PERSISTENCE AND RECURRENCE OF INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT

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18 MAY 2010
Abstract

This thesis analyzes factors that affect the duration and relapse of internal armed conflicts. I use a data set containing 173 conflicts that occurred worldwide between 1946 and 2008. I find that ethnically diverse, poor, and populous countries are prone to persistent and recurrent internal conflict. I find that decisive victories tend to be more stable than agreements, which in turn are more stable than conflicts that end due to low activity. My research indicates that peacekeepers are highly effective in reducing the chances that a conflict will relapse. Through a set of case studies focused on recurrence, I determine that countries with a large plurality ethnic group and several smaller groups are prone to recurrent conflict. In a second set of case studies, I argue that exogenous support for rebel organizations is crucial to sustaining many persistent conflicts. I stress that negotiators and policymakers must be acutely aware of the risks of recurrence when mediating internal conflicts. I recommend the deployment of peacekeepers to enforce agreements and the inclusion of ethnic minorities in government, especially in situations at high risk of relapse. Finally, I argue that isolating and neutralizing exogenous support for rebels is critical to ending persistent conflicts.
Acknowledgments

The support, patience, and contributions of many people made this project possible. From providing expert advice to challenging me to explore new directions in my research to simply giving me the encouragement I needed to get writing, your help and generosity enabled me to have an incredible intellectual experience. First, my primary advisor, Professor James Fearon, has worked on this topic with me for over a year now. It was my experience researching for Professor Fearon that inspired me to consider this thesis topic. Since I began working on my thesis, he has helped me with every step of the process—formulating my topic, finding data, analyzing it, and putting my arguments into writing. He was always happy to look at my data and spotted patterns I never would have found myself. He devoted an enormous amount of time to reviewing and discussing my findings and critiquing my writing.

I would also like to express my gratitude to the CISAC Interschool Honors Program faculty and staff. Professors Steve Stedman and Tom Fingar ran the honors college in Washington, conducted our thesis seminar, and tirelessly provided their advice on refining my topic and understanding my findings. Michael Sulmeyer, the program teaching assistant, also contributed invaluable feedback and advice. He was frequently willing to meet with me to discuss everything from how to present a three-minute version of my thesis to whether I should attend law school. Finally, Kate Chadwick kept things running smoothly throughout the summer and the beginning of the year and helped me find resources to research my topic.

Each of the CISAC honors students also helped me work through this experience. Bertram Ang, Amir Badat, Philippe de Koning, Daniel Leifer, Ashley Lohmann, Raffi
Mardirosian, Ben Picozzi, Amir Ravandoust, Sam Stone, Guatam Thapar, Son Ca Vu, Georgia Wells, and Hao Yan were, throughout this year, a friendly and supportive group. From our first meetings in early September through our amazing experience in Washington all the way to that final deadline in May, you provided not only insightful feedback and input but also an uncritical group with which to commiserate.

Finally, thank you to all the family friends—far too many to list here—that have supported me and put with me for this entire year. Special thanks to Matt, Kate, Whitney, Megan, Stephanie, Annie, and Sam for their remarkable patience and willingness to stick with me throughout the year. Mom, Dad, and Jake, thank you so much for your steadfast love and support, for coming to hear me present my thesis, and for proofing my writing. I could not have done this without you.
## Table of Contents

Abstract .......................................................................................................................... i

Acknowledgments .......................................................................................................... iii

Table of Contents ........................................................................................................... v

Figures and Tables .......................................................................................................... vi

Abbreviations ................................................................................................................ vii

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review .............................................................. 1
  Introduction ....................................................................................................................... 1
  Literature Review ........................................................................................................... 6
  Persistence and Recurrence .......................................................................................... 21

Chapter 2: Empirical Analysis ....................................................................................... 25
  Data and Dependent Variables .................................................................................... 25
  Hypotheses and Independent Variables ....................................................................... 31
  Results .......................................................................................................................... 38
  Discussion ..................................................................................................................... 53

Chapter 3: Recurrence .................................................................................................. 55
  Burma ............................................................................................................................. 57
  Ethiopia .......................................................................................................................... 63
  Indonesia ......................................................................................................................... 68
  Discussion ..................................................................................................................... 74

Chapter 4: Persistence ................................................................................................. 80
  Colombia ....................................................................................................................... 82
  Mozambique .................................................................................................................. 85
  Bangladesh .................................................................................................................... 90
  Discussion ..................................................................................................................... 94

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Policy Implications .......................................................... 102
  National Attributes ...................................................................................................... 103
  Conflict Dynamics ....................................................................................................... 105
  Recurrence and Ethnic Demography ......................................................................... 106
  Persistence and Exogenous Rebel Support ................................................................ 107

Appendix A: Reclassifications ...................................................................................... 111

Appendix B: Bivariate Regressions .............................................................................. 112
  All Countries ............................................................................................................... 112
  Countries with Conflict ............................................................................................... 113

References ..................................................................................................................... 114
Figures and Tables

Tables
Table 1 Episode termination data summary.......................... 37
Table 2 Multivariate regressions: all conflicts, all countries........ 42
Table 3 Multivariate regressions: government conflicts, all countries 42
Table 4 Multivariate regressions: territorial conflicts, all countries 42
Table 5 Multivariate regressions: all conflicts, only countries with conflict 43
Table 6 Multivariate regressions: government conflicts, countries with government conflict 43
Table 7 Multivariate regressions: territorial conflicts, countries with territorial conflict 43
Table 8 Determinants of conflict persistence and recurrence 48
Table 9 Cox hazard ratios for periods of peace following internal conflict 52
Table 10 Countries with the ethnic plurality dynamic 78
Table 11 Conflict regressions including rebel support 96
Table 12 Exogenous support for rebels, persistent one-episode conflicts 97
Table 13 Exogenous support for rebels in persistent conflicts 98
Table 14 Exogenous support for rebels in short conflicts 99
Table 15 Bivariate regressions: all conflicts, all countries 112
Table 16 Bivariate regressions: government conflicts, all countries 112
Table 17 Bivariate regressions: territorial conflicts, all countries 112
Table 18 Bivariate regressions: all conflicts, only countries with conflict 113
Table 19 Bivariate regressions: government conflicts, countries with government conflict 113
Table 20 Bivariate regressions: territorial conflicts, countries with territorial conflict 113

Figures
Figure 1 Histogram of total persistence 28
Figure 2 Histogram of total episodes 28
Figure 3 Total episodes and total persistence 29
Figure 4 Total episodes and total persistence, no outliers 30
Figure 5 Total persistence by region and conflict type 40
Figure 6 Conflict persistence by region and conflict type 40
Figure 7 Kaplan-Meier plots for all peace periods 50
Figure 8 Kaplan-Meier survival estimates by conflict type 50
Figure 9 Kaplan-Meier plots by episode outcome 51
Figure 10 Kaplan-Meier plots with and without peacekeepers 51
Abbreviations

ANC  African National Congress
AUC  United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia
CIO  Central Intelligence Organization
CPB  Communist Party of Burma
CHT  Chittagong Hills Tract
ELF  Eritrean Liberation Front
ELN  Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)
EPLF  Eritrean People's Liberation Front
EPRDF  Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPRP  Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party
FARC  Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
FRELIMO  Front for the Liberation of Mozambique
Fretlin  Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor
GAM  Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh Movement)
GDP  Gross Domestic Product
HDC  Hill District Council
INTERFET  International Force for East Timor
KNU  Karen National Union
KNDO  Karen National Defense Organization
OAS  Organisation de l'armée secrète (Organization of the Secret Army)
OLF  Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF  Ogaden National Liberation Front
OPM  Organisasi Papua Merdeka (Free Papua Movement)
PCJSS  Parbotto Chôttogram Jônoshônghoti Shomitim (United People's Party of the Chittagong Hills Tract)
PRIO  International Peace Research Institute
PRRI  Revolutionary Government of the Indonesian Republic
RC  Regional Council
RENAMO  Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Mozambican National Resistance)
RMS  Republic of South Moluccas
RUSI  Republic of the United States of Indonesia
SPLA  Sudan People’s Liberation Army
TPLF  Tigrayan People's Liberation Front
WSLF  Western Somali Liberation Front
UCDP  Uppsala Conflict Data Program
USSR  Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
ZANU  Zimbabwe African National Union
Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

Introduction

Since the end of World War II, there have been 173 internal armed conflicts\(^1\) in 103 countries. Internal conflicts have been more prevalent, intractable,\(^2\) and deadly than interstate wars.\(^3\) Over half of the internal conflicts during the past sixty-five years consisted of more than one episode of fighting, and fifty-two (about thirty percent) had three or more such episodes. The fact that so many internal conflicts involved multiple recurrences is evidence of how difficult they are to resolve. But these conflicts’ episodic nature also highlights missed opportunities, points at which the violence might have ended permanently. This thesis examines two crucial questions. First, why are some internal conflicts more persistent than others? And second, why are some internal conflicts recurrent—that is, why do they feature more episodes of fighting than others?

To answer these questions, I examine data at two levels of analysis. First, I look at attributes of countries that might predispose them to persistent or recurrent conflict. Very little scholarly work has been done on this subject, though a few journal articles provide a good starting point. Second, I examine conflicts, focusing particularly on how episodes end, to determine the likelihood of relapse. In addition to this statistical analysis, I conduct a series of

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\(^1\) A note on terminology: most of the work discussed in this chapter analyzes civil wars rather than internal conflicts. There are two important reasons that I use the term “internal conflict” rather than “civil war.” First, there is a generally accepted requirement in the political science literature that a civil war must involve at least one thousand battle-related fatalities. For inclusion in my data set, I require only twenty-five battle deaths. I discuss my reasons for disregarding the one thousand-death requirement in Chapter 2. Second, the term “civil war” carries significant connotations with most readers, and many of the conflicts I analyze will not fit the reader’s preconception. Thus, I feel that “internal armed conflict” is a broader and more accurate term, but I will use the term “civil war” when describing other authors’ work that uses that term.


case studies to isolate the causal mechanisms behind the relationships I identify. At the country level, I collect data on ethnic diversity, income, population, area, terrain, regime type, and natural resources. I use multivariate linear regressions to test the relationships among these independent variables and persistence and recurrence of internal conflict. At the conflict level, I explore how different episode outcomes (military victory or peace agreement, for example) affect the likelihood that a conflict will recur through survival analysis.

My work indicates that ethnically diverse, poor, and populous countries are prone to both recurrent and persistent internal conflict. There are a number of reasons that help to explain these associations. At the most basic level, greater ethnic diversity usually implies a larger number of ethnic groups. A larger number of groups has two important ramifications. First, there is an increased chance that tensions will develop between at least two ethnic groups, potentially sparking a conflict. Second, the set of national policies and structures of national government acceptable to all the groups decreases in size as the number of groups increases. It follows that there is also an increased chance that at least one group will be dissatisfied with those policies and structure. Unfortunately, such situations have proven remarkably difficult to resolve, making persistence and recurrence of conflict in ethnically diverse nations a common outcome.

Poverty, too, has an intuitive relationship with conflict persistence and recurrence. The opportunity costs of joining a rebellion are lower in a poor country where people have few assets that the government protects. Governments in poor countries also tend to be less effective. They lack the resources to control their territory, providing an opportunity for insurgents to organize in areas beyond the government’s reach. Poor governments are also less able to provide services to their people, so there is likely a grievance-based mechanism involved as well. By most accounts, poverty and violence form a vicious cycle, in which conflict depresses the economy and in turn
encourages further conflict. My findings support the so-called “conflict trap” but also indicate that poverty has an independent causal effect prior to conflict.

Finally, I find that larger populations are associated with persistence and recurrence of internal conflict. At a very basic level, a large population is associated with more groups and factions that might come into conflict. More people are also more difficult govern, both in a physical and in a political sense. A larger population demands greater resources to control and monitor. In poor countries especially, mustering the capacity to do so can be a challenge. In a political sense, more people have more preferences that must be aggregated into national policies. It is more likely that some group of people will be dissatisfied with the results. These findings—that ethnic diversity, poverty, and large populations predict recurrence and persistence—were my main conclusions for the country level analysis. I then explored the determinants of persistence and recurrence at the conflict level.

My findings at the conflict level focus mainly on how episodes of conflict end. I find that episodes ending in a military victory for one side are less likely to relapse than episodes ending in peace treaties or ceasefires. The causal logic here is well developed; a military victory resounding enough to terminate an episode of fighting takes a significant toll on the defeated party in terms of personnel, organizational structure, and credibility. By contrast, negotiated agreements usually leave both belligerents with the capacity to continue fighting. I also find that peacekeepers are highly effective in preventing a resumption of conflict, especially if they deploy to enforce an agreement. All of these results—for both the country and conflict analyses—are based on large-n statistical studies. I complement those findings with a series of case studies that explore the causal mechanisms involved in much more detail.
To examine recurrence, I conduct case studies of Burma, Ethiopia, and Indonesia. I find that all three countries feature a specific distribution of their populations among ethnic groups. In each country, a large plurality or majority—though not overwhelmingly large—has historically ruled the state at the exclusion of several smaller groups (I refer to this configuration of ethnic demography as the “ethnic plurality dynamic”). In each country, exclusion of minority ethnic groups prompted multiple rebellions that occurred along ethnic fractures. I argue that this dynamic promotes recurrent conflict because it creates a situation in which the plurality group has little incentive to reach out to minorities. Simultaneously, the minorities have little prospect of forming a coalition to challenge the ruling party. Additionally, the large number of groups makes finding a solution acceptable to all of them very difficult. Consequently, pauses in the conflict tend be unstable because the government cannot (and often will not try to) credibly commit to include the minority groups in government. The result is conflicts that keep reappearing as temporary solutions unravel.

I find that the capacity of rebel organizations plays an important role in determining how long a conflict lasts. Specifically, exogenous support for rebel organizations is often a key element of sustaining an insurgency. Exogenous support includes external foreign support in various forms (direct military intervention, training, logistical support, weapons, or funds) and natural resources (often oil or gems) that the rebels can exploit. Some form of exogenous support was crucial to sustaining the world’s most persistent one-episode conflicts (in Colombia, Mozambique, and Bangladesh), which I study in detail. This hypothesis also generalizes well to other cases. My work thus extends and refines much of the existing research on conflict duration and peace durability.
Previous work on the concepts I call persistence and recurrence has generally focused on civil war duration and the durability of peace—how long peace lasts following the cessation of fighting. The literature describing and analyzing the durability of peace following decisive military victories versus negotiated agreements is rich though sometimes conflicting. Research in this vein usually relates to a hypothesis proposed by Robert Wagner in 1993: that conflicts ending in a military victory for one side are more likely to be followed by a long period of peace than wars that end in negotiated settlements. Scholars have also intensely researched the effectiveness of peacekeeping and mediated settlements. Finally, a few papers have explored the determinants of civil war duration. But no previous research has analyzed episodes of fighting as distinct elements of the same conflict. Instead, most scholars consider only one episode of fighting when studying duration. Thus, most existing work assumes wars to be fairly continuous phenomena with only rare breaks in the violence. My definition of persistence considers all episodes of fighting over the same government or territory to be part of the same conflict, regardless of the amount of time between episodes. My definition of recurrence is also novel; previous work has focused almost exclusively on the stability of peace between periods of fighting rather than the number of episodes per conflict.

This chapter reviews the key findings from previous studies of conflict duration, relapse, and the durability of peace. This review is confined to works that make specific empirical predictions about the duration of civil war or the likelihood of relapse, and as a result, it excludes most of the more theoretical work about peace implementation. I highlight some of the most important findings of those empirical studies and explain how they relate to my research. Then I explain how my work advances our understanding of these topics.
Literature Review

How Conflicts End: The Wagner Hypothesis

Roy Licklider’s 1993 paper “The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars” was one of the first to explore how civil wars end. Licklider uses a dataset of 91 civil wars and finds that most end in a military victory for one side. Negotiated settlements occurred less frequently, but still regularly. Licklider tests the Wagner hypothesis: that military victories effectively destroy the organizational capacity of one of the belligerents, making a resumption of war unlikely, while negotiated settlements preserve both sides’ abilities to continue fighting and leave in greater doubt which one is the stronger. Licklider finds that the empirical data confirm this hypothesis; negotiated settlements tend to be less durable than military victories.

In the decade and a half since Licklider published his paper, the political science discipline has produced a large body of work that has tested and refined his theory. While the literature has clarified some of the details and implications of Licklider’s findings, subsequent research has generally confirmed his primary hypothesis—that military victories are more stable than negotiated settlements.

Other scholars have examined more closely the mechanisms behind the Wagner hypothesis. Edward Luttwak’s 1999 paper “Give War a Chance” develops the concept of war-induced exhaustion as an explanation for why military victories seem to be more durable. Luttwak claims that wars usually end in one of two ways: one side wins a decisive military victory or the belligerents become exhausted and agree to a settlement. Intervention, whether through force or mediation, prevents these sorts of endings from occurring. Arguing vehemently

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5 Licklider 1995, 685.
that foreign intervention is ineffective, Luttwak writes that arbitrated agreements and military intervention interrupt the “natural” course of the war and leave the belligerents with sufficient resources to resume fighting. As a result, peace treaties and ceasefires reached through intervention or mediation are much less stable outcomes than decisive military victories or war-induced exhaustion.

I will examine these claims more closely in Chapter 4, but there is support for Luttwak’s hypothesis in the empirical data. The data reveal that exogenous support (not only military support) for rebels does indeed prolong conflicts, particularly those with fewer episodes. However, Luttwak’s hypothesis has been contested by other civil war researchers. As T. David Mason (2007) writes, in challenge to Luttwak’s theory of combat exhaustion, “protracted civil wars do not burn themselves out; they simply continue to burn.”[^7] This observation is troubling for Luttwak’s hypothesis, and the fact that many of the longer internal conflicts feature multiple episodes of fighting reinforces Mason’s criticism. That such conflicts keep recurring suggests that war-induced exhaustion may not be a stable outcome, but only a lull while the belligerents rearm and reorganize for another round of fighting.

Taking this analysis a step further, T. David Mason has worked extensively to explain the durability of peace after a civil war. He looks at not only how episodes of civil war end but also at how long it takes for peace to be achieved. In *Sustaining the Peace after Civil War* (2007), Mason examines why civil wars end in the ways they do. He finds that the longer a civil war lasts, the less likely it is to end in a decisive victory for either the government or the rebels. In fact, most decisive victories occur within the first five years of war. If the war lasts longer than that, it frequently becomes what Mason calls a “mutually hurting stalemate,” in which neither

side can defeat the other, and both have sufficient resources to continue fighting. Mason finds that the government tends to prevail early when it has a large army relative to the population. Rebels tend to prevail early when they oppose neopatrimonial regimes (dictators who use state resources to secure the loyalty of important and powerful elements of their countries).

Mason also identifies certain factors that tend to prolong civil wars. One such factor is the number of casualties; the more deadly the war is, the longer it tends to endure. Mason finds this result surprising because at first glance it does not seem consistent with the notion of conflict as an information-revealing process. The theory of war as information-revealing process suggests that battles provide each side with more information about its relative strength. As more fighting occurs, each side adjusts its perspective on its chances of winning accordingly. The theory predicts that more fighting (perhaps more deaths) should reveal information more quickly, so more intense conflicts should generally be shorter. But Mason’s findings do not support that theory. He instead explains his results with a “sunk cost” effect, in which both sides fight to avenge their previous casualties. However, a simpler explanation might be that the relationship between the length of a civil war and the number of casualties is not one-directional. Longer wars might be deadlier simply because there is more fighting over a longer period. Another factor that Mason identifies is foreign intervention. He argues, as Luttwak does, that foreign intervention tends to prop up the weaker side, preventing a decisive victory and thus prolonging the conflict.

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8 Mason 2007, 33.
9 Mason 2007, 36.
10 Mason 2007, 37.
11 Mason 2007, 38.
The identity of the victor—whether it is the seated government or a rebel group—in a civil war also affects the likelihood of a relapse. As Luttwak expected, Mason’s results show that military victories generally produce a more durable peace than negotiated settlements. However, Mason also finds that government victories are less durable than rebel victories, and he hypothesizes that government victories are often little more than a lull in the fighting.\textsuperscript{13} When a government is overthrown, it is unlikely that the defeated government will be able to continue to rally support or maintain its credibility. But when rebels suffer a defeat, they may melt into the countryside until they can regroup to challenge the government once again.

