External Threats, State Capacity, and Civil War*

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Abstract

We argue that the development path of a state plays a consequential role in its future likelihood of experiencing a civil war. States that have endured salient external threats in the past are more likely to have built the capacity to deal with domestic threats as well. States with populations that have consistent state identities and governments that are militarily capable of deterring or repressing dissent are least likely to experience civil wars, and both of these factors increase over time in the wake of salient external threats to homeland territories. We identify salient threats as both latent and realized claims against state territories and find that the presence of a territorial claim by a contiguous neighbor substantially reduces the likelihood of civil war onset in the state. More importantly, a further decline in civil war proneness occurs in the years following the territorial claim, which isolates state capacity as the prime cause of the reduction in conflict. Our tests on a sample of all states from 1945 to 1999 are robust to multiple model specifications.

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1 Introduction

An important argument in the civil war literature links conflict onset with the geographic and economic conditions that make insurgency likely. For example, Fearon and Laitin (2003) find that poor economic development, rough terrain, new states, and political instability increase the likelihood of civil war onset, and they argue this is due to the inability of state governments to properly control areas where insurgencies may grow and succeed. This is a state capacity argument, of course, since governments are weakest in mountainous areas and when lootable resources and drug sales are readily available. Any geographic or economic resource that insurgents can use to fund their fights will advantage their position against the state. Civil wars begin when the insurgents are strong enough to challenge the government.

Missing from these arguments is the substantial variation that can occur in the ability of the state to police its own territory. The depth of state penetration into society can differ markedly across states and even within states across significant periods of time. Consider, for example, the modern history of Iraq. Since its inception Iraqi governments have had to rule three disparate territories as one state; Iraq has also experienced several prolonged periods of political instability and slow economic growth and has tried to maintain rule during periods of external sanction. Each of these conditions should encourage a weak state that is prone to insurgency and civil war, but Iraq only experienced one limited-duration insurgency prior to the first Gulf War. Two more limited insurgencies followed, when the regime was perceived as weak. Indeed, only recently, after the toppling of the Hussein regime and Baathist control, have the Kurds been able to promote a de facto secession from the rest of the state. Why has civil war been so rare until now, in a country that has all the indicators of a weak state?

The answer to this question begins with understanding the relationship between external threat and the development of state capacity. War makes the state, as Tilly (1985) famously phrased it, and this has certainly been the case for Iraq. Actively fighting a prolonged war with Iran damaged Iraqi infrastructure and killed hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, but the war also increased the penetration of the Baathist government within society. It centralized and strengthened the government. Similarly, rivalries with neighboring states—Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Syria—allowed Saddam Hussein’s government substantial popular discretion in increasing the hold of the government on daily affairs. This is why the insurgencies that did occur in Iraq happened prior to the concentration of power in Baghdad, prior to Iraq’s wars and rivalries with neighbors.

We argue here that this case is actually an example of a larger phenomenon. State capacity—the ability of the government to enforce its sovereignty across all its lands—varies substantially across states and within states over time, and we provide a theory that suggests that much of this variation is due to changes in the external threat environment that governments face. New states in peaceful territories will not be as strong as those that have been their territories for some time.

We also substantially re-frame the state capacity argument to focus on the type of external threat most likely to control state capacity. While most previous research has considered all conflict types, including rivalries, as equally able to increase the power of the state, we argue that threats to homeland territories are the types of threats most likely to increase state capacity. Distant conflicts and conflicts over less-salient issues will tend to bias downward the observed capacity-building effects of external threat. By treating control of homeland territories as one of the most consistently salient issues for the state, we are better able to identify the effects of state capacity on civil conflict.

We begin our argument in the next section with a brief review of several findings in the state development and state capacity literatures and discuss how these can be applied to civil war onset. We then develop our argument for why territorial conflict involving core territories is most likely
to affect the ability of the state to govern its lands. Finally, we test our argument against a now-common model of insurgency and close with a discussion of the implications of our findings.

