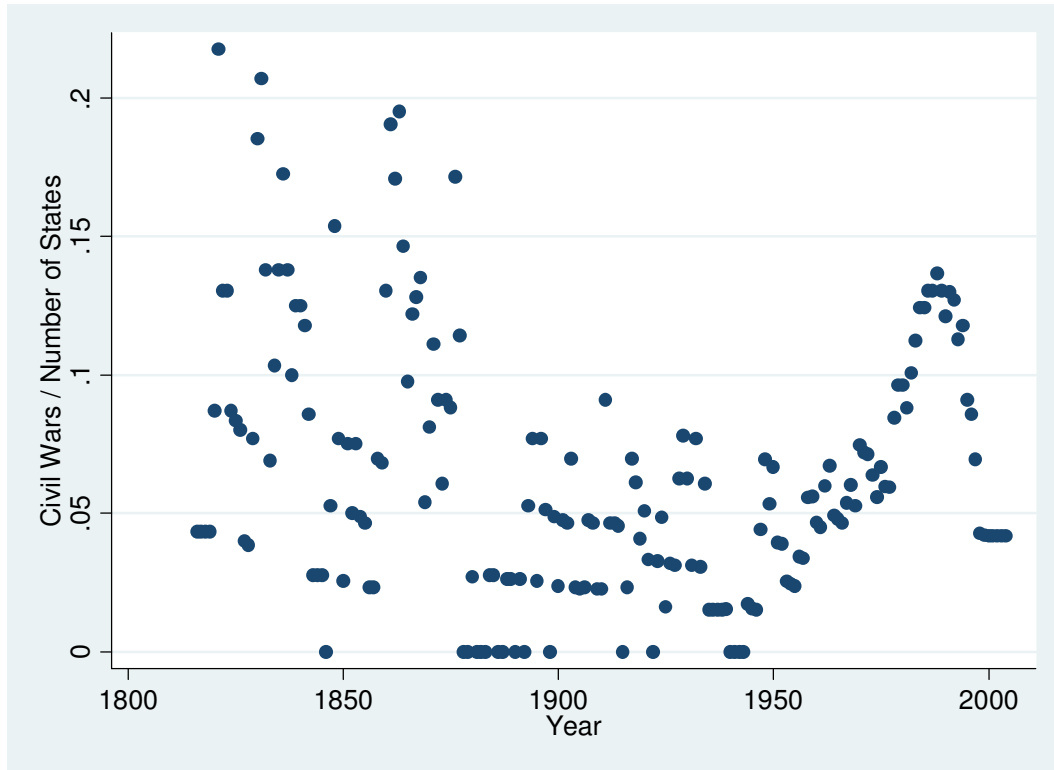
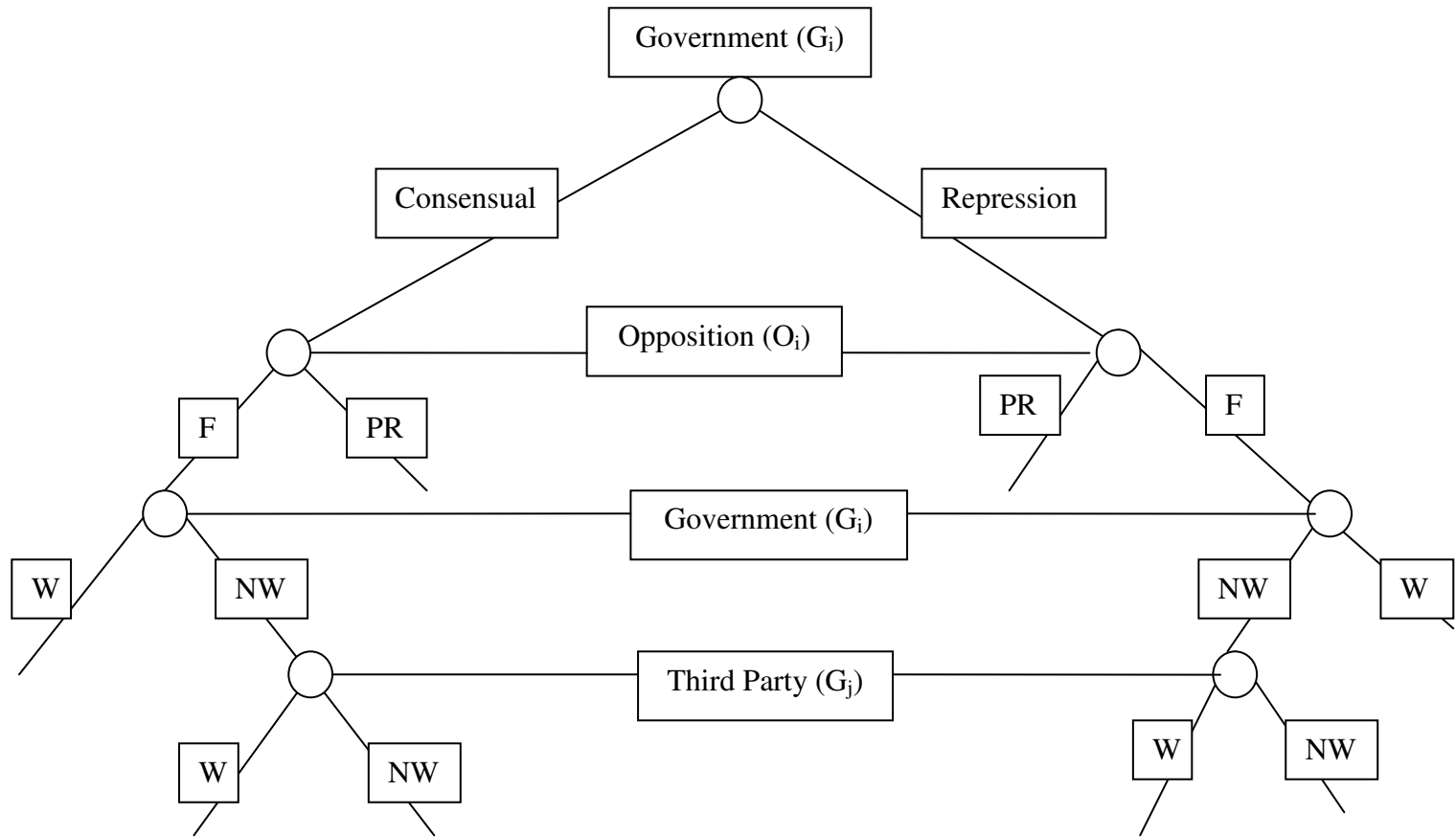