Mason contributes significantly to the existing discourse on civil war duration and the durability of peace, but his work tells us little about the duration or recurrence of individual conflicts. He considers duration only for single episodes of civil war, providing no guidance on the question of why some conflicts with multiple episodes of fighting span relatively long time periods. When he tests the durability of peace, Mason considers the peace broken if \textit{any} civil war breaks out in a country, even if the new fighting is unrelated to the previous hostilities. As a result, his findings are useful in explaining instability generally, but they do not help us understand why certain conflicts keep coming back.

Despite their disagreements, Mason and Luttwak both argue that foreign intervention tends to lengthen internal conflict. That finding has become generally accepted in the canons of civil war research. However, intervention during a conflict differs from enforcement of the peace once the fighting has stopped. In her 2008 book \textit{Does Peacekeeping Work}, Page Fortna examines the effectiveness of peacekeepers in maintaining nonviolence after a civil war. She finds that

\textsuperscript{13} Mason 2007, 48-49.
peacekeepers are generally effective, reducing the likelihood of relapse by more than half.\textsuperscript{14} Fortna emphasizes that her analysis applies strictly to peacekeeping and not to military intervention. That is, she considers only efforts to keep the peace once the fighting has stopped, not military intervention to end the fighting in the first place. Essentially, Fortna’s research touches on relapse but not persistence. Thus, her results do not contradict Mason’s or Luttwak’s findings that military intervention prolongs civil war. That the presence of peacekeepers significantly reduces the chance of relapse is an important finding with crucial policy implications, but it does not tell the whole story.

Fortna’s book is a well-argued examination of one of the factors that reduces the chance civil war recurrence. Like other works on the durability of peace, however, hers touches only obliquely on the episodic nature of civil wars. The presence of peacekeepers may have interrupted episodic wars in a few cases, but peacekeeping is too rare to explain the phenomenon more generally. Civil wars with multiple episodes of fighting have ended without the deployment of peacekeepers. What was different about the end of the final episode of fighting? Fortna’s work does not directly address that question.

\textbf{Countries and Conflicts}

The research discussed in the previous section focused primarily on how conflict outcomes affect the likelihood of recurrence. Studying those factors has produced some important findings, but a deeper analysis of the dynamics of these conflicts and the countries in which they occur has improved our ability to explain civil war duration and the durability of peace. Focusing on some of the inconsistencies and difficulties in defining the beginnings and

ends of civil wars, James Fearon (2004) tried to establish clear criteria. Fearon writes that researchers have handled the task of deciding when to code a new civil war (as opposed to continuation of fighting) “inconsistently, even if they sometimes specify an arbitrary period like two or five years.” Ultimately, Fearon settles on coding war termination by “observation of either a military victory, wholesale demobilization, or truce or peace agreement followed by at least two years of peace.”

Fearon next analyzes the factors that determine the duration of civil wars. He finds that the type of conflict has crucial ramifications for its length; coups, popular revolutions, anti-colonial wars, and civil wars in Eastern Europe following the collapse of the Soviet Union tended to be relatively short. By contrast, wars featuring either “peripheral insurgencies” (guerrilla fighters who usually operate away from the center) or a “sons of the soil dynamic” (conflicts over land or resources between an ethnic minority and migrants supported by the state) tended to be much longer. Fearon also analyzes certain characteristics of countries that might affect the duration of the civil wars they experience. He finds that long peripheral insurgencies are more common in ethnically diverse countries, while less diverse countries tend to have shorter civil wars sparked by coups or revolutions. Poorer countries and populous countries tend to have longer wars, though Fearon argues that those relationships exist because such nations are more prone to contraband financing (when rebels smuggle resources, often gems or drugs, to fund their armies) and sons-of-the-soil dynamics. Both contraband and sons-of-the-soil conflicts play an important role in some of the cases we will examine in Chapter 4.

16 Fearon 2004, 279.
17 Fearon 2004, 280.
18 Fearon 2004, 283.
19 Fearon 2004, 287.
Armed with these findings, Fearon develops a game theoretic model based on a problem of commitment. He proposes that governments only have incentives to make concessions to potential rebels during periods when the government is weak, but that rebels have no guarantee that the government will uphold its end of the bargain if the state grows stronger. If either side believes it has a chance to defeat the other, there is little probability that the fighting will stop because neither side can credibly commit to a settlement. Thus, Fearon predicts that civil war duration will be longer when neither side has a good chance of decisive military victory.\textsuperscript{20} Fearon’s work advances the literature by looking at more subtle dynamics of conflict than either Mason or Luttwak did. His clear criteria for defining the end of a civil war are also an important step. However, his requirement that a military victory, demobilization, or truce be observed in order for an episode of fighting to be considered terminated makes these criteria difficult to apply in a study of recurrence. Episodes of internal conflict often end without any of these obvious signs, as we shall see in Chapter 2.

Building on Fearon’s more in-depth evaluation of the dynamics of conflict, David E. Cunningham has focused on explaining how certain configurations of actors can affect civil war duration. Borrowing from research on domestic politics, Cunningham postulates that a larger number of groups fighting in an armed conflict tends to increase its duration. He theorizes that more groups reduce the bargaining space acceptable to all belligerents, make the information-revealing process of war less clear, increase incentives to refrain from signing an agreement until other groups have done so, and create networks of shifting alliances that make negotiation more difficult.\textsuperscript{21} For all of these reasons, Cunningham predicts that more actors will mean longer wars.

\textsuperscript{20} Fearon 2004, 294.
\textsuperscript{21} David E. Cunningham, “Veto Players and Civil War Duration,” \textit{American Journal of Political Science} 50, no. 4 (October 1, 2006): 875-76.
Cunningham also develops the notion of veto players—those actors who can unilaterally prevent a conflict from ending. He hypothesizes that more veto players, veto players with diverse preferences, and stronger veto players will all increase civil war duration.  

Using the same data set of armed conflicts that I use in this study (though Cunningham employs an earlier version and classifies the ends of conflicts differently), he finds that a greater number of veto players does indeed appear to result in longer civil wars. Cunningham’s data provide more limited support for his other two hypotheses. Cunningham’s work in this area is novel for its development of the point that internal conflicts are not necessarily dyadic; rather, they often involve more than two actors. He continues to develop this line of research in another paper with a focus on foreign intervention.

According to Cunningham, foreign actors as well as internal rebel groups can complicate and prolong internal conflicts. Offering an alternative explanation for the effect of foreign intervention, Cunningham challenges the notion that foreign intervention usually has the goal of ending a conflict or helping one side to win. Instead, he argues that in many cases foreign actors can be treated as additional parties to the conflict with their own goals at the bargaining table. As a result, the same theoretical arguments for the effect of veto players on civil war duration may apply to foreign intervention. Again, Cunningham tests his hypothesis with an empirical analysis. He finds, as do several other studies on the subject of military intervention in internal conflict, that intervention in general prolongs civil wars. However, his results also indicate that

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22 Cunningham 2006, 881.
23 Cunningham 2006, 887-888.
foreign actors who intervene with goals independent from any of the belligerents tend to have an
even stronger effect in prolonging the duration of internal conflict.25

Cunningham’s findings are crucial to understanding civil war persistence and recurrence. He focuses on duration in his paper, but several of the reasons that make reaching a settlement
difficult when there are more actors seem to apply to a breakdown of negotiations as well.
Bargaining space is a key issue for recurrence—if there are more actors involved in an
agreement and hence a narrower bargaining space, there is a greater chance that one of them will
subsequently become disaffected with the terms of the settlement and restart the conflict. Alternatively, the narrow bargaining space acceptable to all belligerents will presumably be more
vulnerable to changes in circumstance that prompt a resumption of violence. Similarly, shifting
contours of alliances can occur in peacetime as well as during a conflict, so more actors that
make alliance networks more complex may also encourage recurrence. Finally, Cunningham’s
findings regarding the effect of external support for rebels is critically important, though I will
adopt a broader interpretation of exogenous support. Among other things, I hypothesize that
rebels’ access to valuable resources has a similar effect to foreign support—natural resources in
the conflict zone can prolong hostilities for similar reasons.

There is a robust body of work in the literature on civil conflict that studies the effects of
natural resources. Scholars have argued that abundant natural resources can encourage conflict
for two main reasons. First, natural resources are attractive spoils that provide a motivation for
rebels to fight. Also, rebels can use valuable natural resources to buy weapons, supplies and food
for their armies, improving the chances that an insurgency will survive. Päivi Lujala (2010) turns

to a question more germane to this thesis: how does the presence of valuable natural resources in a conflict zone affect a war’s duration?

Lujala focuses specifically on whether hydrocarbon reserves or gemstones are present in the conflict zone. She finds that the presence of oil, gas, or gemstones each increases civil war duration significantly—more than doubling the expected length of a conflict. Actual extraction of hydrocarbons is not necessary to observe this effect; their mere presence is enough to lengthen internal conflicts significantly. Since the resources are not being extracted, they presumably have not begun to have the adverse effects on economy and politics often associated with resource-rich countries. Accordingly, Lujala argues that this last finding indicates that the resource effect works by improving the viability of rebel organizations, rather than by influencing the country’s economy or state capacity. Lujala’s findings are significant in and of themselves, but I make a broader argument that connects Lujala’s research with Cunningham’s: any exogenous support for rebels—whether in the form of foreign support or a resource base—may increase conflict persistence. Together, Fearon, Cunningham, and Lujala produce several key insights into how conflict dynamics affect civil war duration.

Other researchers have analyzed how characteristics of conflicts and countries affect the durability of peace. Gurses, Rost, and McLeod (2008) find that mediated settlements in general—and superpower mediation in particular—tend to shorten the duration of peace after a civil war. They find also that deadlier wars and ethnic wars are more likely to relapse, but that income does not have a statistically significant effect. These authors argue that ethnic

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29 Gurses et al. 2008, 150.
differences create irrational hatred among groups and perceived hostility that make negotiating a durable settlement very difficult. They also find that certain characteristics of the countries in which the war occurs affect the durability of peace. Peace in democracies tends to be more durable than peace in autocracies, but the level of economic development does not affect the durability of peace. They suggest that this might be explained by the fact that most countries that experience civil wars are poor, so there is not enough variation among their levels of development to explain recurrence. Unlike some of the earlier researchers on the subject, they determine that the peace following military victories tends to be no more stable than after negotiated agreements.

Gurses et al. produce some important findings that challenge some of the accepted notions about how civil wars end. Unlike most other researchers, they consider how certain qualities of countries—specifically ethnic fractionalization, income, and regime type—affect the post-conflict environment. However, they consider only a few country attributes that might affect the success or failure of peace. Additionally, they focus on the durability of peace rather than the tendency of specific conflicts to recur. Another group of researchers has explored how country attributes affect civil war duration.

Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Måns Söderborn (2001) attempt to explain the vast differences in civil war duration across conflicts by reference to the attributes of the countries in which the civil wars occur. The authors begin by analyzing the average length of civil wars in countries with certain attributes. They find that richer countries with more young men in

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30 Gurses et al. 2008, 139.
31 Gurses et al. 2008, 149.
secondary school tend to have shorter wars.\textsuperscript{32} Diverse countries, both ethnically and religiously, had on average longer civil wars than less diverse countries. Geographically, countries with more mountainous terrain had shorter wars, as did countries with less forest coverage.\textsuperscript{33}

After collecting these initial results, Collier et al. analyze the significance of each factor. They find that income and the proportion of young men in secondary school are significantly negatively correlated with civil war duration. They find a significant relationship between ethnic fractionalization and duration, with the longest wars in countries with an intermediate level of ethnic fractionalization. They suggest that the populations of such countries usually consist of a few large ethnic groups. Highly homogenous or highly fractionalized nations tended to have much shorter wars. Additionally, more populous countries tended to have longer civil wars.\textsuperscript{34} The authors also find that civil war in neighboring countries increases civil war duration by forty-one percent.\textsuperscript{35}

The authors attempt to explain the causal logic behind these results. They suggest that civil wars in neighboring countries present two risks: that rebels might expand operations across the border and that a hostile government might support rebels in a neighboring country.\textsuperscript{36} They also propose that more populous countries are likely to have more groups with tensions between them, and thus a higher likelihood of conflict. They further indicate that larger countries may have multiple civil wars occurring at once, but their measure of duration tests only whether a


\textsuperscript{33} Collier et al. 2001, 7.

\textsuperscript{34} Collier et al. 2001, 11.

\textsuperscript{35} Collier et al. 2001, 12.

\textsuperscript{36} Collier et al. 2001, 13-14.
country is experiencing any civil war. Thus, they suggest that the correlation between duration and population may be spurious.\textsuperscript{37}

Collier et al. develop some important findings, and their methodology is appealing. However, they consider only civil wars during the period 1960-1999, and thus their data set is much smaller (fifty-two observations) than that of most other civil war researchers. Their data set also fails to include some major civil wars, such as Israel/Palestine, Northern Ireland, and all of the post-USSR civil wars in Eastern Europe.\textsuperscript{38} Additionally, as noted above, they do not distinguish among simultaneous civil wars within a country, and they acknowledge that such aggregation may have impacted their results. That is, a country might experience several short but overlapping civil wars. In that case, Collier et al. would code a single long civil war when in actuality there were several shorter ones. The authors also only analyze countries that experienced at least one civil war; they do not examine how their findings are affected if they include countries that did not experience a civil war. Collier et al. make an important start to examining how a country’s attributes affect the duration of the civil wars it experiences, but more could be done to refine their results. They do not touch on the likelihood of relapse.

In his 2007 book \textit{The Bottom Billion}, Collier explores in detail the relationship between economic growth and stability. Much of the book is a thorough analysis of the relationship between growth and civil war. Collier finds that the lower a country’s income is, the longer its conflicts tend to last.\textsuperscript{39} He describes a “conflict trap,” a vicious cycle of civil war and low growth. Low growth means poverty, which feeds grievances and lowers the opportunity cost of fighting a civil war. In turn, civil war depresses growth and income by destroying livelihoods.

\textsuperscript{37} Collier et al. 2001, 14.
\textsuperscript{38} Collier et al. 2001, 29.
\textsuperscript{39} Collier 2007, 26.
and infrastructure and scaring away investors, exacerbating the initial problem. Fighting becomes the only way that many of the country’s young men learn to earn a living, and the arms trade booms. Because of this cycle of violence and low growth, ending civil wars in poor countries tends to be extremely difficult.\textsuperscript{40} The trap Collier describes is an intuitive explanation for civil war persistence, and it makes a clear prediction: poor countries with low growth rates should experience longer and more numerous civil wars than richer, fast-growing ones.

While the conflict trap may describe an important relationship, it does not tell the whole story. Collier’s goal is to explain low growth rather than the duration of conflict, so he does not consider other determinants of civil war duration. And the relationship Collier describes is not entirely causal—slow growth and civil war both cause one another. Additionally, some countries with very slow growth rates manage to avoid the trap, and others seem to have managed to end their violent conflicts while seeing little accompanying economic growth. There is also a wide variation in civil war duration, even among the very poor countries. Finally, the conflict trap does not help to answer the question of why some conflicts feature more episodes of fighting than others, regardless of their duration.

Like Collier, Cederman et al. (2010) examine the effects of a single factor on the likelihood of civil war—in this case, the configuration of ethnic groups. A number of important papers in the civil war literature have contested the notion that ethnic diversity increases the likelihood that a country will experience an internal conflict.\textsuperscript{41} Cederman et al. explore the role of ethnicity in civil conflict in more depth, hypothesizing that certain dynamics of interaction among ethnic groups—and not just ethnic diversity alone—may cause the onset of civil war. Using a new data set with updated information on ethnic groups’ access to political power,

\textsuperscript{40} Collier 2007, 33.
\textsuperscript{41} See Fearon and Laitin (2003), Collier and Hoeffler 2004.
Cederman et al. attempt to determine why ethnic groups in certain political configurations rebel.\textsuperscript{42}

The authors propose three situations in which ethnic groups might initiate rebellion. First, a lack of political power for an ethnic group results in legal disadvantages, loss of access to government jobs, as well as psychological and symbolic defeats. As a result, groups that are excluded from or underrepresented in the political process will be more likely to rebel. Second, they argue that larger ethnic groups are more likely to rebel because of their larger resource pool and enhanced legitimacy. Third, they claim that prior ethnic conflict increases the likelihood of more conflict in the future.\textsuperscript{43} Cederman et al. test these hypotheses using the Ethnic Power Relations data set.

An empirical analysis supports all three of the authors’ main hypotheses. They find that large, politically disenfranchised ethnic groups with a history of conflict are most likely to start rebellions.\textsuperscript{44} Though this work focuses on civil war onset rather than duration or recurrence, it is relevant for two reasons. First, it thoroughly examines the causal mechanisms behind ethnic conflict, which will be important to understanding why certain ethnic configurations prompt recurrent conflict in Chapter 3. Second, the authors touch on recurrence even if they do not study it explicitly. Though they focus on past conflict as a predictor of civil war onset, there is an implicit statement about recurrence in their third hypothesis. Once an ethnic rebellion gets started, breaks in the fighting are less likely to bring about permanent resolution.

\textsuperscript{43} Cederman et al. 2010, 95-97.
\textsuperscript{44} Cederman et al. 2010, 114.
**Persistence and Recurrence**

My work builds on the existing literature by approaching the classification of internal conflicts in a new way. Rather than choose an arbitrary period of peace to separate episodes of fighting into civil wars, I define conflicts by the territory or government over which they are fought. Of course, defining conflicts in this way presents a new set of challenges, which I address in Chapter 2. However, this definition of conflict provides a more accurate measure of how long a conflict has persisted and how many times violent fighting has disappeared and returned. Using this definition, I explore the notions of persistence and recurrence among internal conflicts.

I define persistence as the fraction of a country’s history during which fighting over a certain issue has occurred. Persistence differs from duration in two key ways. First, it is proportional to the time since independence, so it accounts for countries that gained independence only recently. Second, it considers all episodes of fighting in a certain conflict. Most civil war research classifies distinct episodes of violent conflict as separate civil wars. Such a classification scheme might match our intuitive sense of what a civil war is, but it is not an effective way to measure persistence or recurrence. I discuss the details of my coding scheme in Chapter 2, but broadly speaking I classify any fighting over the same issue as part of a single conflict, no matter how much time has elapsed between episodes. My method of classification paints a clearer picture of persistence because it accounts for conflicts with multiple episodes of fighting.

The difference is more than semantic. Previous studies of civil war duration and recurrence have required that a war be terminated by a formal agreement or military victory. By using episodes rather than wars, I can analyze pauses in the fighting regardless of their cause. As
we shall see, the ends of most episodes of internal armed conflict cannot be attributed to an agreement or victory. Thus, the requirement that such an outcome be observed for an episode to be considered terminated artificially extends many episodes of conflicts. That requirement also masks important dynamics—including the oft-theorized instance in which rebels melt into the countryside to rearm and regroup. Instead of waiting to observe a victory or agreement, I consider an episode terminated when the fighting stops—that is, when a full year passes in which the conflict accounts for fewer than twenty-five battle deaths—regardless of the reason that the violence lessens. Using conflicts and episodes rather than wars formulates the questions I am trying to answer in such a way as to eliminate the problem of determining whether to code the continuation of an ongoing conflict or the start of a new one.

The distinction between war and conflict helps to elucidate the significance of the episodic nature of internal conflicts. Licklider (1993) explains the difference, writing that war necessarily involves a minimum level of violence. If the violence ends, the underlying conflict may continue at less intense level.45 Defining precisely when a war ends and a new one begins is a very complicated process. For example, most civil war scholars would agree that there were two episodes of civil war between North and South Sudan, one from roughly 1963 to 1972 and another from 1983 to about 2005. Similarly, the Angolan Civil War, which lasted from 1975 to 2002, saw a two-year break in the violence during 1996 and 1997. In both cases, the belligerents signed formal peace agreements, attempted to form a unity government, and temporarily ended the violence. In both cases, the peace agreement broke down and fighting resumed. There are important differences between the conflicts as well, and indeed civil war datasets often code a single war in Angola but two in Sudan. I avoid choosing an arbitrary minimum peace period to

45 Licklider 1995, 682.
separate conflicts into civil wars. My coding scheme recognizes one conflict between North and South Sudan and one conflict over the government of Angola, each with two episodes of violent fighting. By classifying conflicts in this way, I can compare the persistence and recurrence of different conflicts with multiple episodes of violence.