2 The Relationship Between Conflict and State Development

Theories of state development have focused their attention on the role of international conflict for some time. For example, Tilly (1985) argued that the modern state has been built through the monopolization of violence. Agents of the state focus on four main activities to centralize their power and solidify their control of the state. The first activity is war making, which is used to eliminate or neutralize any rivals outside the state territory that would threaten the continued rule of the agents of the state. The second activity is state making, or the elimination of any rivals within the state territory, while the third activity concerns protection of the citizens by agents of the state. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a system of extraction is developed that gives those in power the means to carry out the three inter-related activities. Together, the agents of the state build the capacity of the state and centralize power by creating military institutions, introducing instruments for controlling social activity, and creating courts and representative assemblies; these are all supported by state-erected tax structures. For Tilly, war-making gives the state the societal leverage that is necessary to extract the resources required for state control.

Tilly’s theory was based on the historical development of modern states in Europe during the 16th and 17th centuries, but an argument based upon large-scale, land conflict has not traveled well to other regions and other time periods. This is why the examinations of the war-making model in other regions have argued for several emendations to the original theory. For example, Centeno (1997) noted that there were well-developed states in post-colonial Latin America, but the conflicts in the area, with notable exceptions, were mostly small, limited engagements that were fought by professional soldiers in remote areas and were paid for with debt. These were not the total wars that had shaped the European continent. Centeno argued that a state’s ability to extract resources from its population depended more than Tilly conceded on the population’s willingness to allow resources to be extracted. That willingness had to be established, along with the political structure of the state, prior to the use of war-making as a method resource extraction. The causal sequencing in Centeno’s survey of Latin American states suggested state making, then war making.

López-Alves (2000) suggests even further changes to the original theory. Again focusing on Latin America, Lopez-Alves argues that democratic institutions were more likely to result from the states that began their development through political parties rather than the army. Power centralization, bureaucracy, and state capacity all varied principally according to whether parties or the army was dominant within the state. This argument introduces a further change to the original Tilly-based model of state making. War making implied strong, centralized non-democracies, at least within Latin America.

Thies (2004) introduces the rather novel argument that the search for war making as a method of development may be misplaced in cases beyond the early European states. For Europe, threats came in the form of large, land-based armies, but, in other areas of the globe and in other times, external threats to the state often took the form of extended rivalries between states that only sometimes involved actual conflict. Fear of these rivalries made the population willing to endure increased taxation, and this supported early efforts at state building. Thies finds strong support for the rivalry-to-state model across all regions—in Latin America, Central America, North Africa and the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia (respectively, Thies 2005, 2006, 2009, 2007). State development can and often does occur as the result of external threats such as rivalry, and war need not be part of the mechanism of state growth.
The progression of the state development literature has mostly considered alternative types of international threats that could generate the processes of state-making within the state. This is why the dependent variable in these studies is often some form of resource extraction by the state, either in the form of tax revenues or government expenditures. Nevertheless, the concentration of political power within the state can serve as an important predictor of civil conflict as well since state failures, weak states, and the lack of any centralized authority have all been cited as factors enabling the outgrowth of insurgencies, secessionist movements, and civil wars. Connecting the development path of states through international conflict will therefore have important consequences for the ability of the state to suppress and withstand domestic challenges.

Only recently, however, have arguments shifted the question to consider the role of the state in bargaining between rebels and government. The shift itself makes sense; just as multiple factors can influence the position rebels versus the state, so too can state capacity affect the ability of the state to quash dissent and rebellion. For example, a recent special issue of the *Journal of Peace Research* notes the dearth of state capacity arguments in the literature and examines several different aspects of the role of state capacity on political violence (Sobek 2010). Braithwaite (2010) finds that state capacity is an important determinant of whether civil conflict can spread across borders; the outbreak of war stresses nearby states (with an influx of refugees, rebels, and other consequences of violence) and only strong governments can effectively deal with these pressures. Meanwhile, Gleditsch and Ruggeri (2010) identify potentially weak states as those with recent irregular transfers of political power within the state and correlate these irregular transfers with an increased likelihood of violent political contestation. That lack of state capacity may also hamper the ability of states to effectively commit to peace agreements once civil wars begin (DeRouen et al. 2010). Only Thies (2010) presents a clear dissent in this group of studies by arguing that any effects of state capacity on civil violence are ultimately endogenous. Estimating state capacity and civil war simultaneously, Thies finds that state capacity is weakened by civil conflict, and, once one accounts for this relationship, the additional effects of state capacity on future civil war onsets are rendered minimal.

