

Civil War and State Formation: Exploring Linkages and Potential Causality

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Working Paper

Civil War and State Formation: Exploring Linkages and Potential Causality

Joshua Rogers

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	<u>Abstract</u>	03
1	<u>Introduction</u>	04
2	<u>Core Concepts</u>	06
3	<u>The Proposed Process</u>	10
4	<u>Summary and Caveats</u>	22
	<u>Bibliography</u>	24
	<u>About swisspeace</u>	30

Abstract

This working paper offers a perspective on contemporary debates about state-formation, contributing to ongoing thinking about the role of conflict and specifically civil war in the emergence of different kinds of political orders.

Based on a reconceptualization of the likely nature of the linkages between civil war and political order, the working paper develops a set of potential causal pathways linking common conditions of civil war to likely wartime changes in the political settlement and state institutions. In doing so, it aims to provide an organising framework for future research to explore conditions under which different pathways predominate and aims to offer an analytical tool to policy makers and researchers to consider potential impacts and consequences of violent conflict in contexts of concern.

1

Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century, there was an established policy consensus that violent conflict was both a cause and consequence of state weakness, failure and disintegration. Much of this policy-focused literature built on earlier academic explorations of changes in the international economy, technologies of violence, and the norm of sovereignty, all of which seemed to suggest that “war in the contemporary developing world tends to trigger [...] dismantling and even a criminalisation of [state] administrative structures” (Leander, 2004, p. 74; see also: Bayart et al., 1997; Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Cooper, 2002; Duffield, 2001; Herbst, 2004; Jung, 2003; Kaldor, 2013, 1999, Reno, 2002a, 1998). By contrast, two more recent strands of research have called into question a simple antithesis between violent conflict and state weakness.

The first of these strands has seen a deeper engagement with the actually occurring historical trajectories of state formation. Making effective use of the insights of Charles Tilly (Tilly, 1992, 1985, 1975), this literature has placed the ‘violence problem’ at the centre of state-formation logics and processes (North et al., 2013, 2009), to explore ways in which certain forms of violence ground political order (e.g. Giustozzi, 2011a), and to investigate how institutions change and adapt in crisis settings (Di John, 2010a; Giustozzi, 2011b; Gutiérrez Sanín, 2009; Putzel and Di John, 2009); complicating a simple antithesis between violence and the institutional forms and innovations we associate with the modern state.¹ This literature has stressed that in addition to the fragmentation and ‘state failure’ associated with internal violence, there are situations in which “statemaking and what we now call ‘internal war’ are two sides of the same coin,” since state formation implies moves to reduce the autonomy and rule-making ability, access to violence, and fiscal and other resources of non-state actors, which are likely to meet fierce resistance (Ayoob, 1998; compare also: Giustozzi, 2011a; Schlichte, 2007; Skocpol, 2008).

The second strand of literature has begun exploring the complexity of the political orders generated in contexts of civil war at a much more local level, highlighting that while conflict often fragments political order, it can provide the framework for a wide variety of sometimes highly sophisticated institutions (Arjona, 2014, 2011; Mampilly, 2007). Research on the micro level impact of violent conflict on political institutions has demonstrated the need to explore the (micro-)politics of civil war and the multiple competing processes that impact on the character and durability of institutions in contexts of war and conflict. Different kinds of institutional change can and are promoted by processes of armed violence (e.g. Justino et al., 2013).

Starting from these recent insights, the paper offers a reconceptualization of the likely linkages between civil war and state formation. It argues that the centrality of violence, particularly internal violence, for the establishment and reproduction of political order has not been taken seriously enough and as a result civil war has been unproblematically equated with state collapse and unmaking, even though its impact is likely to be far more complex and contingent. Building on the questions highlighted by this conceptual shift, the paper

1 This is a view with much older roots, which has recently had to be re-discovered (compare e.g. Malešević, 2010 on the connections between war-making and state-making in classical sociological thought). Moreover, it was on the forefront of thinking about the state in Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, whether on the left - as in Walter Benjamin’s (1966) critique of violence - or in fascist theorizing, such as Carl Schmitt’s (1979) analysis of the ‘state of exception.’ Indeed, Max Weber can also be read in this way (Weber, 1980, pp. 815, 822).

develops a set of potential causal pathways linking common conditions of civil war to likely wartime changes in the political settlement and state institutions; based on a wide reading of the existing literature. Seeking in relatively simple, abstracted form to set-out a complex and at times contradictory set of linkages, the processes presented here necessarily abstract from the specificities of domestic institutions, historical rivalries, and time- and place-bound types of knowledge.

2.1. The State and Political Settlements

Attempts to theorise the state in the field of peace and conflict studies have tended to focus on crises of the state in parts of the global South; crises that have typically been conceptualised as state collapse, fragility, or weakness (Herbst, 2004; Milliken, 2003; Patrick, 2006; Rotberg, 2004; Zartman, 1995). Implicitly or explicitly, this literature shares a vision of the state as the supplier of rights and public goods and as the arena of peaceful democratic and market-based competition - it defines the state in terms of a set of functions and determines whether states are strong or weak based on some aggregation of measures of these functions.²

Where this notion of the state is made explicit, we are offered lists of state functions – to supply public goods, provide social welfare, encourage civility, or give citizens the right to vote – whether codified as ten (Ghani and Lockhart, 2008) or a more compact four such functions (Levi, 2002; Zürcher, 2007).

Arguably, this literature is characterised by serious confusion between the concept of state weakness and its consequences³ and, more broadly, is orientated towards externally imposed criteria and suppresses power, politics and history. The analysis relies on categories that are “subjective, arbitrary and externally imposed”, to borrow from Kriger’s assessment of peacebuilding criteria (Kriger, 2003, pp. 11, 15); for the functions of the state are derived from a particular historical notion of the state, which itself has always been something of an idealisation. Indeed, for decades after Weber formulated his thoughts on the state, even in the most powerful states, the legitimate use of force was not only exercised, but successfully claimed, by party and private militias, vigilantes, and private security and detective companies.⁴

When approaching the state from the perspective of functions, practical difficulties, surrounding the choice of indicators, conceptual clarity, quality of data, and issues of aggregation, abound (Gutiérrez Sanín, 2009).⁵ These are accompanied by major theoretical difficulties. Thinking about the state in terms of functions by its nature requires a (normative) theory of what states should do, an account of the boundaries between the state and society, and a theory of how the state should be doing the things states are supposed to do. None of these are unproblematic, as the ‘third wave’ of state theorising has underscored (see e.g. Jessop, 2001; Migdal, 2001; Mitchell, 1991). Moreover, such thinking about the state is blind to the identity of powerful actors and the very different political orders implied by different dominant coalitions.