Existing work on civil war relapse has focused on the durability of peace following the war. By durability of peace, researchers mean how long the peace lasts after a conflict has ended. Usually, the durability of peace is measured in years from the end of one civil war to the start of another. The durability of peace is related to recurrence, but it differs in a few important ways. First, existing research on the durability of peace (like Mason’s) measures the time from the end of one civil war to the start of any other civil war in the same country. While useful in determining some of the factors that affect stability, this definition provides little guidance on the question of why certain conflicts keep coming back. Work on the durability of peace has also focused solely on individual periods of peace. Thus it fails to address the question of why some conflicts have more episodes than others—some conflicts have had as many as six or seven, while others have a single, uninterrupted period of fighting.

Another common problem is distinguishing among multiple simultaneous conflicts within a country. Because the process of sorting out exactly which groups are fighting and why is so complex, much of the existing work codes the presence of civil war as a binary variable. That is, researchers consider only whether the violence has reached the threshold of a civil war, regardless of which groups are involved in the fighting. For example, Collier et al. (2001) do not distinguish among multiple simultaneous conflicts within a country. This failure skews duration analysis by stringing together distinct but overlapping conflicts. Additionally, it prevents an accurate measurement of recurrence because it is impossible to tell whether certain conflicts
actually reemerge after a period of peace. The peace period might be masked by another war in the same country, or a subsequent civil war might be different from the first but still considered a relapse. I attempt to rectify this problem by distinguishing multiple simultaneous conflicts in the same country.

This thesis attempts to fill some of the gaps in the literature on civil war persistence and recurrence. I focus on aspects of conflicts and the countries in which they occur to determine why some conflicts last so long and why some appear to resolve but then flare up again. Understanding why some wars exhibit multiple episodes might hint at ways to break the cycle of violence during periods of peace, preventing these conflicts from relapsing. In Chapter 2, I present the results of a large-n empirical study using my classifications of conflict and civil war. Chapters 3 and 4 present two sets of case studies that examine how the findings from Chapter 2 play out in practice and how the results from each level of analysis affect one another. I present conclusions and policy implications in Chapter 5.
Chapter 2: Empirical Analysis

Data and Dependent Variables

Studying the persistence and recurrence of internal armed conflict requires precise definitions of conflicts and episodes. Much of the work I discussed in Chapter 1 has been limited by coarse data that do not distinguish among simultaneous conflicts within a country and imprecise definitions of the beginning or end of conflicts. As I outlined previously, I use the concept of a conflict to describe two or more groups—at least one of which is the government of a country and one of which is a non-state actor—competing for control of government or territory within a state. Territorial conflicts must have a clear tie to a specific region of a country; any conflicts without such a connection are classified as government conflicts. All episodes of fighting over the same government or territory, regardless of how much time separates them, are considered part of the same conflict.

My data are from the Armed Conflict Database developed by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and the Centre for the Study of Civil Wars at the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO).¹ UCDP/PRIO define a conflict as “a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths.”² The dataset includes entries for every year of conflict in which there were at least 25 battle deaths, and each conflict is classified by the territory or government in question. That classification is based on what the

¹ The original data can be found at http://www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Armed-Conflict/UCDP-PRIO/. I made a few changes to the UCDP/PRIO’s codifications, which are listed in Appendix A.

parties are fighting over (or claim to be fighting over), and it therefore does not necessarily reflect why the parties are fighting.\(^3\)

The UCDP/PRIO battle death requirement differs importantly from how previous work defines civil wars. Most existing work on civil wars requires at least one thousand battle-related deaths for a conflict to reach the level of civil war.\(^4\) The term “internal armed conflict” thus defines a much broader set of conflicts than “civil war.” Additionally, many of the conflicts generally included in research on civil wars do not necessarily match our intuitive notions of what a civil war is. As a result, I use the term “internal armed conflict” (or “internal conflict” for short) throughout this thesis.

I collated the UCDP/PRIO year-by-year data into episodes of fighting. An episode is a set of one or more continuous years in which a conflict caused at least 25 battle deaths. If a calendar year passes with fewer than 25 battle deaths for a certain conflict, I consider the episode to be over and code a new episode if the fighting resumes. Then I further aggregated episodes of fighting over the same territory or government into conflicts of one or more episode of fighting. My data are drawn from the period 1946-2009. They include 173 conflicts in 103 countries. The shortest conflicts were less than one year long; the longest (Israel/Palestine) had fifty-seven years of fighting across two episodes. Conflicts had as few as one or as many as six episodes. The average (mean) conflict had 9.93 war years and 2.05 episodes of fighting.

A conflict’s “persistence” is the percentage of years since a country’s independence in which that conflict caused at least 25 battle deaths.

\[
\text{Persistence} = \frac{\text{CONFLICT YEARS}}{\text{EXIT} - \text{INDEP}}
\]

where CONFLICT YEARS is the number of years in which the conflict caused at least 25 battle deaths, EXIT is the last year in which the country existed (usually 2009, but earlier for

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\(^3\) “UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset Codebook” 2009, 6.

\(^4\) Fearon and Laitin 2003, 76.
countries such as East Germany or South Vietnam) and INDEP is the date of independence or 1946, whichever is later.

Persistence therefore has a maximum value of 1 and a minimum of 0.0159 (a one-year conflict in a country that became independent prior to 1946 and still existed as of 2008). Persistence correlates strongly with duration \((r = 0.961)\), but persistence accounts for the shorter histories of countries that became independent (or ceased to exist) during the period of observation while duration does not. Considering the length of a country’s history is especially important because many internal conflicts occurred in countries that gained independence in the second half of the twentieth century; of the 103 countries that suffered violent conflicts, sixty gained independence after 1946 and an additional three ceased to exist at some point during that time.

In addition to calculating the persistence and number of episodes in individual conflicts, I aggregated data for each country. I created a measurement of total persistence, which is the total war years for every conflict in that country divided by the number of years since independence (this is equivalent to the sum of the persistence measures for every conflict in that country). Another way to think about total persistence is the average number of simultaneous conflicts occurring in a country since 1946. Unlike a conflict’s persistence, a country’s total persistence may be greater than 1 because there can be more than one conflict in a country at a time. Indeed six countries (Burma, India, Ethiopia, Philippines, Israel, and Angola) have a total persistence of one or larger.

I also calculated a few other aggregate variables at the country level. One is simply the total number of episodes of fighting a country has experienced during the period of observation. This number is a measure of a country’s propensity for recurrent conflict. Another measure of recurrence at the country level is the average number of episodes per conflict for each country. The common attributes of countries that tend to experience conflicts with more episodes may
give us an idea of why some countries seem trapped in cycles of violence. To assess differences by type of conflict, I also calculated each statistic for only conflicts over government and only conflicts over territory.

For the statistical analysis in this thesis, persistence and total episodes will be the dependent variables. Both measures vary widely and are skewed strongly to the right. Most observations have relatively small values for both persistence (close to zero) and episodes (one). However, a small number of countries have very high persistence, episode counts, or both. Figure 1 and Figure 2 are histograms that illustrate the distributions of my dependent variables. Observations are countries, and only countries with at least one year of conflict are included.

The relationship between the dependent variables also helps us to understand the data. There is a strong positive correlation between total episodes and total persistence (r = 0.848), and a scatterplot of total persistence against total episodes (Figure 3) confirms this relationship graphically. However, a handful of countries with very high persistence and episode count mask
much of the variation, so I include **Figure 4**, a scatterplot of total persistence against total episodes for only countries with a total persistence less than one. The excluded countries are Burma (Myanmar), India, Ethiopia, Philippines, Israel, and Angola. When these countries are excluded, the correlation between total episodes and total persistence drops to 0.568. As **Figure 4** reveals, there are striking differences in the patterns of persistence and recurrence across countries. Some nations, like Iran, Indonesia, and Iraq, have both high persistence and episode counts. Others, such as Colombia, Cambodia, and Bangladesh have high persistence but few episodes. Finally, there are a few countries—for example Senegal, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, and China, with high episode counts but low persistence. I will examine some of these patterns in more detail in Chapters 3 and 4.
In the next section, I develop hypotheses for several potential determinants of persistence and recurrence (as measured by the number of episodes in a conflict). These determinants can be broken down into two groups: attributes of countries and attributes of conflicts. Attributes of countries apply most directly to the aggregate country-level metrics. Attributes of conflicts apply only to individual conflicts, not country-level statistics. Included among attributes of conflict is my analysis of episode termination, which attempts to determine how dynamics of conflict affect recurrence. In the next section, I present my hypotheses and explain how I measure the independent variables. Then I discuss the results of my empirical analysis.
Hypotheses and Independent Variables

Country Attributes

The role of ethnicity in encouraging and prolonging conflict has been vigorously debated in the political science discipline. Because so many wars are fought along ethnic lines, there is a significant body of work postulating that ethnically diverse countries are prone to conflict—whether because of clashes in cultural practice or separatist movements that identify along ethnic lines. Additionally, the perception that ethnic conflict is particularly deep-seated implies that ethnic conflicts are especially difficult to end. Given this perspective, it might be expected that:

H₁: Ethnic diversity is positively correlated with civil wars that are more persistent.

Additionally, managing the peace in ethnically diverse countries is often more difficult—as Cederman et al. (2010) find, fighting along ethnic lines tends to increase the likelihood of conflict among the same groups in the future. This finding suggests the following hypothesis:

H₂: Ethnically diverse countries experience wars with more episodes of conflict than ethnically homogenous countries.

To assess ethnic diversity, I use two measures of ethnic fractionalization. The first is drawn from the Soviet Atlas (1964) and represents the probability that any two randomly selected individuals from a given country are members of the same ethnic group. The second was developed by James Fearon in 2002. Data for both measurements of ethnic diversity are those collected by Fearon and Laitin (2003).

The role of democratic institutions in preventing conflict has also been studied extensively. There are two aspects of democratic government that might be expected to affect the
persistence or recurrence of civil war in a country. First, because democracy provides a peaceful mechanism for the transition of power, we might expect that conflicts in democracies are less likely to recur than conflicts in autocratic countries. Second, participatory democracies are generally thought to be better able to prevent discrimination and thus reduce grievances. Indeed, Gurses et al. find that peace tends to be more stable in democratic countries. As a result:

**H₃:** Democratic countries should experience fewer episodes of violent conflict than autocracies.

I use Polity IV scores to measure regime type. Polity IV scores range from -10 (hereditary monarchy) to +10 (consolidated democracy). However, despite the existing research on democracies versus autocracies, it is possible that democracy may not be the dependent variable of interest when considering the effect of regime type on internal conflict. Fearon and Laitin find that democracy does not in fact reduce the likelihood of a civil war onset. Rather they find that both strong democracies and strong autocracies are good at preventing rebellions. They postulate that anocracies—governments somewhere in between—tend to be weaker regimes more likely targeted by insurgents.⁷ Essentially, the distinctive features of democracies or autocracies provide little predictive power for the course of civil wars, but anocracy acts as a proxy for less capable states. Thus, I expect that:

**H₄:** Anocracies experience more persistent and more recurrent conflicts than either democracies or autocracies.

To test for correlations with anocracy, I calculated the percentage of years during the period 1946-2008 during which a country’s Polity IV score was between -5 and 5, consistent with the

⁷ Fearon and Laitin 2003, p.85.
approach Fearon and Laitin (2003) use. My aggregation of Polity scores over the entire period does, however, introduce the possibility of endogeneity.

Income levels are also crucial to predicting civil war onset and duration. Richer countries tend to be more capable states with a better ability to put down insurgencies and to address the grievances of their people. Wealthier populations also face a higher opportunity cost when deciding whether to rebel.

\( H_5: \) Countries with lower per capita income should experience more episodes of civil war than richer countries.

Violent conflict and poverty also form a vicious cycle, as Collier (2007) describes. Thus, we can expect that:

\( H_6: \) Countries with lower per capita income should experience more persistent conflicts than richer countries.

As Collier makes clear, the relationship between income and conflict is not exogenous. Low growth and internal conflict breed one another. To minimize the endogeneity, I used income data from the earliest year available for each country.

In addition to income, another important economic factor is the presence of lootable commodities, such as oil, gems, or drugs. As Lujala (2010) explains, these commodities help rebel organizations in two ways. First, they provide a source of funds with which insurgents can purchase arms and supplies. Second, they provide motivation for rebels to fight for a certain territory. These theories suggest the following hypothesis:

\( H_7: \) Countries with lootable commodities should experience more persistent conflicts than countries without them.

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8 Fearon and Laitin 2003, p.81.
To operationalize this concept, I used an aggregation of Fearon and Laitin’s (2003) data. They code a country as an oil exporter if fuel exports make up more than one third of the country’s export revenues in a given year. My measure is the percentage of years in which the country was an oil exporter by that criterion.

Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderbom find that certain geographical features may determine the length of a conflict. Their most important finding is that countries with more forest coverage have longer wars. Fearon and Laitin argue that civil war onset is more likely in countries in which the landscape is conducive to insurgent activity (specifically they measure the percentage of a country covered by mountains). Thus, I expect that mountainous countries will also suffer from longer civil wars, as rough terrain makes it easier for rebels to operate.

\textbf{H}_8: \text{Countries that are more mountainous should experience conflicts that are more persistent and more episodes of fighting than less mountainous countries.}

Another barometer of the difficulty of managing a state is its area. Larger countries are simply harder to govern, potentially providing both incentive and opportunity for rebels.

\textbf{H}_9: \text{Larger countries (in terms of area) should experience more episodes of conflict and more persistent conflict than smaller countries.}

Collier et al. also identify a positive correlation between population and conflict duration. However, they indicate that their failure to account for simultaneous civil wars may produce a spurious correlation. In other words, they acknowledge that they may have erroneously concluded that populous countries seem to have longer conflicts because those countries have

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item[9] Fearon and Laitin 2003, 81.
\end{itemize}}
more conflicts. But the finding that more populous countries are more prone to longer internal conflicts is not unique to their work. There are several other hypotheses as to why population might be correlated with the duration internal conflict. One suggests that a bigger population means there will be more divisions and factions that might be sources of violence. Another proposes that more people are simply more difficult to control, especially in weaker states, providing greater opportunity for potential rebels. Finally, larger populations make it more difficult for governments to aggregate their people’s preferences into policies that are widely acceptable. Because of these findings and hypotheses, I expect that, even after correcting for Collier et al.’s failure to account for simultaneous conflicts,

\[ H_{10}: \text{Population is positively correlated with total persistence and total episodes.} \]

**Conflict Level Data**

Next, I considered factors at the conflict level. Two important conflict metrics are magnitude (the number of deaths) and intensity (deaths per unit time). I built two intensity measurements. The first is simply the total number of deaths divided by the number of conflict years—deaths per year.\(^1\) The second is the percentage of conflict years in which at least 1,000 battle deaths occurred. This second measure may grant better insight into whether a conflict maintains a high level of intensity over time. The first intensity measure, for example, cannot distinguish between a conflict that has one or two extremely bloody years and several less deadly ones from a long conflict with a consistently high intensity level. It is unclear exactly how intensity relates to persistence or recurrence. On one hand, less effective rebels would

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presumably not be able to maintain an intense conflict for long periods. On the other, a capable government might be able to inflict massive casualties against a rebel group, resulting in a short but intense conflict.

**H11:** The intensity and magnitude of a conflict should both be positively correlated with its persistence.

In addition to conflict intensity, I also examine the effect on conflict persistence and recurrence of economic development. The reasons discussed in the previous section indicate the hypothesis that:

**H12:** Conflicts in poorer countries should be more persistent and recur more frequently than conflicts in developed countries.

To operationalize the independent variable for this hypothesis, I used the income level in the year prior to the start of conflict.

### Episode Termination

As outlined in the Wagner hypothesis and confirmed by Mason, military victories tend to produce a more durable peace than negotiated agreements.\(^{13}\) Such findings indicate that the way episodes of conflict end might have a dramatic effect on the likelihood of conflict relapse. Joakim Kreutz at UCDP built a data set on conflict termination that provides information on how each episode in the Armed Conflict Database ended.\(^ {14}\) Termination types include peace agreement, ceasefire with regulation, ceasefire, military victory, and low activity. In cases of

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\(^{13}\) Mason 2007, pp.48-49.

military victory, the dataset also indicates whether the government or rebels won. The last termination type—low activity—is used when there is no clear military victory and no formal agreement, but a break in the fighting (a year with less than 25 battle deaths) occurs nonetheless. For the purposes of this study, I aggregate the first three termination types into a single “agreement” category since the individual categories often contain too few observations to yield statistically significant results.

In total, my dataset includes three hundred and fifty-five episodes of internal conflict. The numerical breakdown for each termination type is presented in Table 1. Of those episodes, a plurality ended due to low activity, followed closely by military victory. Agreements were the least common type of termination. As of 2008, thirty-two episodes were ongoing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Termination Type</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percent of All Episodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any Agreement</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace Agreement</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceasefire</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Victory</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Victory</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebel Victory</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Activity</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>355</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data provide a convenient way to study the effects of episode outcomes on recurrence. Given the support in the literature for the Wagner hypothesis, I expect that:

\[ H_{13}: \] Episodes that end in military victory are less prone to relapse than episodes ending in an agreement. Episodes ending in an agreement are less prone to relapse than episodes terminated due to low activity.
Another important factor to consider at the episode level is whether the peace is enforced. Fortna (2008) makes a convincing argument for the effectiveness of peacekeepers.\textsuperscript{15} Thus, I expect that:

\textbf{H}_{14}: In cases where peacekeepers deployed, relapse of conflict is less likely.

It is important to distinguish \textit{peacekeeping} from \textit{military intervention}. Military intervention occurs during a conflict, while peacekeeping occurs after the fighting has stopped, once there is actually a peace to be kept. My results, and Fortna’s, apply only to peacekeeping\textsuperscript{16}. For the purposes of analyzing peacekeeping, I used Fortna’s database of peacekeeping efforts with a few additions\textsuperscript{17}.

\textbf{Results}

I performed multivariate linear regressions to test the relationships between the independent variables and my measures of persistence and recurrence. I examined the relationships on various different groups of countries; I looked at all countries, only countries that experienced at least one year of conflict, and only countries that experienced at least one year of government or territorial conflict. To test \textbf{H}_{13} and \textbf{H}_{14}, I used Kaplan-Meier survival estimates and the Cox proportional hazards model. These models allow me to assess the probability of peace “failure” (return to conflict) at any point during a period of peace. The data were right-censored at 2008, allowing the models to account for conflicts that have not recurred since the end of their most recent episode.

\textsuperscript{15} Fortna 2008, 9.
\textsuperscript{16} Fortna 2008, 6.
\textsuperscript{17} Fortna’s data is available at http://www.columbia.edu/~vpf4/research.htm. I made a few updates so that the database included more recent peacekeeping efforts.
Regional Differences

The summary statistics for the dependent variables presented in the data section miss significant variation across regions. The countries in this study were divided into six regions: the West (United States, Canada, and Western Europe); Latin America and the Caribbean; Eastern Europe; sub-Saharan Africa; North Africa and the Middle East; and Asia. I explored regional differences at both the country and conflict levels. At the country level, my analysis revealed that Asian nations have, on average, by far the highest total persistence. Asia is followed by North Africa and the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the West. This general trend also hides variation by type of conflict. In every region except sub-Saharan Africa, countries tend to have higher average total territorial persistence (usually much higher) than average total government persistence. This finding is to be expected given the classification of conflicts; since total persistence aggregates all territorial conflicts in a country but only one conflict over government, we would expect the average total territorial persistence to be higher. The deviation in sub-Saharan Africa testifies to a general trend of highly persistent government conflicts in that region, which is known to have particularly weak states. Figure 5 summarizes these results. For the purposes of the figure, only countries with conflict were included. If all countries are included, the trends and relative differences are approximately the same; the numbers are just lower across the board.
Analysis at the conflict level confirms the methodological basis for the results at the country level. Government conflicts in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America tended to be more persistent than territorial conflicts in those regions. By contrast, territorial conflicts were more persistent in the West, Eastern Europe, and North Africa and the Middle East. The regional breakdown for persistence at the conflict level is presented in Figure 6.
Country Attributes

I summarize the multivariate linear regression analysis in Tables 2-4 (all countries) and Tables 5-7 (only countries with conflict). Both provide important insights, but the results for countries with conflict are probably the most telling analysis because those results pinpoint the factors that distinguish levels of persistence and recurrence among countries that have experienced conflict. Regressions including all countries are useful as well, but such regressions may highlight determinants of internal conflict in general, rather than determinants of persistent or recurrent conflict. Bivariate regressions, which do not control for confounding variables, are available in Appendix B.