Measurement is an important issue in these studies. Just as with the literature on international conflict and threat as predictors of state growth, civil conflict studies have yet to decide on a consistent measure of capable states. Mostly, this has been the result of differences in conceptualizing the argument—what exactly is meant by state capacity? Hendrix (2010) describes this point well, in the same special issue, by noting that state capacity has actually operationalized at least 15 different ways. Nevertheless, each of these measures can be categorized as signifying one of three basic categorizations. “Rational legality” measures identify the bureaucratic and administrative fitness of the state. “Rentier-autocraticness” includes high-revenue rentier autocracies such as Saudi Arabia but also the low-revenue and resource-poor democracies of Bangladesh, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Finally, “neopatrimonialist” states are often those states that use resource wealth to buy loyalty within the state. Hendrix (2010) rightly argues for using a combination of measures that depend on the type of question being asked but also notes that both surveys of bureaucratic quality and tax receipts seem the most theoretically justified identifications of traditional conceptualizations of state capacity.

### 2.1 Connectedness, Repressive States, and External Territorial Threats

Despite the lack of convergence within empirical tests of state capacity on civil war, the theoretical argument remains the same across studies: weak states provide opportunities for rebellion and are unable to put down challenges to government authority. This is why insurgencies can lead to civil wars. In order to better link theory with empirics, we argue that only certain types of state capacity
will allow for a reduction in the propensity of civil war within the state. Thus, instead of thinking of state capacity in terms of bureaucratic and administrative ability or resource extraction from the population, we argue the ability of the state to control potential rebellions resides in a combination of two factors—the level of connectedness of the government to the state and the repressive strength of the state. States are more likely to have both in abundance following physical threats to their homeland territories.

We use the term connectedness to describe the political attitude of the population and whether the average person self-identifies as a member of the state, their race, their ethnic group, or some other grouping. There will always be groups that rest outside of the average opinion within the state, but the attitude of the average citizen is important for determining how marginalized those groups actually are. If rebel groups are not marginalized within popular opinion, the costs of deterring or quashing dissent increase markedly. Even the most powerful governments will have difficulties maintaining stability if defiance to authority is tolerated nationally.

There is growing evidence that public opinion changes substantially when the state is targeted by external threats. For example, individuals in states that are targeted by territorial threats are much less likely to be tolerant of their least-liked groups (Hutchison and Gibler 2007). Targeted populations are unwilling to tolerate individuals from these groups running for office or educating their young. Traditionally, democracy had been the primary explanation of cross-national variation in tolerance levels; however, Hutchison and Gibler (2007) demonstrate that the effect of democracy disappears once the threat environment is included in the estimation. This study suggests that populations harden under salient external threats, and they will be unlikely to tolerate the levels of dissent that potential rebel groups encourage.

Similarly, Gibler, Hutchison and Miller (2013) provide recent evidence that individuals are more likely to consider themselves to be members of the state, rather than their tribal or ethnic group, when the state’s territories are targeted. Using both Afrobarometer and World Values Survey data, they demonstrate that changes in threat environment have a substantial effect on individual self-identifications. Again, the population centralizes its opinion in support of the state. This type of centralization will then decrease the number of opportunities that domestic rebel groups have to start and grow their memberships.

State repressive strength is more consistent with traditional arguments for state capacity, but here we use the concept as it specifically relates to the effectiveness of the government in implementing its policies, by force if necessary. There will almost always be disagreement with specific policies implemented by the national government, and dissent from those policies can at least partially be curbed by the threat of implementation by force. The deterrent effect of the state’s military can be powerful if it is well-equipped to respond. Whether dissent turns to rebellion will depend on the ability of the military to respond domestically. Not all strong militaries are equally able to respond domestically—a reliance on the navy or air force to defend against foreign threats makes the military ill suited to respond domestically. However, if the military has been built to fight a ground war, then the costs of repression for the elites is likely to be lower than in other states.