What might an alternative perspective look like? There has been a marked convergence in recent work in political economy (Cramer, 2006; Cramer and Goodhand, 2003; Putzel and Di John, 2009), institutional economics (Khan, 2007; North et al., 2013, 2009) and parts of sociology interested in

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- 2 Cullen Hendrix (2010) provides a useful overview of different measures and what they may be capturing.
 - 3 For instance, Bob Jessop (2001, p. 164) has pointed to the tautology involved in defining weakness or strength purely in terms of outcomes, whereby strong states are ones that are able to do the things strong states do.
 - 4 It is also worth noting that, “the state-centred and state-supporting literature of political science has been so heavily concerned with emphasizing the *benefits* of statehood that the other side of the account has gone almost unnoticed (...). The social costs of statehood, and particularly of modern statehood, include the sacrifice of identities and structures that are inimical to the hierarchies of control that states seek to impose” (Clapham, 2004, p. 86; see also: Scott, 1998).
 - 5 Gutierrez highlights that coding and ranking state performance run into two types of problems: issues such as poor conceptual definition, conceptual dispersion, inconsistencies, and confusion between causes and definitions, which he deems serious, but potentially solvable, and those he argues are shared with practically all cross-national contemporary political science databases and which he judges as probably not solvable. On the specific point of indicators and their meaning, the example of tax to GDP ratio is instructive. It is a frequently used and clearly important political economy variable (compare e.g. Di John, 2010a). However, not only is it uncritically utilised as a proxy for a broad range of weakly-linked indicators, but it is also unclear what we can infer about the relative ‘strength’ of the state from the fact that, for example, Algeria, Lesotho, and Sweden all had average tax/GDP values near 31% between 1980 and 2000 (Hendrix, 2010, p. 279).

long-term historical trajectories (Mann, 2012, 1993, 1986, Tilly, 1992, 1985, 1975), offering a view of the state and state-formation focusing on conflict, power and violence, rather than state functions. Indeed, it views such functions almost as by-products. These works all share an interest in the historical processes by which actually existing states have been formed and (1) stress how specific groups and powerful social actors use the coercive capacities of the state for their benefit, (2) view the forms and institutions of the state as a product of significant and ongoing conflict for political, economic and cultural power⁶, and (3) recognise the centrality of violence for contesting, establishing and reproducing the state.

A promising way to capture these insights lies in the conceptual vocabulary of the political settlement (Khan, 2010; Putzel and Di John, 2009) or dominant coalition (North et al., 2013, 2009). This approach stresses that any political order is based on an agreement between groups with access to violence, particularly those that could bring down the existing order were they to revolt. Together, these groups, whose alliance is at the heart of state power, are the dominant coalition. The implicit or explicit agreement governing the allocation of obligations and rights (to violence, property, political influence and dispute resolution) to the dominant coalition is the political settlement. This settlement reflects the underlying political economy, for the powerful interests that make up the dominant coalition and their (imperfect) control of coercion and capital determine whose interests are reflected in laws and state practice. Although often stable for long periods, any political settlement is subject to recurrent renegotiation, in which external shocks or gradually-accruing changes in bargaining power can lead to (sudden) shifts in the settlement.

For all the utility of thinking about the state in this way, there is a danger of throwing out the baby of institutions with the bathwater of a narrow focus on state functions. The tendency of the political settlement literature to treat institutions primarily as epiphenomena of more or less inclusive coalitions underestimates institutions' durability and the way they generate new interests and even social groups, thus creating path dependencies, altering the political settlement in turn and constraining the range of options open to the dominant coalition and others (Hall and Taylor 1996).

Moreover, there is a danger in an exclusive focus on the political settlement of losing sight of the questions that motivated the thinking about the links between conflict and political order in the first instance: making sense of tendencies of fragmentation and cohesion, centralisation and de-centralisation, routinisation, formalisation and informalisation; as well as links between political settlements, institutions and developmental and state-formation outcomes.

6 In the words of Douglass North (1990, pp. 260–261), (state) institutions are created “to serve the interest of those with bargaining power to create new rules”

For this reason, the working paper proposes to view the political settlement in tandem with institutional changes, i.e. shifts in organisations, rules, formal and informal procedures, functionaries, and bureaucrats that embody

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- 7 Those familiar with Peter Hall's (1997) analysis of institutional development may find it useful to think about the political settlement in terms of 'interests,' and the institutional expression of the state in terms of 'institutions'. Or, in the terms of Kahlevi Holsti's (1996, p. 97) thinking about the state, the 'physical basis' of the state and its 'institutional expression.' The third item in both of these authors' trinity of explanation, ideas, doubtlessly help determine which of the rival pathways identified in section three are pursued by actors, but this dimension is not explored further below.
- 8 These studies have consistently found that civil war weakens states measured in terms of the ratio of tax to GDP. However, findings have not always been statistically significant and suffer from major shortcomings in terms of construct validity and data quality. They have not engaged with evidence from studies of civil war onset that coding decisions about civil war can have substantial impacts on findings (Sambanis, 2004), with evidence that GDP data is highly unreliable (Jerven, 2013), or with arguments that missing data may be systematically absent: "For it is in the nature of things that [the quality of] state-performance information is directly proportional to the level of development and the strength of the state" (Gutiérrez Sanín, 2009, p. 9).
- 9 This has become a common theme of work focusing on the micro-dynamics of conflict at least since Kalyvas' (2006) important contribution. Compare i.a. the collection in (Justino et al., 2013).
- 10 While there is no obvious boundary between civil war and related phenomena such as smaller-scale insurgencies, less contentious organised crime, or less violent mass protests and direct action - and important political struggles occur over the naming of actually existing instances of contention - there is much to be said for viewing them as distinct, but related phenomena. In important ways, political violence is not simply a continuation of non-violent contentious politics by other means, for "if and when violent means on both sides begin to predominate, mobilisation, rivalries, and defensive action all spiral rapidly upward" (Rogers, 2011, p. 51).

the state in practice and provide both its organisational form and the officials who conceive of themselves as its agents. This perspective allows us to conceive of the state as both a system of domination and its incarnation in rules and patterned behaviours, characterised by an historical process of state-formation and ongoing conflict.⁷

2.2. Civil War

The other core concept of this paper is civil war and the mechanisms and processes that may characterise it. Too often, thinking about civil war and particularly about the connections between civil war and the state has engaged in little to no analysis of what civil war is and what may characterise phenomena labelled in this way.