Ethnic diversity exhibited a strong positive association with a country’s total persistence, total episodes, and episodes per conflict \((H_1\text{ and } H_2)\), though the relationship with episodes per conflict loses its statistical significance when only countries with conflict are considered. Diverse countries tend to suffer more persistent conflicts and more episodes of violence than less diverse countries. Additionally, conflicts in ethnically diverse countries recur more than conflicts in less diverse nations. Even when controlling for all other variables, the associations with ethnic diversity remained statistically significant. This finding differs importantly from the determinants of civil war onset; Fearon and Laitin find that ethnic diversity is not significantly correlated with the likelihood of onset when accounting for income. I find the opposite is the case for persistence and recurrence with regard to territorial conflicts; when only countries with conflict are considered, income is no longer significant when controlling for ethnic diversity. This result is consistent with Fearon’s (2004) findings that civil wars in ethnically diverse countries tend to last longer and with Gurses et al. (2008), who find that ethnic wars are prone to relapse.
### Table 2 Multivariate regressions: all conflicts, all countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Persistence</th>
<th>Episodes</th>
<th>Episodes per Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Intercept)</td>
<td>-0.6192 *</td>
<td>-7.7760 ***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethfrac</td>
<td>0.4011 **</td>
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<td>0.7195 *</td>
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<td>Income (log)</td>
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<td>Mountains (log)</td>
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<td>0.0524</td>
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<td>0.1141 ***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oil</td>
<td>0.1107</td>
<td>2.2271 *</td>
<td>0.1914</td>
</tr>
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### Table 3 Multivariate regressions: government conflicts, all countries

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### Table 4 Multivariate regressions: territorial conflicts, all countries

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<th>Episodes per Conflict</th>
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Significance codes:

*** $p < 0.001$    ** $p < 0.01$    * $p < 0.05$    . $p < 0.1$
### Table 5 Multivariate regressions: all conflicts, only countries with conflict

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<th>Episodes per Conflict</th>
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</thead>
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### Table 6 Multivariate regressions: government conflicts, countries with government conflict

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<td>Income (log)</td>
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### Table 7 Multivariate regressions: territorial conflicts, countries with territorial conflict

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</thead>
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<td>Oil</td>
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Significance codes:

- *** $p < 0.001$
- ** $p < 0.01$
- * $p < 0.05$
- . $p < 0.1$
As might be expected given the justifications for $H_1$ and $H_2$, the effect of ethnic diversity was about twice as strong on persistence and recurrence of territorial conflicts when all countries were considered. When only countries with conflict were considered, the effect on persistence was only slightly higher for territorial conflicts. The effect on recurrence was almost five times stronger for territorial conflicts, though the results were not statistically significant, probably because only thirty-nine countries experienced territorial conflict (compared with eighty-nine for government conflict). Ethnically diverse countries are more likely to have groups willing and able to mount an insurgency against the government, and such insurgencies usually manifest themselves as territorial conflicts for regional autonomy.

Neither democracy ($H_3$) nor anocracy ($H_4$) had a statistically significant relationship with persistence or total episodes, and many coefficients were not of the expected sign. In the bivariate regressions, democracy had a significant negative association, and anocracy a significant positive one, with episodes per conflict, though the relationship with anocracy was more than twice as strong as that with democracy. For the most part, these relationships lost their significance when I accounted for per capita income. In the multivariate regressions, anocracy was negatively associated with persistence and recurrence for all conflicts and territorial conflicts, though the correlation was positive for government conflicts. Anocracy only achieved statistical significance in the multivariate regressions for total episodes of territorial conflict, and the coefficient was negative. This result might be due to an effect of state capacity on recurrence. If anocracies are indeed less capable, then rebels in those countries might be able to sustain insurgency over a longer period, resulting in fewer breaks in the conflict.

As predicted ($H_5, H_6$), per capita income was significantly and negatively associated with persistence, total episodes, and episodes per conflict when all countries were considered. These
results were fairly constant regardless of conflict type in the bivariate regressions. Poorer countries suffer from more persistent conflicts and more episodes of conflicts. Conflicts in poorer countries also tend to recur more frequently than conflicts in richer countries. The effect of income remained statistically significant when controlling for all other variables and considering all countries. Though it remained significant for government conflicts in the multivariate regressions, income had no statistically significant effect on the persistence or recurrence of territorial conflict once I controlled for ethnic diversity. When the analysis was limited to countries that had experienced internal conflict, income failed to achieve statistical significance.

As we observed in Chapter 1 (and as outlined in Collier’s conflict trap), this relationship is not one-directional. Some studies have attempted to isolate the effect of income by using income in the year or years prior to the start of a conflict as the independent variable. I use the earliest income data available for each country in my data set. The income level in the earliest available year is strongly negatively correlated with persistence, suggesting that income has causal effect. However, the average income over the entire period is even more strongly correlated, providing support for Collier’s conflict trap.

Oil exportation ($H_7$) was generally not a statistically significant predictor of persistence or recurrence, even in the bivariate regressions. In fact, the coefficient was not even of the expected sign in the bivariate regression with persistence. Checking this finding with a dummy variable indicating whether a country was ever an oil exporter produced similar results. The most frequent oil exporters—Angola, Iran, and Iraq—all had very high persistence, and Iran and Iraq also had high episode counts. However, several other oil exporters, such as Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Syria, and Yemen had very low persistence and episode
counts. The group of countries that export oil is fairly heterogeneous, and many have been relatively stable. Indeed, though rebels might be able to sell oil illegally or expropriate funds from oil companies, oil also provides funds to the state, improving its ability to suppress rebellion. As a result, oil is an inconsistent predictor of recurrence and persistence.

The exceptions to this general trend were the multivariate regressions that included all countries. Oil was a statistically significant predictor of total episodes, though it lost its significance when only countries with conflicts were considered. These results can be explained by looking more closely at the countries identified as oil exporters. There are thirty-five countries identified by the Fearon and Laitin criteria as oil exporters at some point during the period 1946-2008. Twenty-six of those countries, and eight of the twelve countries that exported oil every year, experienced at least one episode of conflict. Oil exportation may predispose a country to conflict, but it does not help to predict persistence or recurrence among those countries that have experienced internal conflict.

One final note about oil. Oil exportation is used here as a proxy for some form of support for rebels. However, my measurement does not indicate whether the oilfields are actually located in the conflict zone, so it is a very coarse measure. Lujala (2010), who built a data set accounting for the location of oil reserves within a country, found that oil was, in fact, a statistically significant predictor of conflict duration. Additionally, oil is by no means the only potential source of support for rebels. My results do not challenge notion of resources or other exogenous support as important for sustaining rebel activity, to which we will return in Chapter 4.

I measured two geographic attributes that could affect the persistence or recurrence of internal conflict: the percentage of a country’s terrain occupied by mountains ($H_8$) and area ($H_9$). Both were significantly and positively correlated with persistence, total episodes, and episodes
per conflict in bivariate regressions. Both attributes also exhibited statistically significant correlations with persistence and episodes in conflicts over government, but mountainous terrain was not quite significant at the five percent level for territorial conflicts. For the most part, the statistical significance of the relationships between both geographic factors and all dependent variables disappeared when controlling for population. In fact, the coefficient for area was negative in most of the multivariate regressions.

There were two important results that defied this general trend. Mountainous terrain was positively and significantly associated with persistence of government conflicts. This relationship held for all countries and for just countries that experienced government conflict. In other words, mountainous terrain predicts more persistent and recurrent government conflict among all countries, and it even differentiates persistence just among those countries that have experienced government conflict. Mountainous countries are difficult to govern and mountainous terrain provides rebel groups an opportunity to maintain bases beyond the central government’s reach. Conflicts in such countries are more likely to recur because rebels can retreat to the rugged periphery to regroup after suffering a setback. The geography of these countries exacerbates the problem that Mason identifies—when rebels are defeated, they can disappear in the countryside to prepare for another round of fighting. Mountainous terrain far from the center makes it easier for rebels to do that, and thus recurrent conflicts are more common.

Along with ethnic fractionalization, population \((H_{10})\) was positively and significantly associated with both persistence and recurrence for all conflicts regardless of which set of countries was considered. Because the UCPD/PRIO data distinguish among simultaneous conflicts within a country, it is unlikely that these results can be explained in the way that Collier et al. suggest. Rather, it may be the case that more populous countries are difficult to govern or
that, by virtue having more people, such countries also have more groups to act as belligerents in a conflict.

Conflict-Level Data

In addition to the country-level analysis, I explored the determinants of persistence and recurrence for individual conflicts. The results are summarized in Table 8. Conflict intensity—measured using both metrics discussed in the methods section—was associated with more persistent conflicts ($H_{11}$), but not more recurrence. In fact, there was a negative correlation between the second measure of intensity (percentage of years in which at least one thousand battle deaths occurred) and episodes, though the relationship was not quite statistically significant. A possible explanation for these results is that, as suggested by $H_{11}$, is that intensity can be a proxy for rebel strength. Stronger rebels are able to maintain insurgencies for longer periods, hence the positive correlation with persistence. At the same time, weaker rebels may be incapable of creating enough violence each year to reach the twenty-five battle death threshold. As a result, more intense conflicts also tend to be more continuous and therefore have fewer episodes. The same relationship existed when the data were limited to conflict over governments, but there was a (statistically insignificant) negative correlation with persistence for territorial conflicts.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>0.28347 *</td>
<td>2.68400 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income (log)</td>
<td>-0.04942 **</td>
<td>-0.24333 .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>148</td>
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</table>

Table 8 Determinants of conflict persistence and recurrence
As expected, a country’s income level at the start of a conflict was negatively associated with both persistence and episodes ($H_{12}$). This relationship existed regardless of the type of conflict, though it was not quite statistically significant at the five percent level for territorial conflicts. This finding is additional evidence for $H_5$ and $H_6$—that poverty is actually a cause of more persistent and recurrent conflicts. Conflict doubtless depresses income and growth, but that economic development prior to conflict predicts persistence indicates that poorer countries are predisposed to longer conflicts. There are a number of reasons why poorer countries might suffer from more persistent conflicts. Lower opportunity cost for rebels is one explanation—with nothing to go back to, there is little incentive to stop fighting. Another is that income is often representative of state strength, and weaker states are more appealing targets for insurgents. Finally, poorer countries are generally less able to address their people’s grievances by providing social services. That conflict and poverty are strongly associated is one of the more consistent findings of the literature on civil wars, and there is no shortage of reasons for why that is the case.

**Episode Termination**

I performed two types of analysis to examine the effects of episode outcomes. The first, a Kaplan-Meier survival estimate, assesses the “survival rate” of peace for any given number of years after an episode of conflict. In other words, it estimates the portion of peace periods that have not given way to a new episode of conflict for some number of years after peace is achieved. The Kaplan-Meier estimator has the advantage of accounting for data that are “censored,” meaning that the period of observation ends without a failure. My data indicate only whether a conflict had relapsed as of 2008, providing no indication of the conflict’s chance of
relapse after 2008. The Kaplan-Meier model accounts for episodes that have not relapsed without making any assumptions about whether those conflicts will reemerge in the future. Figure 7 shows the Kaplan-Meier survival estimate for all peace periods. The initial steep decline in the curve indicates that peace often fails early; about 40% of the time, the peace fails within five years. If the peace lasts for fifteen years or so, however, it has an excellent chance of lasting permanently. There is little difference in the Kaplan-Meier plots for territorial and government conflicts (Figure 8).

Figure 7 Kaplan-Meier plots for all peace periods

Figure 8 Kaplan-Meier survival estimates by conflict type

Episode outcomes had more pronounced effects than conflict types. The Kaplan-Meier curves indicate that periods of peace following military victories tend to fail at lower rates than periods of peace following agreements, which in turn fail at lower rates than periods of peace following episodes that end due to low activity—strong support for H_{13}. Figure 9 shows the Kaplan-Meier estimates for different termination types. The plot for military victories is much less steep than the others at the beginning—conflict does not tend to relapse early after a military victory—lending credence to the hypothesis that victories are relatively stable because the losing side needs time to recover and rearm. Peacekeeping, too seems to have a strong effect in reducing the failure rate; Figure 10 shows the Kaplan-Meier plots for periods of peace with and without peacekeepers.
Figure 9 Kaplan-Meier plots by episode outcome

Figure 10 Kaplan-Meier plots with and without peacekeepers
To assess further the effectiveness of peacekeepers, I used a Cox proportional hazards model to test the “hazard rate,” in this case the likelihood of a return to conflict. My methodology parallels that of Gurses et al. (2008). The Cox model estimates the hazard rate as a function of several independent variables, so I include a number of control variables to help isolate the effect of enforcing the peace. My controls include income at the beginning of the peace period, ethnic fractionalization, percentage of mountainous terrain, population, and Polity IV score (averaged over the peace period). Like the Kaplan-Meier estimates, the Cox model allows for right-censoring. Additionally, the Cox model makes no underlying assumptions about the hazard rate. Table 9 shows the results from the Cox model, first for all episodes and second for only periods of peace preceded by a negotiated agreement. Observations are periods of peace following an episode of internal conflict.

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</tbody>
</table>

The Cox hazard ratios reveal that peacekeepers reduce the likelihood of conflict relapse by over fifty percent, and that result is significant at the $p = 0.05$ level even when controlling for all other variables. Population and Polity IV scores have essentially no discernible effect, and income has almost no effect as well. By contrast, mountains seem to have a modest effect, increasing slightly the chance of a return to conflict. Ethnic diversity has a more dramatic effect; a shift from complete ethnic homogeneity to perfect fractionalization increases the likelihood of
recurrence by one hundred and sixty percent. When only peace periods following a negotiated agreement are considered, a few important changes occur. First, the effect of ethnic diversity drops dramatically and loses its statistical significance. Second, the effectiveness of peacekeepers increases; peacekeepers reduce the likelihood of conflict relapse by more than seventy-five percent following an agreement.

Discussion

The most consistent results of the empirical analysis are that ethnic diversity and population are both positively associated with persistence and recurrence. A strong relationship existed at both the country and conflict levels. Other determinants of total persistence and recurrence with statistically significant effects, such as income and mountainous terrain, tend to lose their significance when controlling for ethnic diversity and population. Income, however, remained a statistically significant predictor of the persistence and recurrence of individual conflicts even after controlling for ethnic diversity. Though ethnic diversity was significantly correlated with the persistence and recurrence of both types of conflict, the effect was much stronger on territorial conflicts. In summary, ethnically diverse populous countries are prone to persistent and recurrent internal conflict.

Mountainous terrain was the only other factor regularly and significantly associated with persistence and recurrence when controlling for other variables, but the relationship was significant only for government conflicts. Mountainous countries are conducive to insurgent activity beyond the reaches of the central government, promoting persistent internal conflict. They also provide havens for temporarily defeated rebels to regroup and return to fighting. More broadly, factors that limit the reach and capacity of the central government—such as rough
terrain or political instability—tend to encourage rebels in government conflicts, but not in territorial ones. Anocracies may generally be less capable governments than either democracies or autocracies and are therefore targets that are more attractive for insurgents. However, stronger central governments do not dissuade territorial conflicts, which are more frequently motivated by a desire for minority independence or autonomy. Ethnic diversity has a much stronger effect on territorial conflict persistence and recurrence, indicating that breakaway ethnic groups frequently start long-lasting conflicts that are difficult to end.

With regard to episode termination, there is strong evidence for the Wagner hypothesis. Military victories produce a more durable peace and are less likely to relapse than agreements. Peace agreements are better than ceasefires. But the most important finding with immediate policy relevance is that peacekeeping is effective, especially when peacekeepers enforce an agreement. Peacekeepers reduce the likelihood of relapse by more than half in general and by more than seventy-five percent after an agreement.

While this empirical analysis is helpful in identifying factors that predispose countries to persistent or recurrent conflict, it does not answer why these factors have the effects they do. Because empirical analysis on a large scale is limited to certain factors that must be applied uniformly to all countries, it misses the nuances of individual conflicts and countries. Also, the multivariate regressions reveal that all of the national attributes analyzed in this section explain only some of the variance in persistence and recurrence. There are always additional reasons that a war persists or recurs in addition to the national attributes that can be measured for every country. The next two chapters present a series of case studies that explore the causal relationships behind and the interactions among the hypotheses proposed in this chapter. They also examine additional factors that affect persistence and recurrence.
Chapter 3: Recurrence

While empirical analysis of the sort discussed in Chapter 2 is useful to identify broad trends and attributes that predispose countries to recurrent or persistent conflict, it misses some important points. First, statistical analysis can only tell us that certain relationships exist; it cannot tell us why. Because empirical analysis on a large scale is limited to certain factors that must be applied uniformly to all countries, it fails to account for much of the variation in other factors across conflicts and countries. Sometimes the relationships are nonlinear or significantly more complicated and interactive than the regression models indicate.

To examine the causal mechanisms more closely, the next two chapters present two sets of short case studies on countries with different dynamics of internal conflict. This first chapter examines countries with high recurrence. The three countries I examine in detail—Burma, Ethiopia, and Indonesia—all had at least eleven total episodes. Burma and Ethiopia each also averaged more than three episodes per conflict. Most of the countries discussed in this chapter also had relatively high total persistence, though the range varies widely from Senegal (0.184) to Burma (3.97). I argue that certain configurations of ethnic groups make recurrent conflict more likely.

Building on Cederman et al.’s theories of political exclusion, I claim that recurrent conflict is common in countries in which there is a large, dominant ethnic group (not necessarily a majority, though it often is) and several much smaller groups. I refer to this configuration as the ethnic plurality dynamic. This dynamic promotes recurrent conflict for several reasons. First, though there is a large plurality group, that group is not large enough to overwhelm the country. Nonetheless, the plurality group is large enough to secure preeminence on the political scene, prompting feelings of resentment and disenfranchisement among the other groups. The other
important characteristic—that the second-largest group is much smaller—is also critical. Since there are so many smaller groups, they have little chance of forming a coalition to override the dominant group, even if the largest group is not the majority. At the same time, the plurality group has little incentive to reach out to the minority groups. As Cunningham argues, this lack of legitimate outlets for dissent prompts the minority groups to resort to violence. Additionally, the presence of multiple smaller groups means that there are more actors with conflicting interests. This can mean more conflicts and less stable outcomes since the bargaining space acceptable to all belligerents is very small. Finally, the fact that there are many disenfranchised groups makes it more likely that at least one of them will have the will and ability to rebel.

Burma and Indonesia are excellent examples of the ethnic plurality dynamic. The largest ethnic group in Burma is the Burmese, with sixty-eight percent of the population. The next largest is the Shan, with nine percent, followed by the Karen, with seven. In Indonesia, the plurality ethnic group is the Javanese, with forty percent of the population. Next is the Sundanese, with fifteen percent, and then the Madurese with three percent. Ethiopia differs slightly. It has two larger ethnic groups—the Oromo and the Amhara—each with about thirty percent of the population, and several much smaller groups. However, it is important to note that the term “Oromo” actually refers to several smaller groups with related languages, so Ethiopia fits the dynamic more accurately than the raw data suggest. As we shall see, the Amhara have primarily dominated Ethiopian politics, and the Oromo groups have been consistently excluded from power. All three countries are among the top five countries in terms of total episodes of internal conflict; Burma is second with twenty-five, Ethiopia is third with nineteen, and Indonesia is fifth with eleven.
This chapter contains case studies for Burma, Ethiopia, and Indonesia. Each case study consists of a brief history of the various conflicts in the country followed by a short analysis of the determinants of persistence and recurrence. I conclude with a discussion that analyzes the commonalities and differences among these three cases, with an emphasis on ethnic demography. I also examine how the trends from these three countries generalize to the rest of my data set.