Fig. 2  
Proportion of Civil Wars per Number of States (1816-2007)

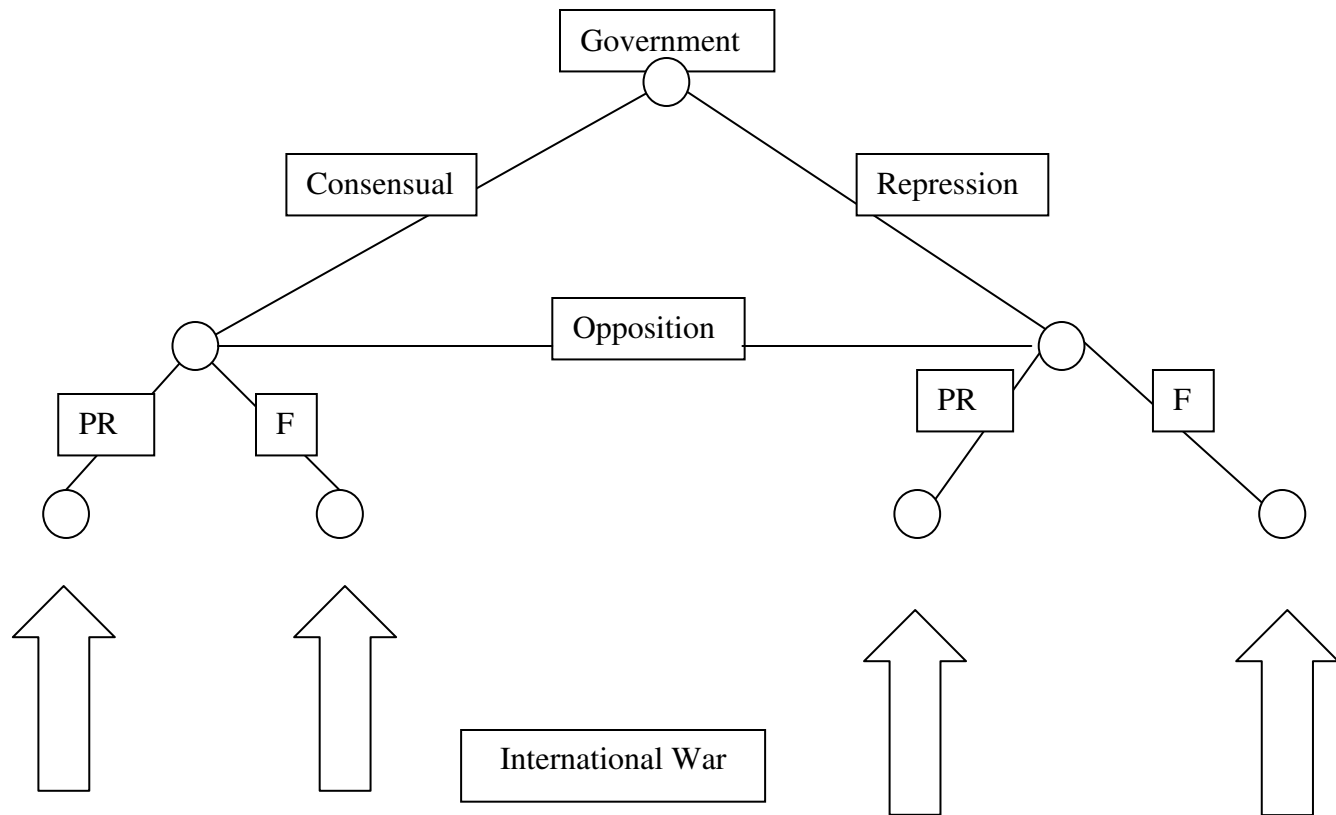


**Fig. 3** The Effect of Civil War on International War



Key  
 PR = Play by rules  
 F = Fight  
 W = War  
 NW = No War

**Fig. 4** The Effect of International War on Civil War



Key

PR = Play by rules  
F = Fight/Civil War