One reason why this is so important is because of a tendency in the literature on the impact of civil war on the state to investigate the state-making and state-breaking effects of civil war through large-n quantitative 'testing' (e.g. Chowdhury and Murshed, 2014; Lu and Thies, 2013; Thies, 2005).⁸ This literature fails to take the possibility seriously that because civil wars are messy and complex things, there may be multiple competing and contradictory causal pathways linking civil wars to outcomes in terms of political order. Yet, this is almost certainly the case, for when students of civil war have explored their object conceptually, they have tended to stress civil war as one among a range of forms of violence and collective action, itself composed of a wide variety of different behaviours and practices (e.g. Cramer, 2006; Kalyvas, 2003). That is to say, there is great diversity both between different instances of what we refer to as civil wars and between what happens in different places and to different (types of) people within any given such conflict.⁹

If this is true, the *average* effects of 'civil war' on 'the state' become a great deal less interesting because there is underlying variation. One way of capturing this insight is to view civil war as a form of violent claim making and collective action sharing features with other forms of contentious politics. In this view, civil war is collective contentious action exhibiting high levels of coordination and in which violent coercion is the main way in which power is exercised and contested – that is, the 'salience of violence' is high (Tilly, 2003).¹⁰

Such an approach to civil war readily acknowledges the wide diversity of causes, consequences, forms and objectives at work in the group of events and processes we call civil war. It can also deal with the fact that civil war, as a form of contention, is always about challenging the status quo: Insurgents claim to fight to establish or maintain a more just order for some fraction of the population (Jung, 2003, p. 15). In this sense, it is unlikely that civil war has a single effect on the institutions of the state and the dominant coalitions that emerge from conflict. The status quo and the alternative being offered matter: What is being contested, by whom, against whom, and how. Insurgent aims,

degrees of success, wartime institutional developments by both incumbents and insurgents, and the peace agreements that end conflict, to name but a handful of important factors, shape the nature of the political order that emerges.¹¹

However, such a definition also highlights the fact that civil war is likely to exhibit important similarities at the meso-level (Tarrow and Tilly, 2007; Tilly, 2003). This is because as a form of highly coordinated collective action in which the salience of violence is high, civil war requires the articulation of a challenge to the status quo and thus (1) reveals the existence of rivals to the dominant coalition. In addition, as a form of contention in which violent coercion is the main way in which power is exercised and contested, (2) civil war increases the salience of violence for contestation and rule maintenance. Finally, because of widespread coordinated violence for control of territory, population, and/or resources, (3) civil war re-draws zones of control, with far-reaching implications for strategies of rule maintenance. Overlying these processes, the violence, death and destruction of war itself is liable to cast a long shadow.¹²

11 Such an approach may also instil a sensible scepticism about the various efforts to pin down precise and consistent definitions and coding rules for a civil war (c.f. Cramer, 2006).

12 Viewing civil wars in this way also alerts us to dangers of reification and glorification that have accompanied war-making since its inception, in the sense that it is only one form - and often a destructive and ineffective one - of claim making and collective action. At the same time, viewing civil war as a set of processes within a continuum of political violence and collective action highlights its political nature and cautions against the similarly reifying demonization of any violent challenge to the status quo of authors equating civil war with development in reverse and the unmaking of states.

13 Viewing civil war in this way also suggests that these different processes are what we should be interested in - only in a second instance does this then mean thinking about systematic variation between different configurations of civil war on them. While there is some evidence that ethnic and non-ethnic civil wars follow different logics (Cederman et al., 2013; Doyle and Sambanis, 2000; Sambanis, 2001), that secessionist conflicts, rebellions, and coups likely include differential dynamics and may be made more likely by different factors, (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Kalyvas, 2005; Le Billon, 2001), and external intervention can impact on and internationalise 'domestic' civil war in complex ways, thinking of civil war as a form of contention with recurrent features and shared processes, means that these themselves may offer the richest opportunities for disaggregation.

That we can construct such a list of common processes operational during civil war highlights that such wars, or rather the practices that compose them, are likely to influence the state in systematic ways. As we will see in the following, it is a way to think about the impact of civil war on the state that can help to get beyond an impasse in the literature, that, even in its most sophisticated versions, has concluded (doubtlessly correctly) that there is "no single unambiguous causal relation between states and wars" (Schlichte, 2003, p. 38), but has left it at that.¹³

The Proposed Processes

The above discussion suggests civil war is marked by three widely recurring features. It (1) reveals the existence of rivals to the dominant coalition; (2) increases the salience of violence for contestation and rule maintenance; and (3) redraws social and spatial zones of control, with far-reaching implications for strategies of rule maintenance and access to resources. These three recurrent features are likely to affect the two dimensions of the state identified above: the political settlement and its institutional expression. This section spells out the potential mechanisms¹⁴ by which they appear to be connected.

3.1. Effects on the Political Settlement

The mechanisms linking features of civil war to the political settlement are summarised in Figure 1. They begin from the three recurring features of civil war identified in the previous section.

Revealing the existence of rivals to the dominant coalition, civil war both creates and reflects an elite crisis. On the one hand, there is a great deal of evidence suggesting that civil wars tend to arise under conditions of renegotiation or crisis of the political settlement (Giustozzi, 2011a; Skocpol, 1979); on the other, war and civil war generally open up “new arenas of conflict, bargaining and accommodation” between elites (Heydemann, 2000, p. 17). As a result, it often translates into conflict between and defection of elements of the coalition, resulting in rapid shifts in power and in the composition of the dominant coalition itself. Moreover, since war marks intensive periods of primitive accumulation (Cramer, 2006) and extreme returns on investment are possible for entrepreneurs that are willing to take the exorbitant risks of operating under conditions of war and/or serve the needs of (successful) violence specialists (Cramer and Goodhand, 2003), civil war tends to create stark winners and losers among economic actors, thereby again re-drawing the membership of the dominant coalition.

Second, increases in the salience of violence for rule maintenance mean that the dominant coalition has an increased need for violence, which it can meet by mobilising existing violence specialists, by creating new security organisations, or by seeking external allies. The process outlined in Figure 1, below, suggests that each has a different effect on the political settlement, since access to violence decisively determines the distribution of the material benefits and opportunities offered by war (Raeymaekers, 2013).¹⁵

If members of the dominant coalition seek predominantly to build alliances with existing local violence specialists, this is likely to lead to a decentralisation of power over coercion, since it usually involves giving up large amounts of central oversight (Giustozzi, 2011a, p. 63) and requires the transfer of rights, including rights to revenue extraction, and of control over resources to local violence specialists from the centre to buy loyalty. Moreover, as Joel Migdal (2001, p. 68) has argued, powerful local intermediaries tend to undermine conditions for centralising control of coercion in the longer term,

14 With its focus on mechanisms, this paper takes an approach inspired by process tracing. It seeks to set out a potential “causal chain [...] between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable” (George and Bennett, 2004, pp. 206–207; compare also: Gerring, 2007, p. 45). Process tracing implies a ‘mechanismic’ ontology, that is a belief that statements of causality can go beyond statements of regular conjunction (Sayer, 1992).