Burma

Burma has the highest total persistence of internal armed conflict of any country in the world. In any given year since 1946, an average of four different armed conflicts was waged in Burma. Burma also has the second-highest total episode count in the world, with twenty-five episodes distributed among eight conflicts. Two of the conflicts remained active as of 2008. These conflicts involve so many complex issues that reaching a peaceful settlement has proved elusive.¹

During World War II, Britain, Japan, China, and the United States all fought bitterly for control of Burma. Several of Burma’s many ethnic groups took sides, exacerbating internal ethnic divisions that would later form the basis for competing factions in several of Burma’s internal conflicts.² After the war, the British government realized that Burma would inevitably become self-governing, but the British did not clarify the status of ethnic minorities in the emergent state. As early as 1945, some of the Karens (an ethnic group making up about eight

percent of the population) began demanding their own independent state, and soon thereafter the Pao and other ethnic groups made similar demands.³

Miscommunication and poor representation added to the developing tensions. In January 1947, a group of important Burmese leaders visited London to negotiate the Atlee-Aung San agreement, which laid out the plan for Burma’s independence. All of the delegates were members of Burma’s largest ethnic group, the Burmese. None came from any minority ethnic groups. During the subsequent meetings and negotiations Aung San (leader of the Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League, Burma’s most prominent political party) was primarily responsible for assuring the minority groups that they would have fair representation in the new unified Burma.⁴ Over the next few months, continued disagreements and a lack of representation of the minority groups led to a convoluted and inconsistent constitution that granted several minority groups a right of secession from the new country after a ten-year trial. All of these events laid the groundwork for some of the world's longest internal conflicts.

The friction generated by the shifting alliances of different ideological and ethnic groups during World War II created animosity and jealousy. Some ethnic groups desired independence, and most all of the minority groups feared political marginalization in the new Burma. The war had also created tension along ideological lines. Most notably, the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) had supported the British for the entire duration of the war. However, the British extended political support to some of the socialist and nationalist parties in the country even though several of those groups had sided with the Japanese at the beginning of World War II. The CPB resented this support, viewing it as denigration of the CPB’s consistent loyalty. Aung San was

³ Smith 1999, 72-73.
⁴ Smith 1999, 78.
the individual most able to maintain bonds among the many factions within the fragile new country.\(^5\)

On July 19, 1947, Aung San and several other top officials of the Interim Burmese Government were assassinated, probably by Aung San’s subordinates.\(^6\) The killings destroyed what few links the minority groups had to the new government, exacerbating their fears of political marginalization. Six months before independence, the only Burmese politician who had made a genuine effort to reach out to the minority groups was dead.

Independence came on January 4 of 1948. By February the new Prime Minister U Nu, a nationalist, faced a resentful and restive CPB. CPB-supported strikes gripped the country, and the government feared that the CPB was planning a revolution. On March 14, CPB leader Than Tun made it clear that his party was willing to use force to achieve its goals. A little over a week later, on March 25, Than Tun gave a speech threatening to have a communist stronghold in Rangoon overflow “with the blood of socialists.”\(^7\) U Nu ordered Tun’s arrest and the arrests of other CPB leaders. However, the CPB leadership was tipped off and escaped to Pyinmana, where it began calling up armed supporters.\(^8\)

Meanwhile, tensions were growing in the Karen region. U Nu feared that the Karen National Union (KNU) was attempting to establish its own government.\(^9\) The situation became chaotic; with the communist rebellion and army defections, numerous armed groups were roving at large in the countryside so that it was often impossible to tell who was fighting whom. Fearing a further breakdown of order, KNU leaders met with U Nu in mid-1948. The KNU promised that

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\(^6\) Tucker 2001, 154-56.

\(^7\) Smith 1999, 106.

\(^8\) Tucker 2001, 111.

\(^9\) Smith 1999, 93.
it would never use force to pursue its demands, and in response U Nu authorized the Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO) to arm itself against the CPB rebels. Soon, Karen militants were seizing territory. In early September, they took advantage of the turmoil throughout the country to capture Burma’s third largest city. During 1948, the insurgencies across the country became bloodier as the Arakan and Mon ethnic groups rebelled.

The constitutional clause allowing certain ethnic groups to secede from the country after a trial period was not forgotten. As the ten-year anniversary of Burma’s independence approached, another wave of ethnic insurgencies hit the country. The Karenni began a short-lived rebellion in 1957 that died out very quickly but recurred three times in brief one-year episodes of relatively minor conflict. In 1959, the Shan also rebelled. The first episode of Shan fighting lasted until 1970, when it ended due to low activity. Fighting erupted again two years later, died out again during 1974 and 1975, and then resumed in 1976.

Burma’s central government was overthrown in 1962. That year, General Ne Win led a successful coup against the country’s nominally democratic government. Ne Win launched both an aggressive program to consolidate the central government and a major military campaign against the ethnic insurgencies. For the most part, he was unsuccessful, but the Mon insurgency paused in 1963 due to low activity; it would not resume until the 1990s. Meanwhile, the government continued its campaigns against the Karen, the Kachin, the Arakan, and the CPB. All four of those conflicts continued uninterrupted until at least 1988.

Cooperation among the various rebel organizations was never a constant feature of the ethnic insurgencies in Burma. Indeed, the lack of a unified ethnic minority movement is one of

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10 Smith 1999, 111.
11 Smith 1999, 112.
the primary complicating factors for negotiators and the government. A major uprising in 1988, however, temporarily united some of the many insurgent groups. Hundreds of thousands of monks, students, and doctors took to the streets throughout the country demanding reform from their government. Ne Win initially responded cautiously, promising minor reforms. But the protesters were not appeased, and the government used the continuing unrest as justification for a military crackdown. About one thousand people were killed as the government quelled the uprising. At the same time, one of Ne Win’s subordinates, General Saw Maung, staged a coup. He seized power and reasserted military rule of the country.

As soon as he took power, Saw Maung moved to root out the remnants of the uprising. He launched a major military campaign that quickly and violently repressed the protestors across the country. At least in part as a result of Saw Maung’s offensive, three of the major insurgencies temporarily ended that year—the Communists, the Arakan, and the Shan all stopped fighting, if only briefly. Only the Karen and the Kachin conflicts remained active during 1989. But the quiet was short-lived. The CPB resumed fighting in 1990, the Arakan insurgency restarted 1991, and the Shan insurrection rekindled in 1993. A ceasefire with the Karen briefly quieted that insurgency in 1993, but fighting broke out again in 1995.

Several of the insurgencies subsided again during the 1990s. A ceasefire ended fighting with the Kachin in 1992. The Arakan and communist insurgencies both ended due to low activity in 1994. The government defeated the Mon in 1996 and signed a ceasefire with the Wa in 1997. By 2006, the government had signed twenty-five ceasefires with various ethnically motivated insurgent groups. As of 2008, two of the insurgencies—the Karen and the Shan—were still

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13 Lall 2009, 4.
16 Lall 2009, 5.
active. However, the government had been able to negotiate most of the ceasefires only by promising a new constitution. Whether that new constitution will prove to be acceptable to the various insurgent minorities is an open question—in fact there are already troubling signs of disagreement among the Kachin and the Wa.\textsuperscript{17}

Despite its many ethnic conflicts, Burma is only slightly above the world average for ethnic fractionalization according to both measures. However, it is both poor and populous (26\textsuperscript{th} in the world in population). Additionally, its ethnic dynamics predispose it to recurrent conflict, with a large plurality group (the Burmese) and several much smaller groups. One of the major difficulties for Burma is the large number of small ethnic groups. The insurgencies have come in waves—one at independence, one about ten years later, and a third in the early 1990s. In Burma, the various insurgencies have fed off one another, taking advantage of the government’s divided attention and resources. The government has had difficulties quelling multiple rebellions simultaneously—for example, it managed to defeat the Karenni in 1950, but the conflict erupted again 1961. Most episodes of fighting ended due to low activity and relapsed, indicating that military offensives have not been decisive.

Burma’s complex ethnic dynamics lie at the heart of the high level of conflict recurrence in that country. The dominant Burmese ethnic group has never attempted to make a credible commitment to include the galaxy of smaller groups in government. This pattern was established prior to independence when no ethnic minorities were included in the delegation to London that negotiated the terms of independence. Because all of the minority groups are so small that they could not compete with the Burmese, Burmese politicians had little incentive to reach out to the minority groups. Even assuming that Aung San might have been able to negotiate peace with all

\textsuperscript{17} Lall 2009 5-6.
of the ethnic minorities after independence, his assassination all but eliminated hope for those groups. In fact, the fears among Burma’s minority groups were codified in its constitution. The clause allowing for secession by several ethnic groups after a ten-year trial period indicated that those groups had little confidence that the new country’s government would represent them fairly.

Since all of Burma’s minority groups are so small (the second largest has nine percent of the population), the government has from time to time been temporarily successful in suppressing the ethnic insurgencies. These successes are indicated by periods of relative stability following major military operations, most notably after 1988. However, the large number of disenfranchised groups ensures pockets of discontent scattered across the country that have proved exceedingly difficult to quell for any extended period.

Ethiopia

Since 1946, Ethiopia has suffered six different internal conflicts. The conflicts combine for a total of ninety-nine conflict years and nineteen episodes. The country has seen wars over both government and territory. One of the territorial conflicts—the war for Eritrean independence—is a rare post-decolonization instance in which a separatist movement succeeded in achieving independence. Ethiopia has also been the location of four other territorial conflicts and one government conflict.

Until the mid-1970s, Emperor Haile Selassie ruled Ethiopia. The first episode of government conflict (in fact the first episode of any type of internal conflict) in Ethiopia was an attempted coup against Selassie. In December of 1960, Mengistu Neway led some of the Imperial Bodyguard and a handful of other followers from the security forces in an attempt to
seize the government. The rebels managed to capture the crown prince and twenty cabinet members. However, they never garnered enough popular support to maintain control. Most of the army and air force remained loyal to the government, and the coup was crushed. Some 324 people were killed in the fighting.\textsuperscript{18}

Selassie’s government remained in power until the mid-1970s, when a group of military officers known as the Derg wrested control from the ailing emperor through a bloodless mutiny.\textsuperscript{19} For the first three years of its rule, the Derg was crippled by internal power struggles that Mengistu Haile Mariam eventually won. Shortly after Mengistu finally managed to establish his supremacy, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) began promoting a democratic government. In early 1977, the EPRP executed a series of terrorist attacks against Derg members and supporters known as the White Terror. The government responded with the Red Terror, a period of about a year and a half in which it focused on locating and killing members of the EPRP.\textsuperscript{20} These were the opening salvos of an internal conflict that would continue until 1991.

A scattered collection of insurgent groups operated against the government over the next fourteen years. Among them were the EPRP, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and eventually an umbrella organization known as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).\textsuperscript{21} In 1991, the EPRDF captured the capital, Addis Ababa. The government was defeated, and the EPRDF became a political party that has ruled the country ever since.\textsuperscript{22} But the fourteen years of fighting over the central government composed only one of the six conflicts

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Turner 1993.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Turner 1993.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Gebru Tareke, \textit{The Ethiopian Revolution} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 2.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Tareke 2009, 334.
\end{itemize}
that have plagued Ethiopia in the post-World War II era. In fact, during the period of relative stability between Neway’s failed coup and the Derg’s takeover, a separatist movement was brewing in Eritrea.

Eritrea is a narrow strip of land northeast of Ethiopia. Prior to its independence, it formed Ethiopia’s only outlet to the ocean and was therefore considered integral to the mainland. In 1952, Ethiopia was granted independence following a period of British administration. Eritrea was a semiautonomous region of the country.\(^23\) Beginning in 1956, the Ethiopian government gradually seized control over Eritrea from its local governing body. In 1962, Ethiopia officially annexed Eritrea. The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) had been formed two years earlier, in 1960,\(^24\) but its operations did not account for enough battle-related fatalities for the conflict to enter the UCDP/PRIO data set until 1964.

The Eritrean rebels were a remarkably divided group, sometimes fighting one another as well as the Ethiopian government. For the first decade or so of the conflict, the rebels’ inability to coordinate operations allowed the Ethiopian government to contain the insurgency, though not to quash it entirely.\(^25\) The various divisions within the ELF led to the formation of the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) in 1977. By mid-1978, the rebels ruled the Eritrean countryside but the government maintained control of most major towns.\(^26\) Throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s, the Eritrean rebels won a string of military victories over the government. By 1991, the rebels had de facto control of Eritrea. The defeat of the Derg government at the hands of the EPRDF in the same year ensured Eritrea’s independence, as the

\(^23\) Tareke 2009, 56-57.
\(^24\) Tareke 2009, 59.
\(^25\) Tareke 2009, 62.
\(^26\) Turner 1993.
TPLF (by then the dominant member of the EPRDF) had promised a referendum on Eritrean independence once the Derg was ousted.

Though the Ethiopian military’s resources were stretched to the limit in efforts to defend the government’s existence from the EPRDF and to put down the Eritrean rebels, it also faced a series of additional territorial conflicts on the periphery. The deadliest of those conflicts occurred in the Ogaden region of eastern Ethiopia. Since its independence in 1960, Somalia has claimed sovereignty over Ogaden for ethnic and cultural reasons. In 1976, the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF), with the aid of the Somali government, began an armed insurgency. Somalia followed up on its training of the WSLF rebels by committing its own regular army to aid them, but Ethiopia managed to repel the Somalis. The defeat of the Somali invasion was a major setback for the rebels, but they continued to fight until 1983, when the first episode of conflict was terminated due to low activity. Then, in 1994, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), took up the WSLF’s mantle and continued the rebellion. With a lack of foreign support, the ONLF has managed to stage an effective insurgency only intermittently. Breaks in the fighting occurred in 1995, 1997-1998, and 2003, all because of low activity. The insurgency remains active today.

Ethiopia has seen three additional territorial conflicts. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which fights for autonomy in the southern region of Oromiya, began operating in 1977. Though the Oromo are the largest ethnic group in the country, they have had little political influence since the nineteenth century (and, as mentioned previously, the term “Oromo” applies to several small ethnic groups with similar languages). The OLF insurgency manifested as a

27 Tareke 2009, 185.
28 Tareke 2009, 183.
29 *Ethiopia: Treatment of Oromos and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)* (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, April 9, 2001), http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3df4be2f20.html.
series of five short episodes, all ending due to low activity, until 1995. After a three-year break, fighting began again in 1998 and continues to this day. The Islamic nomads of the eastern lowlands known as Afar also staged an insurgency composed of three episodes, the longest of which was three years. The Afar conflict has been marked by relatively long breaks separating shorter periods of fighting that subside after a few years due to low activity. The last episode of fighting ended in 1996. Finally, al-Itahad al-Islami, a Somali-based Islamic militant group was active in eastern Ethiopia for three years during the 1990s.30

Ethiopia is country predisposed to recurrent civil war. It is large in terms of area (27th in the world) and population (14th), and it is poor. The country is also very mountainous, and the Eritrean rebels took advantage of the mountains’ natural defenses to repel the government’s army.31 The patterns of conflict in Ethiopia have followed the trends in Chapter 2; most episodes terminated due to low activity relapsed, while the victories have been more stable. The government suppression of Neway’s 1960 coup was followed by sixteen years of peace, and neither rebel victory (in Eritrea or the government conflict) has relapsed.32

Ethiopia’s large number of territorial conflicts can be explained by the country’s ethnic diversity. Both measures of diversity are well above the world average, and at least four of Ethiopia’s five territorial conflicts can be traced to an ethnic group’s desire for autonomy. Unlike most of the other cases discussed in this chapter, the dominant ethnic group is Ethiopia is not the largest. The Amhara, which is slightly smaller than the Oromo, has consistently dominated

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31 Tareke 2009, 218.
32 There is a convincing argument that the Eritrean conflict has in fact relapsed. Ethiopia and Eritrea went to war again in 1998 when Eritrea invaded Ethiopia. Ethiopia repelled the invasion and the war ended in 2000. One might claim that the Eritrean-Ethiopian War was merely a continuation of the separatist conflict with a different label. However, the war is classified as interstate war, not an internal conflict, since Eritrea was an independent nation at the time. As a result, the war is not included in the data set used for this study.
Ethiopian politics. As in Burma, several of the groups excluded from power began violent rebellions against the government. Once the government was overthrown, the EPRDF, a coalition of Amhara, Oromo, and Tigrayan groups took power. But Ethiopia’s continued inability to resolve dissent among its ethnic minorities demonstrates the difficulties of successful coalition-building in nations with many small ethnic groups and one larger one that claims ownership of the state.

The EPRDF victory in 1991 brought a short period of stability. Even the OLF joined the ruling coalition, but it withdrew the next year, citing political harassment and election irregularities. The coalition was also unable to attract the support of the Ogaden or the Afar, and both of those ethnic insurgencies continued after the Derg’s ouster. While Ethiopia does not follow exactly the pattern of ethnic distribution I described previously, its ethnic configuration is similar enough that it has suffered recurrent conflict for many of the same reasons. Like Burma, Ethiopia has suffered recurrent ethnic conflict because of the central government’s inability to credibly enfranchise minority groups. The groups’ failure to build an inclusive coalition has encouraged recurrence throughout Ethiopia’s history.

**Indonesia**

Since 1946, Indonesia has experienced five internal armed conflicts that have totaled eleven episodes of fighting. Those eleven episodes are many more than some countries with much higher total persistence. For example, the Philippines and Israel both have total persistence about twice as high as Indonesia’s, but only half as many total episodes. The conflicts in Indonesia include a fairly brief struggle over government and four territorial conflicts.

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In the aftermath of the Second World War, Indonesia’s government and status as an independent country were both poorly defined. The Netherlands wished to regain its former colony following the Japanese occupation, but, devastated by its own occupation by the Nazis, it lacked the resources to control the distant archipelago. The result was a confused series of Dutch “police actions” to quell nationalist sentiment, an unwieldy federal government known as the Republic of the United States of Indonesia (RUSI), and a failed coup led by a Dutch counterinsurgency expert. Known as the Indonesian National Revolution, the war for independence was a long and bloody ordeal. Eventually, the Dutch agreed to recognize Indonesia as an independent state.34

Once it became independent, the process of consolidating the RUSI was complicated and sometimes violent. By early 1950, strong pressure from the central government convinced most of the Indonesian states to give up their federal status to join a unitary Republic of Indonesia. However, the South Moluccas, in the eastern part of the country, proclaimed the independent Republic of South Moluccas (RMS). The RMS had a largely Christian population and a long history of cooperating with the Dutch, so its people were less inclined to support decolonization. The central government responded militarily, beginning the first internal armed conflict in independent Indonesia. The conflict was short-lived; by November, the rebellion had been suppressed and some 12,000 soldiers who had fought for the RMS resettled in the Netherlands.35 It was a decisive victory for the government, and the conflict never recurred.

During the Indonesian National Revolution, an Islamic mystic named Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosuwirjo attempted to establish an Islamic theocracy in the country. He founded

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35 Seekins 1993.
the Indonesian Islamic State (better known as Darul Islam) in 1948. Darul Islam was active mostly in West Java, but its activities did not reach the twenty-five battle death threshold until 1953. That was the first year of the government conflict in Indonesia. However, the first episode of conflict was terminated the same year due to low activity. It was not until 1958 that the conflict resumed. By that time, Darul Islam had spread to Aceh and Sulawesi. The conflict would continue for another five years, and two additional insurgent groups would join Darul Islam in opposing the central government.

These new groups formed in Sumatra and eastern Indonesia. In March of 1957, a group of disgruntled military commanders in eastern Indonesia began an insurrection known as Permesta. At the same time Sukarno, Indonesia’s first president, had been gradually collecting power, moving his regime in an authoritarian direction. In late 1956, Mohammad Hatta, Sukarno’s vice president, resigned in protest. Hatta was popular in Sumatra and eastern Indonesia, and on February 15, 1958 a group of Sumatran military officers and Masyumi politicians formed the Revolutionary Government of the Indonesian Republic (PRRI). Permesta and the PRRI joined forces, but the government’s army worked quickly. By mid-1958, the insurgency was mostly neutralized, though the fighting dragged on until 1961. Darul Islam also continued its operations until Kartosuwirjo was captured and executed in 1962.\textsuperscript{36} The defeat of all three groups was another major victory for the government, and Indonesia experienced no further government conflicts.