Increasing the size and scope of the military is an expensive venture, both monetarily and politically. For a state to increase the size of its military, it must acquire new military hardware, increase the number of troops, and provide upkeep for both the weapons and personnel. Thus, the costs of increasing capacity are both immediate and, potentially, long-term. Strengthening the state’s military during peaceful periods will often be difficult and politically unpopular. Concerns for the growth of repressive abilities among elite groups are not outweighed by any exigencies of responding to threats to state survival and rising, potentially-repressive military increases raise the risk of rebellion. Building a military during an insurgency is also not likely to be a viable option. Conflict disrupts economic growth, and the increased taxation that is necessary to fund the military
may itself provoke more support for the insurgency within the population.

External threats are different. Returning to the Tilly (1985) argument, external threats, like the wars in Europe, provide the elites within the state the necessary *modus vivendi* to pursue greater domestic power in order to defend all those who occupy it. This political coverage allows the state to increase its military amid little popular dissent because few can question the need for survival. In some cases resources from the population are almost willing given in the hopes of guaranteeing future security (Gibler 2012, Chapter 3). An additional focus on territorial threats also makes sense in terms of the repressive power of the state. While navies and air forces are capable defense against distant threats, threats to occupy and hold land require a large, land-based military. As Gibler (2012, Chapter 5) demonstrates, the *average* territorial dispute predicts an increase of over 100,000 troops in targeted states; non-territorial disputes have no such effect. Further, since the military response to territorial conflict is design to occupy land, its weaponry and personnel will be tailored to land and population control. Finally, territorial threats are more closely linked to the large, land-based conflicts Tilly originally observed.

A focus on territorial conflict can help explain why there is little connection between rivalry, state capacity, and the likelihood of civil war (Thies 2004). When homeland territories are directly targeted, survival becomes the prime goal of policy. When targeted by rivalries, though, the level of threat can vary substantially over time, from contention and contestation to actual war, and, though wars often occur during rivalries (Goertz and Diehl 1992), these instances remain relatively rare events within the rivalries themselves. This is why leaders can often use the threat of conflict as a popular motivator for extraction but transfer those resources to other areas rather than trying to defeat the rival. Rivalries can provide great domestic benefits for those leaders who engage in them (Gibler 2010), but they do not necessarily decrease the costs of repression for the state.

The connectedness of the population to the state and the repressive strength of the government are not captured well by current indicators of state capacity. For example, bureaucratic and administrative strength provides some indication of the effectiveness of the government in implementing policies, but it does not assess whether the population is actually tied to the state nor does this efficiency necessarily coordinate with an ability to prevent armed rebellion. Tax revenues suffer similar drawbacks as a measure. While increasing the spending power of the government, there is no guarantee that high tax revenues strengthen the ability of the government to deter armed challenges; monies may be used for patronage or encourage corruption within the state. As Thies (2010) finds, tax revenues are simply good indicators of a peaceful domestic population that offers few challenges to state authority.

With the shift in conceptualization of state capacity away from these measures, in order to better focus on state connectedness and repressive strength, we argue that there will indeed be a strong, negative relationship between state capacity and civil conflict. Further, since we are treating state capacity as derivative of external conflict—making state capacity a latent and intervening variable in the causal sequence—we have few fears of endogeneity in our tests. It is difficult to imagine how domestic peace can systematically increase the level of threat from neighboring states. Thus, we should have greater confidence in any empirical confirmation of a decreased level of civil conflict following external threats to the state.

### 2.2 Specifying Hypotheses Amid Alternative Explanations

We argue that threats to homeland territories are more salient to the state than other types of threats and are more likely to increase the state’s capacity to stymie and survive domestic challenges to authority. Leaders are able to raise armies, create bureaucracies to manage the armies, increase taxes, and otherwise increase the depth of control on society by the regime. Because state capacity
is a latent variable as we are treating it, there are perhaps other explanations for any empirical confirmation of domestic peace following territorial threats on civil war onset. Figure 1 provides an outline of these potential rival explanations and how we distinguish our argument from these.