15 Different conditions of warfare may be one important factor influencing choices over mobilising. According to Gongora, (1997), the importance of advanced weapons in interstate conflict has underwritten a strong preference among dominant coalitions for large-scale external support since the second half of the 1950s in the Middle East in order to access advanced technologies of violence. In this sense, civil war, which is often characterised by less technology-intensive warfare, may be one of the few forms of contemporary warfare in which seeking such forms of external support is not a strongly dominant strategy.

since they make the creation of effective central militaries more difficult. Indeed, while ‘taming’ violence may make sense viewed from the capital, violence and brinkmanship are often tools for local violence specialists to increase their leverage vis a vis the centre (Giustozzi, 2009, p. 13).

Such a dynamic appears to have been operational during the civil war in Yemen in the 1960s. The conflict between the ‘royalists’ and ‘republicans’, generated an escalating bidding war to secure the support of armed tribes for the rival sides. This generated a veritable flood of guns and money for tribes in the country’s north, greatly expanding their power and underwriting an extensive process of involuntary decentralisation (Dresch, 2000; Rogers, forthcoming). Similarly, in Sierra Leone, regime support and arming of the Kamajors, Mende hunters that increasingly replaced the disintegrating military, while successful in stabilizing most Mende areas of Sierra Leone, coincided with and accelerated the disintegration of the military and expanded the autonomy of these areas (Arnold, 2008).

By contrast, successful attempts to create new organisations - to mobilise and organise new capabilities for coercion, especially where such organisations mobilise new constituencies and are designed to address the continued need for selective violence in a context where targeting is increasingly difficult - are likely to extend central patronage networks and draw new groups into the political settlement, often, but not necessarily, strengthening the security forces as the preferred conduit for such patronage.

The centralising impetus of new coercive organisations stems from the fact that mobilising new constituencies often generates direct relationships between actors at the centre and various locales not mediated through local gatekeepers or strongmen. For example, in Algeria, militia mobilisation during the later years of the 1990s civil war drew on hitherto ‘neutral’ elements of the population, notably former fighters in the War of Independence and the young men who also provided one of the key constituencies of the armed Islamist groups. Creating these new militia groups appears to have succeeded in generating support for the central government and extending the reach of its patronage networks (Lowi, 2005, p. 235; Martinez, 2000, pp. 194–5). Similarly, in Peru “the arming of the *rondas campesinas* led to new ties between state agents and local indigenous residents in many highland communities despite previous state violence” (Wood, 2008, p. 545). This same counter-insurgency strategy gave greater power and autonomy to the armed forces (Mauceri, 1997).

However, the distinction between these two strategies - empowering local violence specialists vs. creating new organisations and mobilising new groups - may not always be clear-cut and many actual instances of mobilisation, whether by rebel groups or incumbents, are likely to combine elements of both. Moreover, the former strategy may masquerade as the latter, since institutionalising and centrally-recognising existing local violence specialists is often the easier strategy to pursue in practice, whereas the creation of new

organisations and the mobilisation of new constituencies often makes for better propaganda. In trying to disentangle the two, it may be helpful to enquire into the networks of political trust that predominate in purportedly ‘new’ organisations and the extent to which local leaders control them.

In a related dynamic, the pressures of civil war and the need to increase selective violence can in some cases put a check on recruitment and organising strategies in the armed forces that exclusively prioritise political loyalty, creating incentives that favour institutionalisation and professionalization, and offering particular advantages to the military within the dominant coalition (Giustozzi, 2011a, pp. 43–74).¹⁶ Direct threats, such as those presented by a civil war, are not sufficient to induce incumbents or insurgents to pursue such strategies, but they appear to be the only contexts in which the effectiveness of the armed forces may trump coup-proofing and political loyalty (Finer, 1975). Although this dynamic is more frequently raised in the context of inter-state war, if we are thinking about civil wars in terms of collective contentious action exhibiting high levels of coordination and in which violent coercion is the main way in which power is exercised and contested, there is no *a priori* reason why a similar dynamic should not exist in such conflicts, provided they create situations of acute military danger to incumbents. These appear to be most likely to occur where both sides face a realistic chance of military success.

For instance, all three cases of ‘social revolution’ examined by Theda Skocpol in her seminal study of France, China and Russia, exhibited such a dynamic, as revolutionaries responded to intense internal and external threats by creating permanent, professional militaries, whose size and effectiveness were vastly extended (Skocpol, 1979). Similarly, during the latter stages of the royalist-republican civil war in Yemen, the republican leadership ceased political purges, relied on (ideologically) suspect commanders and volunteers, and armed and trained the inhabitants of Sanaa, the capital, during the 70-day “siege of Sanaa.” The measures appear to have been critical to the successful defence of the capital, but set the scene for newly empowered and ‘professionalised’ officers to attempt to force political change once the siege had been weathered (Burrowes, 1987, pp. 30–31).¹⁷

Finally, securing large-scale external military support or direct intervention decisively shapes the parameters and incentives within which domestic actors pursue strategies. This is by no means to suggest that external interveners tend to get their way, or to reduce complex domestic factors to a single variable of foreign intervention. However, external intervention tends to supply coercive capacities well in excess of those available by other strategies to those it supports. Often coupled with external funding, discussed below, it tends to provide superior technologies of violence that require a high level of technical expertise and thus tend to have a centralising effect - such as air-power or armoured vehicles - and provides opportunities for patronage. While on face of it, it may appear as though such external support should undermine local violence specialists and even domestic armed forces, these

16 It is worth noting that how soldiers and rebel fighters are recruited may be important in its own right. Some research suggests that ideological recruitment strategies result in more disciplined and centralised forces than monetary recruitment strategies (Weinstein, 2007). However, the picture is likely to be significantly more complex (Guichaoua, 2013) and both strategies tend to coexist (Mampilly, 2011, p. 14).

17 Conversely, in situations where a conflict is based in a split of the military or a conflict’s master-cleavage is framed in terms of religious, ethnic, or linguistic identities, political loyalties and ascriptive identities may play a near-exclusive role in patterns of recruitment.

18 Not only, but perhaps especially, in an age of nationalism, legitimacy and local information have been among the most elusive resources for external interveners and consequently among the most powerful bargaining chips for domestic actors.