Another territorial conflict broke out in 1965. That year brought the formation of the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (Free Papua Movement, OPM), a separatist organization that sought to break West Papua away from Indonesia and unite it with Papua New Guinea.\textsuperscript{37} The OPM’s

\textsuperscript{36} Seekins 1993.
\textsuperscript{37} Seekins 1993.
activities reached the twenty-five battle death threshold only infrequently. West Papuan separatism qualified as an internal armed conflict for seven years in three distinct episodes between 1965 and 1978. Each of the three episodes ended due to low activity. Despite the lack of a clear military victory or a formal agreement, the conflict has not recurred since 1978.

As the conflict in West Papua was winding down, another, more persistent conflict began in East Timor. East Timor was a colony of Portugal, and the Portuguese government started a rapid decolonization program in 1974. A leftist organization called Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretlin) seized power and declared the independence of the Democratic Republic of East Timor in late November of 1975. Ostensibly to prevent East Timor becoming a base of operations for communist activity, Indonesia invaded. It captured the territory relatively quickly and made East Timor a province in July 1976.\(^{38}\)

Fretlin refused to go quietly. The organization continued to oppose Indonesian occupation continuously for the next fifteen years. By the late 1980s, an aggressive campaign by the Indonesian army had taken its toll. Between 100,000 and 250,000 of East Timor’s 650,000 people died because of the occupation, starvation, and disease.\(^{39}\) The first, and by far the longest, episode of fighting in East Timor ended in 1989 due to low activity. The conflict reappeared twice during the 1990s. In 1998, the Indonesian government acceded to international pressure and allowed a vote on whether East Timor should be granted greater autonomy as an Indonesian province or become independent. Around 98 percent of registered voters showed up at the polls, and 78.5 percent voted for independence. Following the vote, however, militias composed of Indonesian settlers and some security forces retaliated with a series of attacks throughout the country that killed thousands. At the order of the United Nations Security Council, a

\(^{38}\) Seekins 1993.

\(^{39}\) Seekins 1993.
peacekeeping force known as the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) deployed to restore order and provide for a peaceful transition.\textsuperscript{40} Fighting between Indonesia and East Timor has not recurred since 1998.

The last of Indonesia’s territorial conflicts was fought over the region of Aceh on the northern tip of Sumatra. Separatist notions have a long history in Aceh, dating back to the region’s support for Darul Islam in the 1950s. The Gerakan Aceh Merdeka (Free Aceh Movement, GAM) began agitating for independence as early as the mid-1970s, but its guerrilla warfare was contained quickly.\textsuperscript{41} The fighting did not reach the threshold of an internal armed conflict until the early 1990s. By 1991, the conflict’s intensity had tapered off. A more sustained episode of violence broke out in 1999. In late 2002, a group of foreign observers arrived to monitor a plan brokered in Switzerland to end the fighting. Both sides signed the agreement but interpreted it very differently. The violence continued, and the ceasefire monitors began leaving in May of 2003.\textsuperscript{42} In 2005, the government and the GAM signed another peace deal. The fighting stopped, but disagreements about the separatists’ political representation threatened the fragile peace.\textsuperscript{43} In 2006, Indonesia allowed separatist parties to participate in elections for the first time.\textsuperscript{44} The Aceh conflict has not recurred since 2005.

Several of the determinants of persistence and recurrence indicate that Indonesia should be prone to persistent and recurrent conflict. It is large country, particularly in terms of population (4\textsuperscript{th} in the world), but also in area (16\textsuperscript{th}). By both measures of ethnic diversity,

\textsuperscript{42} “Free Aceh” 2006.
\textsuperscript{44} “Free Aceh” 2006
Indonesia is well above the world average. It is also very poor. While Indonesia’s total persistence is fairly high, it is much lower than countries with similar indicators, like Burma or Ethiopia. In fact, Indonesia is more populous, more ethnically diverse, and poorer than Burma. It is more populous and slightly more ethnically diverse than Ethiopia. Nonetheless, Indonesia’s total persistence is only half that of Indonesia or Ethiopia. However, it has had more total episodes of fighting than several countries with similar or higher levels of total persistence.

It might be tempting to write off Indonesia’s short-lived government conflict as a series of opportunistic rebellions that resulted from the inevitable weaknesses of a new state. Indeed, new states are much more likely than established ones to experience the onset of a civil war, and Indonesia’s contentious battle with the Dutch for independence did not bode well for a peaceful transition. The motive for the Permesta insurgency was certainly linked to the new statehood—a group of military officers had established lucrative smuggling operations in the eastern part of the country during the confusion of the National Revolution, and they revolted when the government attempted to crack down on them. But the government’s quick and decisive victory over all three insurgent groups indicates that state weakness was not a major issue.

The government crushed South Moluccas rebellion with speed and impunity. Its victories there and over Darul Islam, the PRRI, and Permesta indicate a capable state despite the country’s poverty and size. However, the government had much more trouble quelling the later separatist rebellions. West Papua, East Timor, and Aceh all involved multiple episodes spanning several decades. Each saw at least one episode terminated due to low activity. In each case, the historical record indicates that the low activity was prompted by the government’s military success. The

45 Fearon and Laitin 2003, 85.
rebels regrouped, sometimes switching briefly to nonviolent activities, before resuming guerrilla warfare. For the most part, episodes that ended due to low activity recurred (only one of seven did not recur) while episodes ending in military victory or peace agreements did not (of two military victories and two peace agreements, none recurred). This pattern indicates that the government’s inability to win decisively or sign a formal agreement in several instances encouraged a return to conflict.

Recurrence of internal conflict in Indonesia, as in Burma and Ethiopia, can be traced to an ethnic dynamic with a plurality group (in this case the Javanese with forty percent of the population) and several smaller groups. The federal character of Indonesia’s government attests to the importance of local interest, many of which are ethnic. The rebellions in the South Moluccas, East Timor, Aceh, and West Papua were all directly motivated by separatist groups. Even Darul Islam, which UCDP/PRIO classifies as part of the government conflict, found some of its strongest support among the Aceh and in South Sulawesi, where minority ethnic groups dominate. Again, the exclusion of small minority groups by a plurality ethnic group that claimed ownership over the state contributed multiple internal conflicts.

Discussion

Burma, Ethiopia, and Indonesia each have a total episode count and total persistence much higher than the world average. All three countries also exhibit most all of the indicators of persistent and recurrent internal conflict: poverty, large population, and ethnic diversity. Burma and Ethiopia are also quite mountainous (a statistically significant determinant of persistence and recurrence of government conflicts, but not of territorial ones). Indonesia is not, but that it is an archipelago may have a similar detrimental effect on the government’s ability to project its
influence and operate its military at the periphery. Thus, all three countries are at a high risk for recurrent and persistent conflict, with several potentially rebellious ethnic groups in a poor populous country that is difficult to control.

The vast majority of episodes of fighting in Burma, Ethiopia, and Indonesia ended due to low activity. Most of those recurred. Even military victories were not necessarily indicative of a stable peace; both Ethiopia and Burma saw recurrence after a government victory. Unfortunately, these cases do not highlight any single method for successfully breaking the cycle of conflict. A peace agreement enforced by a peacekeeping operation may be an option—it has worked so far in East Timor, but only because Indonesia was willing to grant full independence. Rebel victories seem to have been more stable than government ones; fighting over government in Ethiopia has not recurred since the EPRDF won the center. The Burmese government’s tactic of making concessions to rebel groups and signing ceasefires has brought increased stability since the mid-1990s, but it remains to be seen how long those agreements will last. The predisposition towards recurrent and persistent conflict in these countries combined with a large number of rebel groups has made ending the violence difficult or impossible. The large number of rebel groups can be attributed, at least in part, to the distribution of ethnic groups in each of the three countries.

The most significant similarity among all three countries is the configuration of ethnic groups. Each country’s politics were characterized by the ethnic plurality dynamic. Since most of the minority groups in each country were relatively small, they had little prospect of challenging the larger group by forming a coalition. Even in Ethiopia, where the distribution of population among the ethnic groups made such cooperation more feasible, attempts at building a coalition failed to end ethnic violence. As a result, the dominant ethnic group rarely strove to include any
of the country’s other ethnicities. This exclusion from the legitimate exercise of political power sparked many of the rebellions examined in this chapter.

The challenges to coalition building were not only triggers for internal conflict; they also played an important role in conflict recurrence. Despite multiple attempts, these countries have failed repeatedly to find a method of governance that is satisfactory to all of their ethnic minorities. As Cunningham predicted, the large number of groups involved narrows the bargaining space and makes finding an acceptable solution extremely difficult. Cunningham argues that the result will be longer conflicts. My data indicate something different: that the ethnic plurality dynamic explains higher recurrence but not necessarily higher persistence. Indeed, the ethnic plurality dynamic tells us nothing about the capacity of rebel organizations to continue fighting over an extended period. Each time the fighting stops, the belligerents face difficulties in maintaining the peace generated by a bargaining space narrowed due to the large number of groups. As a result, periods of peace in these countries tend to be unstable, even after military victories in some cases. Additionally, Cederman et al. hypothesize that ethnic violence has a particular tendency to be woven into the written and oral traditions of groups that experience it. That claim may help to explain these results; once an ethnic group rebels, it is more likely to do so again after the fighting stops. For this reason, the particular configuration of ethnic groups in Burma, Ethiopia, and Indonesia helps explain their highly recurrent internal conflicts.

All three countries saw a high number of distinct conflicts—eight in Burma, six in Ethiopia, and five in Indonesia—which can be attributed to multiple ethnically-motivated rebellions. The phenomenon of multiple simultaneous conflicts was problematic, especially in Burma and Ethiopia. In each case, simultaneous or briefly separated conflicts taxed the
government’s ability to respond. The Karen in Burma took advantage of the CPB insurgency and unrest elsewhere in the country to launch their own insurgency. Similarly, the EPRDF and the ELF combined to overwhelm the government in Ethiopia. In Indonesia, fighting over Aceh and East Timor began around the same time, just as the conflict in West Papua was ending. The Burmese government’s major military offensive in 1988 temporarily stymied most of the country’s conflicts, but they quickly reignited in the early 1990s, one after the other, dividing the government’s resources once again.

These trends related to the configuration of ethnic groups generalize well beyond the three countries examined in detail here. All seven of the countries with more than eight episodes of conflict demonstrated a similar ethnic configuration. To test the relationship more thoroughly, I created a dummy variable indicating whether a country’s largest ethnic group was between thirty-five and seventy-five percent of the population and its second-largest group was less than thirty percent. Ten of the thirteen countries (seventy-six percent) with six or more episodes of internal conflict had ethnic groups distributed in that way, compared to fifty of the 160 countries for which I have data (thirty-one percent). Only eleven of the fifty countries with the ethnic plurality dynamic had no episodes of internal armed conflict (see Table 10). The ethnic plurality dynamic is associated with 2.13 additional episodes of internal conflict, and the relationship is statistically significant even when controlling for all other variables (including ethnic diversity). Even more convincingly, the ethnic plurality dynamic is associated with 1.05 additional episodes per territorial conflict. Again, the relationship is statistically significant at the $p = 0.05$ level even after controlling for other variables. In fact, the ethnic plurality dynamic is the only statistically significant predictor of episodes per territorial conflict among countries that have experienced at least one year of conflict.
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<th>Country</th>
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<th>Total Persistence</th>
<th>Episodes per Conflict</th>
<th>Plurality Ethnic Group</th>
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This relationship did not hold for persistence. The ethnic plurality dynamic was significantly associated with an increase in persistence of 0.239, but it lost its statistical significance when controlling for population. Indeed, the countries that exhibited this ethnic configuration tended to have high episode counts, but their persistence measurements varied widely. Burma has the highest total persistence (3.97) of any country, and Ethiopia’s (1.57) is very high as well. But Senegal, which also exhibits the ethnic plurality dynamic, has had six very short episodes of conflict. It has a total persistence of only 0.183. Similarly, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Niger all had at least four episodes of internal conflict but total persistence measures of less than 0.25. While ethnic demography may predict more episodes of conflict, it says nothing about the rebels’ capabilities. Correspondingly, some of the conflicts in countries with the ethnic plurality dynamic were fairly short, and the association with persistence was not quite statistically significant. Thus the ethnic plurality dynamic is associated with high recurrence, which often, but not always, means high persistence.
Chapter 4: Persistence

As indicated in Chapter 3, while many of the determinants of persistence and recurrence affect both, a few seem to have much more pronounced effects on one or the other. Chapter 3 examined the effect of a certain configuration of ethnic groups—the ethnic plurality dynamic—on recurrence. Despite its noticeable effect on recurrence, the ethnic plurality dynamic had little effect on persistence. This chapter explores the effect of exogenous support for rebels (defined very broadly) on persistence. I consider exogenous support to be any unusual form of support, from direct military intervention by another country to drug trafficking that enriches the insurgents’ coffers. I hypothesize that that exogenous support for rebel organizations should result in conflicts that are more persistent.

In a basic sense, exogenous support for rebels is important simply because it provides the physical means to keep fighting for a longer period. If the support is military in nature, there is a simple causal explanation. Military support, in the form of troops, weapons, training, or logistical aid helps rebel organizations operate more effectively. By making it more difficult for the government to defeat the rebels, this type of exogenous support causes longer wars, unless of course it leads to a quick rebel victory. However, rebel victories are very rare—of the 323 episodes in my dataset that have ended, only thirty-four (10.5 percent) ended with a rebel victory. In a few cases, exogenous support for rebels seems to have prompted a fast rebel victory (Bangladesh’s war for independence) or forced the government to negotiate (Kosovo). For the most part, however, exogenous support for rebel organizations prolongs conflict.

Lujala (2010) explored the role of exogenous support in terms of oil and gemstones that rebels might sell to fund their armies. She finds that the presence of such valuable natural
resources is associated with longer civil wars.⁠¹ Limiting the independent variable to resources located in conflict zones allows Lujala to argue that her findings are best explained by the rebels’ access to the resources, rather than by the resources’ positive effects on state capacity and the economy more generally.⁠²

Another related argument about the effect of exogenous support has its theoretical basis in one of Luttwak’s (1999) claims about military intervention. Luttwak argues that intervention usually helps one side or the other continue to fight when it would otherwise be unable to do so. As a result, intervention prolongs conflict by propping up weaker belligerents and preventing a decisive military victory that might permanently end the violence. If this argument is correct, then exogenous support should have a stronger effect on persistence when the rebels are too weak to win a decisive military victory. If the rebels are strong enough to win, then exogenous support should just help them win faster. But if the rebels lack the capacity to take over the country, exogenous support might prolong the conflict in the way that Luttwak suggests—by strengthening the weaker actor just enough to prevent its defeat.

This chapter examines in detail the three countries with the most persistent single-episode conflicts. They are, in order of persistence, Colombia (0.714), Bangladesh (0.474), and Mozambique (0.471). Each of these countries has experienced exactly one conflict between 1946 and 2008. Two (Colombia and Mozambique) were fought over government, and one (Bangladesh) was territorial. In each case, the rebels significantly benefited from some form of exogenous support. Often, the insurgents were able to survive only because of such support. As in Chapter 3, I present a brief outline of each country’s conflict history followed by a discussion of the determinants of persistence, this time with a focus on the role of exogenous support.

¹ Lujala 2010, 21-22.
conclude with a discussion that compares the cases and considers the generalizability of my hypotheses about exogenous support to other conflicts.

Colombia

Colombia has experienced one longstanding internal conflict that has maintained a low but consistent level of violence since the mid-1960s. In 1964, a group of students formed Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army, ELN), a Marxist guerrilla group that had splintered from the Communist Party of Columbia. Two years later, another guerrilla group officially linked to the Communist Party, Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC), was formed. Both groups claim to represent Colombia’s rural poor and oppose U.S. involvement in the country.³ Through the late 1960s, a few other Marxist guerrilla groups formed and operated primarily in rural areas. However, as the decade ended, an improving economy and the capture of guerrilla leaders prompted decreased insurgent activity.⁴

During the tenure of President López Michelsen (1974-78), the FARC and ELN stepped up their activity in the rural areas. The Movimiento 19 de Abril (19th of April Movement, M-19), which formed in 1972, also executed hundreds of kidnappings. Julio César Turbay Ayala took office in 1978 and began a crackdown on guerrilla activity that was mostly ineffective. Though the ELN was less active during Turbay’s administration, the FARC actually expanded operations.⁵ However, throughout the 1980s the yearly death toll for the conflict never exceeded

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⁵ Sturges-Vera 1988.
During the 1990s, the intensity of the conflict increased significantly, with the yearly death toll regularly topping 1,000. Rebel and paramilitary groups in Colombia turned in part to illegal drug trafficking for financial support, and they have become deeply involved in the production of cocaine. Oil, too, has been an important source of funds for the rebel organizations. The FARC has been known to kidnap oil contractors and extort oil companies that operate in the conflict zones, and the right-wing groups siphon as much as 7,000 barrels of oil per day from pipelines to sell at below-market prices. This connection to the drug trade added to the conflict’s intractability, and the fighting has continued to the present day. The FARC is the dominant rebel group, while the ELN has declined in its scope and numbers since the 1990s. Despite intermittent peace talks between the government and the FARC since the 1980s and the ELN since 2004, there has been no ceasefire.

In addition to the leftist rebel organizations, several right-wing paramilitary groups also operate in Colombia. Laws passed in the late 1960s that legalized local self-defense groups prompted the formation of loosely organized right-wing paramilitary organizations. Though they initially formed in the late 1960s, the paramilitary groups consolidated under the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) in 1997. Colombia’s paramilitary organizations have also become actively involved in the drug trade and have formed de facto local governments. At the same time, the Colombian army, security services, and government have cooperated with the paramilitaries. A peace deal orchestrated by the administration of President Alvaro Uribe in 2003

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6 “UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset Codebook Version 4.”
9 Armed Conflict Reports: Colombia, Armed Conflict Reports (Project Ploughshares, 2009), http://ploughshares.ca/libraries/ACRText/ACR-Colombia.html.
10 “FARC, ELN” 2009.
with the AUC led to the demobilization of tens of thousands of members of the paramilitaries, but some remain active.\footnote{Stephanie Hanson, “Colombia’s Right-Wing Paramilitaries and Splinter Groups,” \textit{Council on Foreign Relations}, January 11, 2008, http://www.cfr.org/publication/15239/colombias_rightwing_paramilitaries_andSplinter_groups.html.}

Though the conflict in Colombia has caused thousands of deaths and kidnappings, it has never threatened the country’s center. Similarly, while elements of the drug trade and paramilitary organizations have infiltrated high levels of the Colombian government, the fighting has never threatened to overthrow the government. Unlike many longstanding conflicts, the conflict in Colombia is not organized along ethnic or religious lines—the struggle is ideological and political. The persistence of the conflict in Colombia must therefore be explained by other factors. Of the determinants of persistence discussed in Chapter 2, Colombia is fairly large, both in terms of area (26\textsuperscript{th} in the world) and in terms of population (28\textsuperscript{th}), and it is relatively mountainous. However, Colombia is not particularly poor; it is above the median income of countries that have experienced internal conflict and just below the median for all countries. Colombia is a country that is difficult to govern because of its large size and rough terrain, but it benefits from a relatively stable central government.

These factors can explain to some extent the dynamics of Colombia’s internal conflict. Though the central government is rather capable, it has been unable to extinguish the rebellion in rural areas. Colombia’s size and terrain have helped to foster guerrilla activity in the countryside. More important than the country’s size and terrain, however, is the drug trade. The rebel organizations in Colombia depend heavily on funds generated by the production—and sometimes transnational trafficking—of cocaine. Indeed, the United Nations’ 2007 World Drug...
Report cites a “symbiotic relationship between political instability and the drug trade.”¹² That relationship has had an especially pernicious effect in Colombia.

If the drug trade, and not Colombia’s physical attributes, is responsible for the conflict’s persistence, then we would expect that groups involved in the drug trade should be more successful and active for longer periods than those that are not. That is exactly what a closer examination of the various rebel groups in Colombia reveals. The most successful of the leftist groups, the FARC has been deeply involved in the processing and trafficking of cocaine. The ELN, which has been relatively marginalized over the past few decades, has been known to tax the cultivation and export of drug crops but is less actively involved. The M-19, which demobilized in 1990, was probably not involved in the drug trade at all. At the other end of the political spectrum, the AUC has been by far the most successful of the right-wing groups. Like the FARC, it is deeply involved in both the drug trade and oil smuggling. The most persistent groups have funded themselves in large part through lootable resources.

Mozambique

Mozambique has suffered one internal armed conflict since its independence. The conflict was a bitter one, pitting the ruling Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) against the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Mozambican National Resistance, RENAMO). For 16 years, the two groups fought in a bloody struggle for control of Mozambique’s countryside. Hundreds of thousands of people died in what would become one of sub-Saharan Africa’s worst humanitarian disasters.

During the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, FRELIMO led the Mozambican independence movement in a war against Portugal. Though FRELIMO was initially a fragile alliance of three ethnically- or regionally-based groups, FRELIMO’s leader, Dr. Eduardo Mondlane, hoped to build “a broad-based insurgent coalition that could effectively challenge the colonial regime.”\textsuperscript{13} Despite its eventual success in achieving independence, FRELIMO remained a deeply divided alliance. Two main factions within FRELIMO competed constantly—and sometimes bloodily—for power: the conservative nationalists and the revolutionary socialists. By 1968, however, the socialists had triumphed and transformed FRELIMO into a revolutionary socialist movement.\textsuperscript{14} By 1974, as independence and a transfer of power to FRELIMO became likely, European settlers in Mozambique grew anxious about their status in the new nation. In September of 1974, a white settler movement failed in an attempt to overthrow the FRELIMO leadership.\textsuperscript{15}

Mozambique became independent on June 25, 1975. At the time of Mozambique’s independence, two of its most powerful neighbors, Rhodesia and South Africa, were highly unstable.\textsuperscript{16} In Rhodesia, Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) was combating white minority rule, while in South Africa the African National Congress (ANC) was defying apartheid. Both countries would become deeply embroiled in Mozambique’s internal conflict, which would kill over one million people and last for almost twenty years.\textsuperscript{17}

The socialists who controlled FRELIMO managed to make a number of important enemies. The socialist leaders saw traditional tribal chiefs as collaborators with the Portuguese

\textsuperscript{13} Allen F. Isaacman and Barbara Isaacman, \textit{Mozambique: From Colonialism to Revolution, 1900-1982} (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), 82.


\textsuperscript{15} Isaacman and Isaacman 1983, 106.


\textsuperscript{17} Chingono 1996, 1.
and an anachronism of an exploitative society. The socialists similarly viewed the peasants as vestiges of an obsolete and unfair system, with the result that they alienated the peasant class and lost its support. When the peasants protested, FRELIMO responded brutally. The government repressed dissenters ruthlessly, forced resentful peasants to leave their homes for collective farms, and took dissenting religious leaders to reeducation centers from which they never returned. Unfortunately for FRELIMO these efforts tended to backfire, encouraging peasants to align with the resistance.

Because of FRELIMO’s iron grip on political power in Mozambique, there was no civil outlet for dissent. When the Portuguese relinquished power to FRELIMO in June of 1975, FRELIMO quickly banned all opposition. The result was a large group of disaffected people with no legal avenue to express their grievances. These internal factors certainly played a role in Mozambique’s developing internal conflict, but the war was heavily influenced by external factors as well.

Shortly after gaining independence, Mozambique closed its borders to Rhodesia, its landlocked neighbor. Intended to weaken the white minority government that controlled Rhodesia, this move probably damaged Mozambique’s economy much more severely. Additionally, the FRELIMO government aided Rhodesian rebels and granted them sanctuary within Mozambique’s borders. The Rhodesian government responded in kind by supporting rebels against the FRELIMO government in Mozambique. In 1975, Rhodesia’s Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) began supporting a group of rebels, mostly disaffected

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18 Chingono 1996, 34.
20 Chingono, 1996, 40-41.
21 Chingono 1996, 35.
22 Chan and Vanancio 1998, 2.
Portuguese, against the FRELIMO government. This group was remarkably ineffective, and the CIO instead turned to a group of exiled and disenfranchised Mozambicans that would eventually become RENAMO.\(^{24}\)

RENAMO’s early recruits were both Portuguese and black Mozambicans, veterans of the colonial army, a handful of intellectuals and middle class businessmen, and traditional chiefs.\(^{25}\) These groups all shared a resentment of FRELIMO and fear for their future status under its rule. As a result, they were driven to the only alternative available, RENAMO, a group whose tactics would become exceptionally brutal.\(^{26}\)

Initially, in 1976 and 1977 RENAMO executed only cautious, small-scale operations, attacking villages and kidnapping peasants but avoiding an outright battle with the army.\(^{27}\) In 1977, RENAMO successfully recruited a former FRELIMO commander, Andre Matsangaissa, who had escaped from a reeducation camp. Despite Matsangaissa’s expertise, RENAMO continued to focus almost exclusively on sabotage, plundering agricultural collectives and raiding reeducation camps. In 1978, the CIO expanded RENAMO’s activities. The CIO helped RENAMO establish more permanent bases specifically targeted at disrupting the Rhodesian rebels operating in Mozambique.\(^{28}\) RENAMO was heavily reliant on external support, at first from Rhodesia and later from South Africa. Though it probably would not have survived without external support, RENAMO also drew its recruits heavily from the elements of Mozambican society neglected by FRELIMO including peasants and traditional chiefs.\(^{29}\) RENAMO continued

\(^{24}\) Alex Vines, *RENAMO: Terrorism in Mozambique* (York: Centre for Southern African Studies), 16.
\(^{25}\) Chan & Vanancio 1998, p.3.
\(^{27}\) Chan and Vanancio 1998, 4.
\(^{28}\) Vines 1991, 16.
\(^{29}\) Chingono 1996, 41-42.
its operations over the next twenty years. The war finally ended in 1992 with the Rome General Peace Accords, which established a democratic government in the country and were enforced by UN peacekeepers.\textsuperscript{30}

Mozambique is a poor, ethnically diverse country in sub Saharan Africa. Though the conflict in Mozambique was not explicitly ethnic, RENAMO did exploit certain ethnic cleavages to attract supporters. Thus, Mozambique illustrates an important mechanism behind the correlation between persistence and ethnic fractionalization, especially for government conflicts—even if the conflict is not an obviously ethnic one, ethnic divisions may improve the rebels’ ability to gather recruits. However, unlike other countries that have suffered persistent government conflict, Mozambique is not particularly populous (53\textsuperscript{rd} in the world), nor is it very mountainous. Though the conflict was long and bloody, it consisted of only one episode and has not recurred since its end in 1992. The lack of recurrence since 1992 is due at least in part to an exogenous factor: the presence of UN peacekeepers. As discussed in Chapter 2, peacekeepers significantly reduce the likelihood of relapse and improve the durability of peace, especially when an episode ends with a negotiated agreement. However, the conflict’s persistence is also attributable to foreign involvement.

External support for the rebels from Rhodesia and South Africa was critical to RENAMO’s ability to continue the rebellion. That support helps to explain both why the war lasted so long and why it had only one episode. Without its foreign sponsors, RENAMO would probably not have been able to maintain an insurgency consistently for the entire period of the conflict. Had South Africa and Rhodesia failed to support RENAMO, the conflict probably

would have been shorter or separated into multiple episodes of fighting by periods in which RENAMO was unable to muster the strength to keep fighting.

**Bangladesh**

The nation of Bangladesh was born in a bloody war for independence with Pakistan. With the help of the Indian army, Bangladesh (then known as East Pakistan) won its sovereignty in 1971. Since independence, Bangladesh has experienced one internal armed conflict, a territorial conflict in the Chittagong Hills Tract (CHT). Though the fighting in the CHT was always low in its intensity, rarely accounting for more than one hundred deaths in a year, the conflict remained above the twenty-five battle death threshold every year until its end in 1992.

When India was a British colony, the CHT enjoyed special autonomy granted to it by the CHT Regulation of 1900. At the time of India’s independence, the British unveiled a plan to partition the colony into two countries: a primarily Hindu India and a Muslim Pakistan. Most of people of the CHT were Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, or animists. As a result, the peoples of the CHT pushed to join India or to form a third nation with nearby tribal areas. However, the British Bengal Boundary Commission placed the CHT within the Pakistani border, ostensibly for economic reasons.\(^\text{31}\) In 1963, Pakistan ended the CHT’s autonomy with an amendment to its constitution. Adding insult to injury, Pakistan sponsored large-scale migrations of Bengali (the majority ethnic group) settlers into the CHT despite the scarcity of farmable land in the region.\(^\text{32}\) The situation did not improve when Bangladesh won its independence in 1971. The victory against Pakistan solidified Bengali nationalism, and the new state refused to allow self-rule in the


CHT or to encourage the culture and languages of the *adibasis* (a collective term for the various ethnic groups indigenous to the CHT).\(^{33}\)

Responding to the influx of migrants and the government’s policies, the people of the CHT formed a political party to represent themselves called the United People’s Party of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (Parbotto Chôttogram Jônoshônghoti Shomitim, PCJSS) in 1972. According to the PCJSS, Bengali settlers were illegally seizing land belonging to natives. The PCJSS had an armed wing, the Shanti Bahini (Peace Brigade), which had the stated purpose of defending the *adibasis* from terrorist attack, rape, torture, and looting by settlers and government forces.\(^{34}\) The government responded by stepping up its military presence, and in 1975 fighting in the CHT first reached the level of an internal armed conflict.

External support helped the PCJSS maintain its insurgency. After 1975, the cordial relationship Bangladesh had enjoyed with India since its independence began to disintegrate. Bangladesh oriented itself towards the West and Arab countries—away from India—resulting in heightening tensions with India, which responded by providing safe havens, funds, weapons, and ammunition to the CHT rebels.\(^{35}\) Further motivation for India to help the rebels stemmed from the fact that the Bangladeshi government received rhetorical support from Pakistan and military aid from China. As a result, India saw the CHT conflict as a bargaining chip to use against its major regional rivals. Throughout the conflict, India supplied the CHT insurgents with a steady stream of arms.\(^{36}\)


\(^{34}\) “The Elusive Peace” 2008, 469.

\(^{35}\) Islam 2003, 146.

\(^{36}\) Islam 2003, 146-47.
The Bangladeshi government initially responded to the conflict in two ways. First, it created the CHT Development Board in 1976 to establish economic development programs in the region. But the program was implemented by the military and often used to reinforce the army’s control of the CHT. Second, the government intensified the resettlement program. Between 1979 and 1984, 400,000 Bengalis migrated to the CHT thanks to promises of land or money from the government. Beginning in the mid-1980s, the government changed tactics and began negotiating with the PCJSS. One outcome of the talks was the formation in 1989 of Hill District Councils (HDCs), local institutions with the authority to regulate government departments such as fisheries, agriculture, small industry, health, education, and culture. Nevertheless, since the HDCs did not solve the land disputes or aid refugees or internally displaced persons, this concession failed to end the conflict.

The early 1990s brought a more lasting solution. In August of 1992, the Shanti Bahini declared a unilateral ceasefire, and the government soon followed suit. The truce was intermittently violated over the next few years, but the fighting never again reached the twenty-five battle death threshold. In 1996, Bangladesh elected a new government more sympathetic to the CHT. Simultaneously, India pressured the CHT to adopt a conciliatory approach and negotiate an agreement. In late 1997, a formal peace agreement granted autonomy—still limited, but more than what was given to the HDCs—to a Regional Council (RC). India asked the PCJSS to stop operating from its territory, and the Shanti Bahini formally disbanded in January 1998.

Bangladesh is a small, flat country in South Asia. It has no mountains at all, and it is well below the world average on both measures of ethnic fractionalization. However, despite its

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37 “The Elusive Peace” 2008, 469.
relatively small area, Bangladesh ranks seventh in the world in terms of population. Countries like Bangladesh reveal the limits of ethnic fractionalization as a predictor of the persistence and recurrence of internal conflict. While high fractionalization indicates more minority ethnic groups that might be willing to fight for regional autonomy, low ethnic fractionalization does not necessarily rule out persistent ethnic conflict. In cases like Bangladesh, a relatively small ethnic minority (or more accurately for this case, a coalition of very small ethnic minorities) can wage a long internal conflict.

Like RENAMO in Mozambique and the leftist militias in Colombia, the PCJSS was heavily dependent on exogenous support. In this case, military and financial aid from India sustained the rebels. However, the nature of the conflict in Bangladesh differed significantly from the conflicts in Mozambique and Colombia. Both of the conflicts in the Mozambique and Colombia were fought over government. Though the conflicts in those countries differed significantly in terms of magnitude and intensity, neither was divided explicitly along ethnic lines or motivated by a movement for separatism or autonomy. Bangladesh, in contrast, is an example of what Fearon (2004) terms a “sons-of-the-soil” conflict, in which state-supported migrants threaten an ethnic minority. Fearon finds that such conflicts tend to be longer than other types of conflict. The fact that the PCJSS depended on Indian aid indicates that exogenous support can be critical to sustaining the capacity of rebel organizations regardless of whether the conflict involves government or territory.

In addition to demonstrating that exogenous support can be an important determinant of persistence in different conflict dynamics, Bangladesh reveals a tactic that might be crucial to ending some persistent conflicts. The PCJSS’s reliance on India for arms and funds sustained the conflict but also made the insurgents vulnerable to pressure, which eventually helped to convince
them to lay down their weapons. In general, reliance on a foreign power gives the state sponsor significant leverage over the rebel group, and India demonstrated how that leverage can be used to negotiate a peace agreement. By cutting off aid and closing its borders to the PCJSS, India helped broker peace between the government and the CHT rebels. Convincing a state sponsor of a rebel organization (or perhaps a government) to use its influence with a belligerent may be an important part of a lasting peace agreement in such cases.

**Discussion**

For a conflict to exhibit high persistence but no recurrence it must, by definition, maintain a level of violence above the twenty-five battle death threshold for its entire duration. In each of Colombia, Mozambique, and Bangladesh, the fighting never threatened to topple the central government—the rebels were too weak to challenge the government’s army directly. At the same time, in each case the government was unable to stop the violence even temporarily, and consequently the conflicts reached a sort of equilibrium in which neither group posed an existential threat to the other. This dynamic is consistent with the hypothesis laid out at the beginning of the chapter: exogenous support prolongs conflict when the rebels are too weak to win. It is telling that, in the two cases in which the fighting has stopped, the conflict ended due to an agreement or ceasefire, not a military victory. A distinguishing characteristic of this type of conflict is that neither side is capable of winning outright.

Generally, countries that experience persistent continuous conflict exhibit some, but not all, of the determinants of persistence and recurrence. For example, Colombia and Mozambique are both relatively mountainous or are covered in jungles that make it easy for rebel groups to avoid government forces. As a result, even rebel organizations that are relatively weak compared
to the government can operate effectively in those countries. But Colombia is not poor and Mozambique is not populous. Both also had governments with firm control of the center throughout the period of observation. In Colombia and Mozambique, the states were capable enough to maintain unchallenged power of the population centers but not strong enough to eliminate insurgencies at the periphery. Bangladesh is poor and populous, but it is neither mountainous nor ethnically diverse. However, the conflict was ethnically motivated. The result was a small but dedicated insurgency that manifested as a low-intensity guerrilla war on the periphery. The conflict never threatened the center, but the government was nonetheless unable to eliminate it completely.

Another key similarity in each case was exogenous support for the insurgents. The FARC and ELN in Colombia are largely supported by the drug trade. First Rhodesia and then South Africa provided critical support to Mozambique’s RENAMO, and India sponsored the rebels in the CHT. In each case, this support contributed to the rebels’ ability to maintain a continuous conflict over a long period, as an influx of funds and weapons from an external source fueled the insurgency. Indeed, it is unlikely that any of the three conflicts discussed in this chapter would have persisted for so long had the rebels lacked access to exogenous support. This finding is consistent with Lujala’s claims regarding natural resources and Fearon’s regarding contraband, and it generalizes to other conflicts as well.

Measuring exogenous support is difficult, as there are so many ways that such support can manifest itself. One of the simplest ways is to determine whether a foreign country actually intervened militarily on the side of the rebels. In the Armed Conflict Database, UCDP/PRIO indicates whether such intervention occurred. I reproduced the multivariate regressions from Chapter 2 using the same conflict data, this time with a binary variable indicating whether
intervention occurred on the side of the rebels. As Table 11 shows, intervention for the rebels is associated with an increase in persistence of 0.13 and about one additional episode of fighting. Both relationships are significant at the \( p = 0.05 \) level. That is, foreign intervention for rebels is associated with an increase in persistence equal to thirteen percent of a country’s history. Of course, this crude measure of exogenous support considers only overt military action. Other types of exogenous support are probably much more common, but are also more difficult to identify and evaluate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Persistence</th>
<th>Episodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>0.215775</td>
<td>1.90392 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income (log)</td>
<td>-0.05728 ***</td>
<td>-0.33424 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensity (2)</td>
<td>0.05305</td>
<td>-0.70626 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountains (log)</td>
<td>0.02071</td>
<td>0.16365 .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area (log)</td>
<td>-0.00632</td>
<td>-0.00396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regime Type</td>
<td>0.00480</td>
<td>-0.00041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention for Rebels</td>
<td>0.13150 *</td>
<td>1.05397 **</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The hypothesis that exogenous support improves rebel capacity makes important statements about both persistence and recurrence. I have reviewed the reasons that such support should be expected to increase persistence. The effect on recurrence is more challenging to isolate. On one hand, rebels with access to external support might be better suited to renew fighting after a setback, suggesting that exogenous support might be associated with more episodes. On the other, it is possible that effective exogenous support allows the rebels to maintain an insurgency continuously, indicating that exogenous support should be associated with fewer episodes.

The empirical data reveal that many of the most persistent one-episode conflicts involve some form of exogenous support. Table 12 summarizes the most persistent conflicts, including
the source of the rebels’ exogenous support. Exogenous support is defined broadly here—it includes direct military intervention, weapons, money, logistical support, training, and exploitation of resources to fund rebel operations. For the purposes of these tables, I reviewed histories of the conflicts in question to identify sources of exogenous support. Establishing clear coding criteria for such conflicts is challenging. In general, I required some form of active support from another government or diaspora (more than simply allowing a rebel organization sanctuary), or evidence that a rebel organization was actually involved in the exploitation of natural resources. Cooperation among rebel organizations in the same country is not considered exogenous support.