19 As in the case of mobilisation strategies, incumbents and insurgents can and do pursue multiple financing strategies at time (Mampilly, 2011, p. 14), meaning more than one of these pathways may be active at once.

are often central to external interveners as their recognised organisational counterparts and as suppliers of local knowledge.¹⁸ As a result, external intervention may be associated with both the decentralising and centralising dynamics discussed above. What it tends to add, however, is the resources necessary for sustaining a broad range of potential dominant coalitions not necessarily supported by the domestic political economy. It may incentivise the creation of narrow and unsustainable coalitions, due to interveners' tendency to define some parties to the conflict as being beyond the pale and conditioning their continued support on their exclusion.

External intervention per se does not create unsustainable dominant coalitions, but by decisively shaping the domestic political economy, it can allow dominant coalitions to form, which are dependent on continuing external support for their survival; indeed, dependence is sometimes a stated goal. As a result, the political settlement in these contexts may be highly unstable when the parameters of external intervention change (Giustozzi, 2011a, p. 227).

Under such conditions, domestic political economies often become organised around the regional and international pursuit of strategic rents (Heydemann, 2000, p. 13) and other forms of capital and power accumulation that is 'politically determined' (Weber, 1980, pp. 95–97) by interveners. In this way, such interventions appear likely to generate an externally-orientated dominant coalition and may disadvantage the domestic holders of capital in particular, as external intervention generally provides domestic violence specialists with sophisticated weapons and funds without having to strike bargains with the domestic holders of capital.

This process appears to have been operational in Yemen during the 1960s, when Egyptian support for President al-Sallal enabled, indeed was conditioned on, the political exclusion of the more consensual figures of Abd al-Rahman al-Iryani and Ahmed Noman, who were central to bringing the conflict to a settlement after Egyptian withdrawal. Other potential examples of such a dynamic at work include post-invasion Iraq and Afghanistan in the 2000s and Vietnam in the late 1960s and early 1970s (compare i.a. Giustozzi, 2009). As has become clear from the preceding discussion, the three pathways to mobilising violence specialists presented here - alliances with local violence specialists, recruitment of new constituencies, and gaining external intervention - need not be mutually exclusive, and we may find elements of all three - and consequently an activation of contradictory causal pathways - in any given situation.

Finally, the reconfiguration of zones of control under a large-scale violent challenge to incumbents means that under conditions of civil war, dominant coalitions lose access to domestic revenue, even as the cost of rule-maintenance increases. From the perspective of the political settlement, four potential reactions by dominant coalitions are particularly relevant.¹⁹

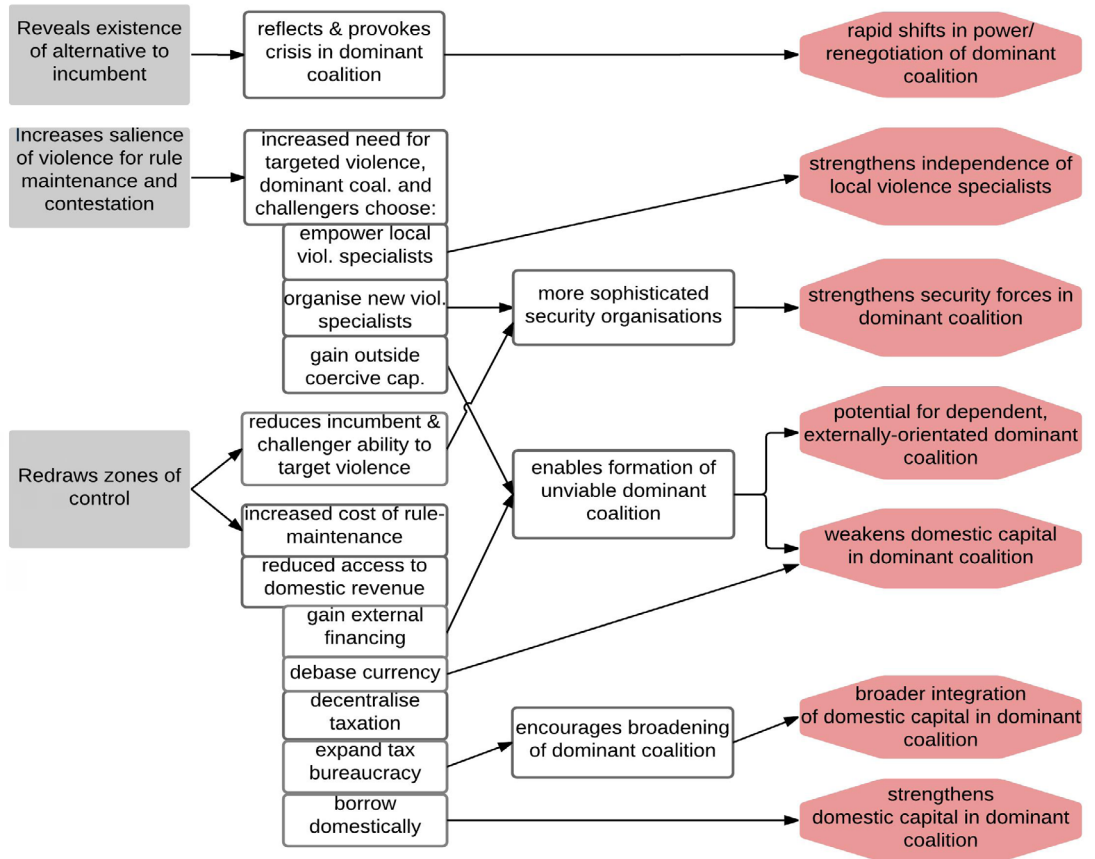


Figure 1: Effect of civil war on the political settlement

The first concerns gaining large-scale external financing. Like access to large-scale external coercion, this changes the parameters for the formation of a domestic dominant coalition. Where financing does not rely on bargains around taxation and bringing on board domestic holders of capital, there is greater variability in the potential composition of the dominant coalition, providing a context in which coalitions that are unsustainably narrow in domestic terms and must rely on continued access to external resources can emerge. Such external funding need not come from foreign governments. Other forms of rent, from natural resources or diaspora networks may also provide external funding, with each likely to condition potential insiders and outsiders in the dominant coalition in different ways. Overall, however, the availability of external financing appears likely to undermine the role of domestic capital in the wartime and post-war political settlement, while strengthening the position of the main actors in control of coercion. For, as foreign funding becomes central to deploying coercion and thus the survival of the dominant coalition, constituencies that gain bargaining power are those domestic actors that provide access to violence, as well as external donors. This weakens the bargaining power of domestic holders of capital and therefore cancels out incentives for (other) members of the dominant coalition to respond to their demands (Leander, 2004, pp. 72–6).²⁰

Contrary to the contention of a number of authors, who have seen such external financing and especially access to global financial flows as a recent phenomenon or a feature of ‘new wars’ (i.a. Kaldor, 1999; Leander, 2004), this dynamic appears to have a longer pedigree. For example, Miguel Centeno (2002) argues that the availability of global financial flows to Latin American governments in the 19th century diminished their need to extract revenue from their citizens in order to finance wars. As a result, war-making in Latin America - both in terms of intra- and inter-state conflict - led to a different, more externally-orientated state-formation process than that analysed by Charles Tilly (1992) in Europe during the 17th and 18th centuries.

There are other ways in which both incumbents and challengers might react to a loss of revenue, even as the costs of control increase, most notably the fiscal innovations that have often accompanied the high capital requirements of war: printing money, expanding (government) borrowing, and domestic resource mobilisation through taxation. Figure 1 suggests that strategies of money-creation, because of the inflationary pressures they cause, will tend to weaken the holders of capital within the dominant coalition. By contrast, strategies focusing on increasing domestic debt and borrowing likely empowers them, since, all other things being equal, they gain influence as creditors. Both of these tendencies should not be over-stated.²¹

Likewise, additional resource mobilisation through taxation will tend to strengthen the holders of capital within the dominant coalition and often encourages a broadening of the coalition. Since taxation, to be successful, is reliant on at least the passive acquiescence of those paying taxes (Levi, 1988), expanding taxation requires bargaining and often the extension of rights and/

20 The distinction between groups whose power depends on capital and those whose power depends on coercion is analytically useful in thinking about different interests within the dominant coalition. It is also a simplification, in that power is fungible to an extent: capital can buy coercion and access to coercion can create lucrative markets in protection or enforce monopolies, providing sources of capital.

21 Enormous profits can be made by the holders of capital through currency trading under conditions of (hyper)inflation (see e.g. Picard, 2000 on Lebanon), while conversely, leaders in control of coercion have often rid themselves of debts through threats or use of force against domestic creditors, pointing to the limits of control exercised through the purse alone.

or other benefits to broader constituencies - an idea that can be found in a succession of influential thinking about state formation from Schumpeter to Michael Mann (1984), Theda Skocpol, Charles Tilly, and Douglass North.²²

Yet, while a small number of states did develop a taxation apparatus during the past century - often going hand-in-hand, as in India, with the sort of resistance, localised rebellion and bargaining we would expect - on the whole, incumbents weighing their options in the international political economy of the past century have pursued rents and revenues derived from control of international borders, rather than pursuing internal taxation during periods of civil war. Particularly for incumbents in post-colonial settings, who inherited institutions designed primarily for this purpose (Bayart, 1996; Bayart et al., 1997; Cooper, 2002; Young, 1994), this has often been a favoured strategy.²³ As a result, post-independence incumbents and many of the insurgencies they face derive much of their income from natural resource extraction and international strategic alliances (Mampilly, 2011, pp. 69–72; Moore, 2004) - both sources of external funding in the terms of the schematic in Figure 1. Even where taxation has been a major source of income, much of it has come from levies on imports and exports, that is, from control of international borders, not from bargains with those inside a territory. It would appear that such income approximates the effects of external funding, as (some) rulers find that they can manage political networks without treasuries, extensive bureaucracies, or revenue collection, provided they monopolize commerce (Reno, 2002a, p. 841).

3.2. Effects on Institutions

The second proposed set of linkages concerns causal pathways linking civil war to outcomes in terms of institutions, that is changes in organisations, rules, formal and informal procedures, functionaries, and bureaucrats. These linkages are summarised in Figure 2 below. They begin from the same, now familiar, three recurrent features of civil war as those marking the starting point of potential processes in Figure 1.

Revealing the existence of alternatives to the incumbent, civil war reflects and provokes a crisis in the dominant coalition. This is likely, at least in the short term, to lead to a fragmentation of central control as the rump ruling coalition loses the resources - including violence specialists - provided by the defecting elements, weakening central control over violence and thus increasing the margin of manoeuvre of local strongmen and power brokers. Internal warfare fragments political authority (Kalyvas, 2006).

In addition, the increased salience of violence for regime maintenance under conditions of civil war increases incumbents' need for violence if they wish to remain in power. In response, they can empower local violence specialists or organise new constituencies for violence. This initial situation and the attendant choices are familiar from the discussion above.

22 Compare the useful discussion in Michael Ross' (2004) exploration of this issue.

Though his actual 'testing' of the impact of taxation on democratisation raises a number of issues about operationalisation and data quality, the conclusion that citizens ultimately care about the 'price' they pay for the government services they receive fits comfortably with the notion of dominant coalition bargaining (rather than more formalistic or institution-focused views of democratisation).

23 As a result, it has, ironically, often been rebel governance, long seen as anti-state, which has been most likely to attempt taxation strategies, which, in their more successful variants, have had to be rule-bound and offer benefits for the taxed to be successful - though equating all forms of (rebel) governance with state-building or state formation appears fallacious (Arjona et al., 2015).

Figure 2 proposes that in terms of institutional change, empowering local violence specialists will tend to multiply competing local institutions and weaken central institutions for control of violence. Empowering local violence specialists may reflect deliberate outsourcing or fragmentation strategies to protect incumbents from military concentrations of power (Leander, 2004; Reno, 1998), reflect the absence of alternative options, or other constraints.

Such a dynamic will be familiar to students of the conflict in Sierra Leone, where, as discussed above, central support for local militia groups was associated with a disintegration of the army as a centralised institution (Arnold, 2008). Similarly, in his discussion of warlordism in Afghanistan, Antonio Giustozzi (2009) highlights the way in which attempts to recruit local violence specialists for counterinsurgency purposes fragmented control over violence in Afghanistan to such an extent that the emergence of a number of powerful local warlords actually represented gains in centralisation and local security. Similar dynamics appear to have been present in South Sudan (De Waal, 1994) and Tajikistan (Nourzhanov, 2005). As these examples serve to highlight, the fragmentation resulting from empowering local violence specialists often increases the incidence of violence, for in 'markets' of violence, the actors that provide 'security' are, paradoxically, in a position to increase demand for their services by creating insecurity (Elwert, 1997; Mehler, 2004).

Alternatively, incumbents and insurgents may organise or recruit new violence specialists. As discussed above, this will tend to favour more centralised control over coercion and the creation of more sophisticated security organisations, although there may be countervailing pressures, thereby decisively shaping the relationship of the centre to the peripheries.