Table 12 Exogenous support for rebels, persistent one-episode conflicts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Persistence</th>
<th>Rebel Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.714</td>
<td>Cocaine, oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Chittagong Hills</td>
<td>0.474</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.471</td>
<td>South Africa, Rhodesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Vietnam</td>
<td>South Vietnam</td>
<td>0.455</td>
<td>North Vietnam, Cambodia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>0.444</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>Kurdistan</td>
<td>0.397</td>
<td>Syria, Iran, Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.383</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>0.365</td>
<td>Zambia, Angola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Kashmir</td>
<td>0.323</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>Western Sahara</td>
<td>0.283</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Table 12 indicates, exogenous support for rebels is an important determinant of the persistence of single-episode conflicts—eight of the ten most persistent one-episode conflicts featured exogenous support for rebels. The trend is less obvious for conflicts with any number of episodes. Thirteen of the twenty most persistent conflicts (regardless of episode count) involved rebel groups with exogenous support. However, five of those twenty conflicts occurred in Burma. Burma is something of an outlier in the civil war literature, since it has had either the greatest number of internal conflicts or the longest-running single civil war since 1945, depending on how episodes are classified. Indeed, Burma’s total persistence was much higher
than that of any other country. A number of factors discussed in Chapter 3 may help to account for the unusual persistence of internal conflict in Burma. If the five Burma conflicts are excluded from this analysis, then thirteen of the fifteen most persistent conflicts (and nine of the top ten) featured exogenous support for rebels. These results are summarized in Table 13. This analysis does not account for the extent or consistency of exogenous support but nonetheless illustrates the importance of such support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Persistence</th>
<th>Rebel Support</th>
<th>Episodes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>0.934</td>
<td>Iran, Syria, Jordan</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>0.918</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.765</td>
<td>DRC, South Africa</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.746</td>
<td>Private foreigners</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.738</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>Arakan</td>
<td>0.731</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.714</td>
<td>Cocaine, Oil</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.694</td>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.681</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>Shan</td>
<td>0.672</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>Southern Sudan</td>
<td>0.623</td>
<td>Uganda, Ethiopia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Mindanao</td>
<td>0.587</td>
<td>Malaysia, Libya</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>Kachin</td>
<td>0.554</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.536</td>
<td>North Vietnam</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.524</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Kurdistan</td>
<td>0.524</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.476</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Chittagong Hills</td>
<td>0.473</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.471</td>
<td>South Africa, Rhodesia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Vietnam</td>
<td>South Vietnam</td>
<td>0.455</td>
<td>North Vietnam</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For comparison, I also looked at several of the least persistent conflicts in my data set (Table 14). I analyzed the twenty conflicts with a persistence of less than 0.02. Again, I looked for sources of exogenous rebel support. I tried to be generous in coding such support—for example, the rebels in Dimaraji in India have only tenuous links to Pakistan’s Inter Services
Intelligence. Nonetheless, it is clear that exogenous support for rebels is much less common among conflicts that are not persistent. In only four of the twenty conflicts (twenty percent) was there exogenous support for a rebel organization. That short-lived rebellions benefit less frequently from exogenous support reinforces the importance of such support in building the organizational capacity necessary to sustain long conflicts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Persistence</th>
<th>Rebel Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>South Moluccas</td>
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<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Dagestan</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Azerbaijan</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yugoslavia</td>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yugoslavia</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
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<td>East Pakistan</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
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<td>India</td>
<td>Islamic State</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Dimaraji</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>Wa</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>China</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though this finding emphasizes that intervention can prolong internal conflict, it also indicates a way to stop the violence. If, as occurred in Bangladesh and Mozambique, the source of external support can be reduced or eliminated, a peaceful settlement might be possible. Consequently, Bangladesh was able to build a stable peace, even without peacekeepers to enforce it. Similarly, the end of apartheid in South Africa meant that RENAMO lost most of its

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foreign support. The loss of its sponsor forced RENAMO into negotiations with the government, though peacekeepers were also crucial to maintaining stability in the post-conflict period. Bangladesh’s experience indicates that, in some instances—perhaps when the rebels are weaker—peacekeepers may not be necessary. But that is a gamble. If the rebels are weak at the end of the conflict, a lack of enforcement might entice the government to renege on its part of the agreement. The outcome would be at high risk of relapse in a situation that has already proved prone to persistent conflict. The best way to ensure that persistent conflicts do not relapse is to enforce a peace agreement with an international peacekeeping operation. Indeed, even though fighting continued after the peace agreement in Bangladesh only on a very small scale, there is evidence that the peace agreement could have been implemented more smoothly had peacekeepers been present.

This chapter highlights several of the most important determinants of persistence. Ethnic divisions played important roles in both Bangladesh and Mozambique, though for different reasons. In Bangladesh, a minority ethnic group that felt threatened by the government rebelled to achieve autonomy. In Mozambique, the conflict was not ethnically motivated, but RENAMO utilized ethnic fractures to recruit fighters. The quantitative analysis from Chapter 2 confirms that ethnic diversity is a predictor of the persistence of internal conflict in other cases, too. The terrain in Colombia and Mozambique (and perhaps the rugged hills of the CHT) played a role as well, making it difficult for even relatively capable states to project their power. The most important finding, however, was that exogenous support for rebels, in various forms, tends to prolong conflict.

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41 Fortna 2008, 121.
All three of the cases examined in detail featured some type of external or natural resource-based support for the rebel groups involved. That support comes in a variety of different forms, ranging from direct military intervention to weapons and funds to natural resources that rebels can sell. Other studies have examined the effects of foreign intervention, and most have found that it prolongs conflicts by propping up weak rebels and introducing additional actors with complex interests. My analysis concurs. There is also a well-developed literature on the role of natural resources in internal conflicts. Again, the literature predicts—and my findings agree—that natural resources in war zones produce more persistent internal conflicts. Rebels may be motivated to fight for resource rich territory as a “prize,” and they can exploit those resources to buy weapons and supplies. For all of these reasons, exogenous support is an important determinant of conflict persistence.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Policy Implications

This thesis has attempted to answer two questions crucial to the study of internal armed conflict. First, why are some conflicts more persistent than others? And second, why do some internal conflicts seem to conclude but then recur? Because internal conflict has surpassed interstate war as the world’s deadliest source of violence, these questions are vitally important to international security. Indeed, many of the worst humanitarian disasters of the last sixty years—the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the Hutu-Tutsi violence in Rwanda, the Congo Wars, and the war in Darfur—have occurred in the context of internal armed conflicts. Unfortunately, these conflicts have a tendency to persist and to recur. Since World War II, most internal conflicts have involved more than one episode of fighting, indicating that there was at least one missed opportunity to end the violence permanently. Moreover, a quarter of the conflicts in my data set lasted sixteen years or longer. Understanding why the violence endured and relapsed with such frequency is critical to learning how to resolve internal conflicts.

To answer these questions, I first constructed a data set that classifies internal conflicts differently than most other researchers. Instead of assuming that internal conflicts are generally continuous, I classified conflicts and episodes in such a way as to capture instances of recurrence after even very brief breaks in the fighting. I used that data set to examine the concepts of persistence and recurrence, relying on both statistical analysis and case studies. I considered national attributes that predispose countries to persistence or recurrent conflict. Additionally, I studied the effects of various conflict dynamics, including intensity and episode outcomes. Finally, I conducted case studies to clarify the causal mechanisms underlying the statistical analysis. This chapter reviews my major findings and discusses their implications for ending persistent and recurrent internal armed conflicts.
National Attributes

The first part of this thesis involved a large-n statistical analysis of all internal armed conflicts that occurred during the period 1946-2008. I explored the effects that a variety of national attributes has on both persistence and recurrence. My research revealed that ethnically diverse, poor, and populous countries are prone to longer conflicts and are more likely to experience relapse among conflicts that have subsided. Ethnic diversity had much stronger predictive power for territorial conflicts, while income had a more significant effect on government conflicts. Mountainous terrain, too, is a predictor of persistence for government conflicts. Other factors I examined, including regime type, oil exportation, and geographic size did not have statistically significant effects on persistence or recurrence.

Ethnic diversity’s strong effect on the persistence and recurrence of territorial conflict seems intuitive, but the role of ethnicity in internal conflict is subject of debate in the civil war literature. That said, ethnically diverse countries are at greater risk of strong ethnic tensions that might fuel and prolong an internal conflict. Additionally, the presence of greater numbers of ethnic groups can complicate the process of resolving internal conflicts because, in the absence of an effective minority coalition, the central government is more likely to spurn them. This dynamic often manifests as a minority ethnic group pushing for regional autonomy or independence from a central government that cannot credibly commit to representing it. For the same reasons it is difficult to reach a resolution that is acceptable to all of the belligerents. Thus, territorial conflicts in nations with large numbers of minority ethnic groups are at high risk of recurrence and often persist for long periods.

Similarly, persistence was higher and recurrence more likely for government conflicts in ethnically diverse countries. In some cases, ethnic groups competed for control of the entire
country. In others, insurgent groups without any specific territorial designs drew from disenfranchised ethnic groups to swell their ranks. As a result, ethnic diversity had a strong effect on government conflicts as well as territorial ones.

Civil war scholars have also thoroughly studied the interaction of conflict and poverty. Poverty and internal conflict form a vicious cycle that Paul Collier has termed the “conflict trap.” There are many reasons for this relationship—lower opportunity cost, weaker state capacity, and poorer service provision are all important features of less affluent countries. Income effects were more consistently statistically significant for government conflicts, indicating that the role of poverty on state capacity is particularly important. My findings confirm that poverty actually predisposes countries to persistent and recurrent conflict. Weaker governments are both attractive targets for rebels and less able to control their territories. In poor countries, the central government’s lack of resources encourages rebellion, resulting in conflicts that persist and recur.

Population consistently had a strong effect on both persistence and recurrence of both types of conflict. This finding is consistent with most other research in the discipline, and again there are several causal mechanisms that probably play a role. First, countries that are more populous are more difficult to control, both physically and politically. The larger the population, the greater the amount of resources required for effective control. Greater numbers of people also increase the difficulty of reaching a consensus in formulating national policies, thereby increasing the likelihood that significant numbers become alienated. Additionally, larger populations tend to have more groups among whom friction might develop.

By themselves, these sorts of findings are not particularly useful to policymakers because, for the most part, the relevant factors cannot be modified except in very radical ways (for example, dividing a country into sovereign states by ethnic groups would reduce both ethnic
diversity and population). The one possible exception is income—there is hope for optimism here, hope that economic development will help to prevent persistent and recurrent conflict in the long term. The effect of income also suggests that improving state capacity may help reduce persistence and recurrence, though the policy ramifications are less clear when the state is corrupt. Ultimately, the importance of these findings to policymakers is not to indicate any particular policy prescription or method of conflict resolution but to improve awareness of situations in which particular care must be taken to prevent conflict from relapse.

**Conflict Dynamics**

Analysis of the data set at the conflict level indicated that military victories are by far the most stable outcome. Negotiated agreements were the next best, and conflicts that subsided due to low activity were the most likely to relapse. This finding is consistent with the hypothesis that military victories usually result in a loss of personnel, organizational structure, supplies, and credibility for the vanquished belligerent, while agreements often do not. As a result, both sides are more able to resume fighting following a negotiated settlement than after a military victory.

I also analyzed the effectiveness of peacekeepers. I found that peacekeepers greatly reduce the likelihood that a conflict will relapse. The effect of peacekeepers was most notable for conflicts that ended in some type of agreement, reducing the chance of a return to conflict by seventy-five percent, though peacekeepers reduced the likelihood of relapse for other outcomes as well. Of all my findings, this has the most obvious policy implication. Peacekeepers are an effective tool, and are sometimes required if an agreement is to succeed. Especially in the situations identified as cases at high risk for relapse, peacekeepers may be crucial to permanent resolution. Combining the results of this section with the determinants of conflict recurrence
indicates that policymakers with limited resources should deploy peacekeepers to ethnically diverse, poor, and populous countries because those countries have the highest risk of descending once again into violence.

**Recurrence and Ethnic Demography**

I explored recurrence in greater depth through case studies of Burma, Ethiopia, and Indonesia. Each country is in the top six in the world in terms of total episodes of conflict, but their persistence varies widely. Burma, Ethiopia, and Indonesia all exhibited most of the determinants of persistence and recurrence I identified in Chapter 2. However, each also had a more specific ethnic demography—what I call the ethnic plurality dynamic. Countries with that ethnic demography have one large ethnic group, between about thirty-five and seventy-five percent of the total, which dominates the government. The next-largest ethnic group is much smaller (less than thirty percent), so that there are multiple minority groups. The ethnic plurality dynamic promotes conflict recurrence.

There are several reasons that the ethnic plurality dynamic predisposes a country to recurrent conflict. First, aggregating the preferences into policies acceptable to all the groups is more difficult when there are many minority groups. Second, the fact that there are a larger number of ethnic groups makes friction among some of them more likely and also increases the likelihood that at least one of them has the desire and capacity to begin an insurgency. The population distribution among the groups is also important. Since there are many smaller groups, they have little chance of forming a coalition to challenge the plurality group effectively. At the same time, the plurality group’s claim of ownership over the state often causes that group to ignore the smaller groups’ preferences. The result is a fractious state with several disenfranchised
ethnic minorities, each with a possible motive to rebel. Moreover, once a conflict starts it is more
difficult to end permanently because the plurality group still has little incentive to include the
minorities in the government, and the same challenges to coalition building exist. As Cederman
et al. hypothesize, once an ethnic group rebels it is more likely to rebel again in the future.

Though I develop this theory through the study of Burma, Ethiopia, and Indonesia, the
ethnic plurality dynamic plays an important role in other countries as well. Thirteen countries in
my data set had six or more episodes of internal conflict. Ten of those countries also exhibited
the ethnic plurality dynamic. Broadly speaking, the ethnic plurality dynamic was associated with
two additional episodes of conflict and one additional episode per territorial conflict.

Again, this finding has little policy relevance in isolation since it is unlikely that much
can be done to change a country’s ethnic makeup. However, the ethnic plurality dynamic is an
easily identifiable indicator that a country is at high risk of conflict relapse. In countries with this
dynamic, peace agreements should be carefully tailored to facilitate minority groups’ access to
government, whether through regional autonomy or significant representation in the national
government.

**Persistence and Exogenous Rebel Support**

I conducted case studies of the three countries with the highest persistence but no
recurrence—that is, only one episode of conflict. Colombia, Mozambique, and Bangladesh all
had very long single-episode conflicts that featured very different dynamics. The conflict in
Colombia is a peripheral government insurgency ostensibly motivated by leftist ideology. The
Mozambican Civil War was a bloody government conflict for control of the countryside. In
Bangladesh, a territorial conflict, a small ethnic minority group resisted settlement in its native
lands by emigrants supported by the majority group that governed the country. Despite their differences, each conflict featured some form of exogenous support for the rebels.

The type of exogenous support differed in each country, but in each it played a critical role in sustaining the insurgency. In Colombia, the rebels traffic in cocaine and oil to fund their armies. Rhodesia and South Africa supported RENAMO in Mozambique with training and logistical advice. The PCJSS in Bangladesh received weapons and funds from India. In each case, this support has been critical to the rebels’ success. Indeed, after support was withdrawn in Mozambique and Bangladesh, the fighting stopped permanently.

During the early 1990s, sponsors of the rebellions in Mozambique and Bangladesh both withdrew their support. The end of apartheid South Africa meant that support for RENAMO vanished, and the group was forced to negotiate with the government. In Bangladesh, India threatened to withdraw its support and forced the PCJSS to make concessions during peace talks. In both cases conflict has not resumed since the agreements were signed. The story is different in Colombia, where the rebels’ access to drug money continues despite efforts of Colombia, the United States, and others to crack down on trafficking. Again, these findings generalize beyond the cases I examined in detail. Eight of the ten most persistent single-episode conflicts featured some form of exogenous support for the rebels. Such support is much less common among shorter conflicts.

The reliance of rebel organizations in persistent conflicts upon exogenous support has clear policy implications. The end of external support for the PCJSS and RENAMO proved pivotal in Bangladesh and Mozambique. This finding suggests that isolating and neutralizing sources of exogenous rebel support is an effective way to curtail the violence in many persistent conflicts. More so than military intervention on behalf of the government—which actually tends
to prolong conflict—removing sources of rebel support may be one of the most important tools policymakers can use to end persistent conflicts.

**Stopping Persistent Conflict and Preventing Recurrence**

All of the findings in this thesis point towards a series of actions that, in some cases, can stop the fighting in persistent conflicts and prevent relapse once the violence stops. When rebels rely on exogenous support, stopping the flow of that aid is crucial to destroying the insurgents’ capacity to fight. In many cases of persistent conflict, rebels are able to operate only because they have some form of exogenous support. Cutting off access to such an important lifeline is likely to encourage resolution, at least temporarily.

The frequency of recurrence among internal armed conflicts indicates that many breaks in the violence are only temporary. Thus stopping the fighting is only part of the challenge of resolving these sorts of conflicts. Once the violence subsides, action is often required to ensure that it does not reignite. My findings regarding the ethnic plurality dynamic indicate that a lasting peace requires regional autonomy for ethnic minorities or their involvement in national government. Regional autonomy was key to resolving the conflict in Bangladesh, and Indonesia’s legalization of separatist political parties seems to have helped to end the violence in Aceh. To a lesser extent, the Burmese government’s strategy of bilateral concessions to minority groups has resolved some conflicts in that country at least temporarily.

Peacekeeping is also a highly effective method for preventing relapse—enforcing a peace agreement reduces dramatically the chance of a return to conflict. However, peacekeeping is an expensive, dangerous, and politically complex endeavor. There are limited human and monetary resources available to deploy and fund peacekeeping operations, and which agreements are
enforced is often a political calculation. My research indicates that peacekeepers will make the most difference in certain situations prone to recurrent conflict. Broadly speaking, those are ethnically diverse, poor, and populous countries. But countries with a large plurality ethnic group that excludes many smaller minorities from power are at the highest risk for recurrence. Together, these findings indicate that policymakers should focus peacekeeping resources to enforce agreements in more populous, impoverished, and ethnically diverse countries, especially those featuring a large ethnic plurality group. This will frequently be the most effective use of peacekeepers to end persistent conflicts and prevent their recurrence.
Appendix A: Reclassifications

This section lists the de facto reclassifications I made to the various data sets used for this study. I made one change to the Armed Conflict Database and several to the Conflict Termination Dataset.

Changes to the Armed Conflict Database
- Reclassified Sudan vs. SPLA as a territorial conflict over South Sudan from 1983 to 2005. Previously classified as a government conflict.

Changes to the Conflict Termination Dataset
- France 1961 (Government, OAS) as victory for government (from low activity)
- Indonesia (East Timor) 1998 as peace agreement (from low activity)
- Malaysia (Government) 1981 as peace agreement (from low activity)
- Mauritania (Western Sahara) 1978 as peace agreement, signed 1979
- South Africa (Government) 1988 as peace agreement, signed 1990
- Chad (Government) 1994 as peace agreement (from other)
- Haiti (Government) 2004 as rebel victory (from low activity)
- Angola (Government) 1995 as low activity (from other)
- Israel (Palestine) 1996 as peace agreement (from other)
Appendix B: Bivariate Regressions

All Countries
This first section summarizes the regression analysis for all countries with available data, regardless of whether a country experienced internal conflict. These are bivariate regressions.

**Table 15** Bivariate regressions: all conflicts, all countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Persistence</th>
<th>Total Episodes</th>
<th>Episodes per Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Ethfrac 1</td>
<td>0.3810 **</td>
<td>4.4188 ***</td>
<td>0.9439 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4.2813 ***</td>
<td>1.3170 ***</td>
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<td>-0.0041</td>
<td>-0.0750 **</td>
<td>-0.0344 **</td>
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<td>0.0962</td>
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<td>Mountains</td>
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<td>0.5609 **</td>
<td>0.1085 .</td>
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<td>0.1205 **</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oil</td>
<td>0.0046</td>
<td>1.2833</td>
<td>0.1207</td>
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</table>

**Table 16** Bivariate regressions: government conflicts, all countries

<table>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Income (log)</td>
<td>-0.0488 ***</td>
<td>-0.3780 ***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountains</td>
<td>0.0294 **</td>
<td>0.2336 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area (log)</td>
<td>0.0174 ***</td>
<td>0.1886 ***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population (log)</td>
<td>0.0219 ***</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Table 17** Bivariate regressions: territorial conflicts, all countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>Total Episodes</th>
<th>Episodes per Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>1.0418 **</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-0.0188</td>
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<td>0.0015</td>
<td>-0.0013</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income (log)</td>
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<td>-0.4257 *</td>
<td>-0.1198 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountains</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area (log)</td>
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<td>0.0711 **</td>
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Significance codes:

*** p < 0.001    ** p < 0.01    * p < 0.05    . p < 0.1
Countries with Conflict
This section summarizes the regression analysis when only countries that experienced at least one year of conflict during the period of observation are included. For analysis of each type of conflict, only countries with at least one year of that type of conflict were included.

Table 18 Bivariate regressions: all conflicts, only countries with conflict

<table>
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<th>Variable</th>
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<th>Episodes per Conflict</th>
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<td>0.7367 *</td>
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Table 19 Bivariate regressions: government conflicts, countries with government conflict

<table>
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<th>Variable</th>
<th>Persistence</th>
<th>Total Episodes</th>
</tr>
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<td>Anocracy</td>
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<td>Area (log)</td>
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</tr>
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Table 20 Bivariate regressions: territorial conflicts, countries with territorial conflict

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<th>Total Episodes</th>
<th>Episodes per Conflict</th>
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Significance codes:
*** $p < 0.001$    ** $p < 0.01$  * $p < 0.05$  . $p < 0.$
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