Centralisation of control over violence and professionalization of violence specialists appears to have been a feature of the United States' civil war. Recruitment drives and the need to supply growing numbers of troops as the war unfolded, led to significant centralisation, as state-led purchasing, recruitment and command became increasingly supplanted by a national military and its attendant bureaucracies of conscription, procurement and supply, resulting in a durable shift of power from the states to the central government (Wilson, 2006). Similar dynamics appear to have been present in Rwanda, where the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) organised Tutsi refugees from a range of backgrounds into a hierarchical fighting force in the early 1990s. The military victory of the RPF in the aftermath of the genocide and its existence in the initial post-conflict period as a centralised and powerful organisation appear to have been one of the key features structuring the creation of the current centralised, bureaucratic (and increasingly repressive) Rwandan institutional set-up (Straus and Waldorf, 2011).

In addition to the immediate impacts on institutions dealing in violence and on the degree of central control over violence rights, the examples highlight that strategies focusing on the recruitment of new constituencies are liable to have important, albeit potentially contradictory impacts on state institutions not primarily about the administration of violence.

On the one hand, stronger central institutions dealing in violence may weaken formal institutions not primarily concerned with the administration of coercion. This pathway emphasises the potential for military expenditure to crowd out other forms of state spending, as well as emphasising that in situations characterised by limited organisational capacity, a unified, professional military has often dominated other institutions and increases in perceptions of risk translated into greater pre-eminence and social standing of the military. This appears to have occurred in a number of cases where internal and external threats may have combined to create particularly acute perceptions of risk, including in Pakistan and Algeria (Giustozzi, 2011b, p. 10; Grawert, 2016). In addition, stronger central institutions dealing in violence might lead to a hollowing-out of civilian forms of administration to the extent that areas are put under outright military rule or civilian administration more broadly is subordinated to the war effort and military institutions substitute for civilian ones (through military tribunals and administration, military-led construction of roads and infrastructure, etc.).²⁴ To the extent that this pathway is operational, the formation of more sophisticated military organisations would lead to a weakening of non-coercive institutions.

On the other hand, as the examples of the US civil war and the RPF in Rwanda from above highlight, more sophisticated security organisations can have the opposite effect, providing an organisational model and experience with large, centrally controlled hierarchical organisations as well as acting as a conduit for other forms of bureaucratic and hierarchical organisation. As Weber argued with reference to the European experience, the rule-bound behaviour and organisational discipline of the military can form the foundation for the civilian bureaucracy (Weber, 1980, pp. 681–6). In addition, mobilising, keeping track of, equipping, paying and otherwise managing new violence specialists may have significant linkages to other areas of bureaucratic organisation. This means that, as appears to have been the case with the Northern states in the civil-war-era United States of America, the creation of a large, more centralised military can create pressures for the creation of a range of similarly centralised bodies to organise everything from the growing of food,²⁵ over the recruitment of soldiers, to overseeing industrial production (Wilson, 2006), thus driving selective bureaucratic expansion and penetration. In a related logic, Richard Stubbs describes a process whereby during the ‘Malay Emergency,’ the government’s desire to control territories ‘cleared’ of insurgents and to avoid their return, led incumbents to significantly expand the civil service at the local level and send government agents into areas where they had hitherto not been present (Stubbs, 1997, pp. 65–66).

24 To a certain extent, of course, the military and non-military are less distinct than this schematic suggests and there is an interrelation. Access to the means of violence can and is often used to accumulate fortunes, while accumulated capital allows the purchase of violence specialists, weapons and other paraphernalia of coercion.

25 On the particular and often neglected issue of food in war - its production, collection and distribution compare: Collingham (2013).

Finally, the third common feature of civil wars in this framework, the redrawing of zones of control, is likely to have important consequences for institutional change. There is mounting evidence that the redrawing of zones of control, and particularly contestation of local control, reduces both central control and the ability locally to sustain complex institutions that provide public goods (Arjona, 2014). Combined with the increased costs of maintaining

effective control implied by a coordinated, violent challenge to the status quo, loss of central control over some areas, creates strong incentives for incumbents to seek additional sources of funding or to more aggressively exploit existing sources. Again, analogous to the choices presented in Section 3.1, incumbents as well as insurgents, face difficult choices between different strategies to raise funds. As in section 3.1 above, these options are primarily: gaining large-scale external financing, decentralising taxation to local power holders, printing money, expanding (government) borrowing, and mobilising domestic resources, generally via forms of taxation.

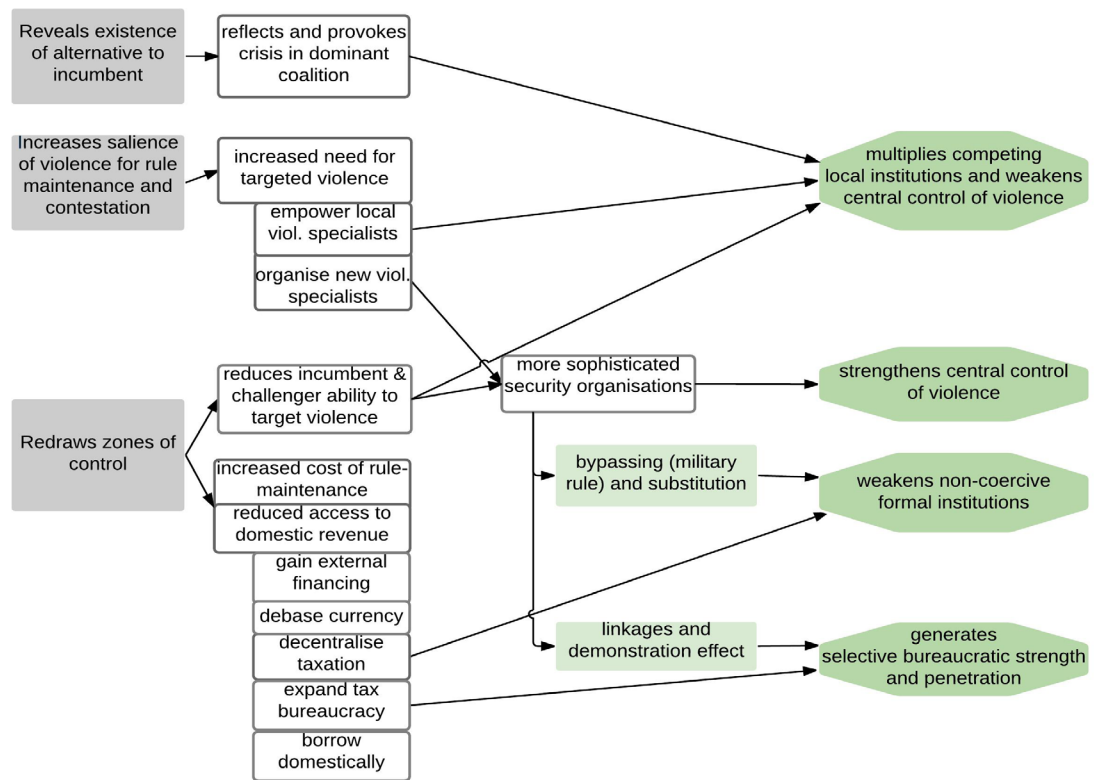


Figure 2: Effect of civil war on institutions

Figure 2 suggests that the most important options from the perspective of institutional change are likely to be decentralising taxation to local power holders and expanding taxation to mobilise domestic resources. The other options, gaining large-scale external financing, printing money, and expanding (government) borrowing, do not appear to be *systematically* linked to institutional change, although there may be linkages between them. In particular, external funding has often meant that donor preferences, via conditionality, affect institutions and procedures in (unintended) ways; and there is a literature on de-institutionalisation as a response to the availability of external financial flows (Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Reno, 2002b, 1998).²⁶

As we saw in section 3.1 above, decentralising taxation often accompanies strategies to decentralise control over violence rights, as the transfer of rights, including rights to revenue extraction, is usually necessary to buy loyalty where the centre gives up control over coercion. Historically, different variations of feudal models approximate such a system. More recently, the examples of Yemen and Sierra Leone, discussed above, come to mind. If members of the dominant coalition, or insurgents, seek predominantly to build alliances with existing local violence specialists, this is likely to weaken central institutions and non-coercive institutions in particular. Thus, for instance, the reliance on tribal fighters during the civil war in Yemen meant that tribal leaders gained de-facto rights to taxation, to policing public order and to appointing governors and judges during the war. Many of these de-facto rights were enshrined in law after the end of the conflict. Thus, it appears that decentralising control over taxation to buy loyalty of violence specialists in this case contributed to the withering of central institutions not only for taxation, but also for other aspects of administration (Stookey, 1978, p. 259; compare also: Rogers, forthcoming).

Conversely, seeking to centralise control over revenue is likely to increase bureaucratic penetration and generate (selective) bureaucratic strength. Measures to centralise control over revenues in this way include taxation and other forms of enforced direct transfer of capital through compulsory savings schemes, which have historically been equally or more important (Di John, 2010a). On the whole, these are measures that require centralisation, rule-bound behaviour, and, because they are reliant on at least the passive acquiescence of important portions of the population, require bargaining and imply direct linkages between state officials and the broader population (Levi, 1988).

An example may serve to illustrate this point. During the 'Malay Emergency' during the 1950s, the civil-war created conditions in which an elite coalition, fearing insurgent victory, acquiesced to a thorough reform of the tax system and higher export duties, leading to a significant increase in central government revenue. As the relative income of the central government began to eclipse that of the federal states and local power holders, central institutions gained not only powers of patronage, but also took over more administrative duties (Stubbs, 1997, pp. 60–62).

²⁶ The systematic link between external financing and de-institutionalisation made in this literature may be based on too generous an extrapolation from a small number of cases of civil war in Sub-Saharan African during the 1990s (Di John, 2010b, pp. 20–22).

However, the specific impact of taxation strategies will depend on the detail of their actual implementation, rather than broad generalisations. Whether tax is collected from all parts of the territory, whether there are other actors with the right or ability to tax, and whether taxation requires bargains with large numbers of economic actors or is purely rent-based is likely to temper the straightforward equation of taxation and bureaucratic strength and penetration (Di John, 2010a) and determines its extent and selective strengths and weaknesses.

Summary and Caveats

The foregoing sections argued that the centrality of violence, particularly internal violence, for the establishment and reproduction of political orders and especially state-formation has not been taken seriously enough and as a result civil war has been identified with state collapse and unmaking, where its impact is likely to be far more complex and contingent. Building on the questions highlighted by this conceptual shift, the paper presented two interconnected processes, each linking a set of shared conditions common to civil war to one of the two areas of state formation identified in section 2.

Gleaned from a literature whose primary concern has not generally been drawing out the connection between the dynamics of civil war and outcomes in terms of state formation, the processes presented may provide a useful starting point for both further academic inquiry and for focusing policy analysis and assessment of potential conflict outcomes in terms of state formation.

Presenting in relatively simple, abstracted form the complex set of linkages between civil war and outcomes in terms of shifting political settlements and institutions on the basis of just three widely-shared features of civil war, the processes constructed here serve to highlight the small number of decision points at which (constrained) choices by dominant coalitions and challengers set-off chains of causality fundamentally shaping the character of the state that emerges from and through civil war.

It has hopefully been made clear throughout that the paper does not assume a simple determinism. Neither are the eventual consequences necessarily intended by the actors making the choices, nor do the same choices in different contexts necessarily lead to the same or even similar outcomes, as the presentation of rival potential pathways has made clear. Part of the utility of the presented processes may be that they highlight pathways that are ambivalent, moments where competing pressures exist, and that they serve to underscore the broad range of potential outcomes, encompassing significant narrowing or broadening of the dominant coalition, the relative ascendancy of actors in control of coercion or capital within it, and a range of institutional outcomes ranging from stronger and more centralised coercive and non-coercive institutions to fragmentation of political power and the establishment of more localised coalitions and institutions.

Similarly, in presenting a set of general linkages, the processes presented here necessarily abstract from the specificities of domestic institutions, historical rivalries, and time- and place-bound types of knowledge, while attempting to hint at the ways in which they may shape outcomes and which pathways are active in any given context. Likewise, some potential pathways are without doubt left unconsidered. Not least among these is the whole complex of state-centred identities that have been at the forefront of nationalist projects around the globe. Analysts and practitioners who share Kahlevi Holsti's view that "it is in the realm of ideas and sentiment that the fates of states is primarily determined" (1996, p. 84), will judge this to be a

major lacuna. But ideas of the state and political loyalty are intimately coupled with the political economy and means of coercion and in many ways appear to be dependent on them (compare e.g. the evidence around political alignment and alliance in Kalyvas, 2006). Moreover, it is an area in which potential mechanisms remain far less specified and are perhaps fundamentally more ambivalent.

As such, the processes presented here purport to offer an initial step in highlighting potential connections. Further research is necessary to explore and further specify the conditions under which different pathways are activated. The above processes can provide the framework for such further exploration, while likewise providing a tool for policy analysis to help systematise thinking about the implications of ongoing and historical conflicts for state formation.

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