Since most of the literature on state capacity builds on an insurgency model of civil conflict, we remain within this framework. Those factors that decrease rebel strength should also decrease the likelihood of conflict. Thus, an association between external territorial threat and domestic peace could occur because the insurgents themselves were conscripted or even volunteered to defend the state. Insurgents would first have to defend their state’s territories from external rivals before trying to cleave from the state an autonomous region of their own. If this were the case, and insurgents were merely otherwise engaged during external conflicts, then we should witness the same decreased likelihood of civil war onset that we describe above as a product of state capacity. However, if this explanation is correct—that insurgents are kept busy defending the state—then a lack of engagement in external conflict should only dampen an already heightened chance of civil war in the state, holding all else equal. If the engagement hypothesis were correct, the states that are affected by external threats are also the ones more likely to have rebellions outside of those threats.

Insurgents may also be responsive to national pride, which is a second possible explanation for domestic peace in the wake of territorial threats. External threat has long been thought to elicit internal cohesion (Coser 1956, Simmel 1955, e.g.), and it could be the case that national pride or some other form of internal cohesion brings the insurgents into the larger group to protect the state. If this were the case, then external threats would only have an effect while the state is targeted. Absent the threat, there is no unifying effect for the domestic population.

Observationally, our explanation differs from these arguments principally in the expectation of reduced conflict during and following an increase in state capacity. As territorial claims persist, the capacity of the regime to govern increases as well, and, with this increased state capacity, civil wars become less likely then and in the future. Our state capacity argument expects fewer civil wars following territorial claims; the rival explanations do not. To provide better evidence for our argument, we therefore need to also assess the long-term effects of territorial threats on the state. This brings us to the hypothesis we test:

**Hypothesis 1** *Territorial challenges to the state increase state capacity and decrease the likelihood of civil war onset for the state, both during and after the external threat.*

### 3 Research Design

Our sample includes all states for which data is available between the years 1945 and 1999. We use the Fearon and Laitin (2003) replication data as our base model of civil war onset.\(^1\) One of the primary contentions made by Fearon and Laitin is that civil wars are more likely to begin when the

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\(^1\)This data is available at: [http://www.stanford.edu/~jfearon/data/apsr03repdata.zip](http://www.stanford.edu/~jfearon/data/apsr03repdata.zip)
geographic and economic conditions of a state favor the initiation and maintenance of insurgent
groups. Weak or incapable governments are likely to facilitate insurgent groups, so adding measures
of external threat should significantly improve the original model, if our argument is correct.

The predictors of civil war onset are well described by Fearon and Laitin (2003, 77-82) in their
original study. These are grouped among several different concepts: the potential for ethnic and
religious grievances (identified using fractionalization measures of each as well as indicators for likely
regime protections for minority rights), predictors of insurgency (mountainous terrain, population
size, per capita income), and the weakness of the state (new state status, non-contiguous states,
and large amount of oil revenues). Unless described here, we use these original data in each of our
analyses.

Dependent Variable

We use the Correlates of War definition of Intra-State War as our dependent variable which includes
conflicts that (1) involve sustained combat, (2) involve organized armed forces, and (3) a minimum
of 1,000 battle deaths within a 12-month period (Sarkees, Wayman and Singer 2003). We code a
dichotomous measure for each year in which there was a new civil war onset. We also include in
each estimate an indicator for the presence of an ongoing or new civil war in the previous year.
The Correlates of War civil war onset measure was used for Table 1, Model 5 of the original Fearon
and Laitin (2003) study, and we use that model here.

Identifying External Threats to the State

We identify external threats to the state with multiple measures. First, we identify all years in
which the state was involved in some type of strategic rivalry with a neighboring state. According to
Thompson (2001, 560), a strategic rivalry exists when both states view the other as 1) a competitor,
2) a source of actual or latent threats that pose some possibility of becoming militarized, and 3) as
an enemy. These rivalries can concern multiple issues and multiple issue types, but our restriction
condition of including only contiguous states is intended to capture the threats most likely to affect
the state’s homelands. The rivalry data is dyadic, so both states in the rivalry are coded as positive
for our state-level data.

We use two indicators to identify territorial threats to the state. First, we identify the presence
of a Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID) that involves a contiguous neighbor. These threats,
displays, or uses of force between two states account for periods when cross-border tensions reached
the point of militarized confrontation. Note, however, that territorial disputes do not necessarily
imply territorial claims against the state; rather, these disputes can involve border incursions and
similar arguments that may concern much different issues. Therefore, our primary indicator of a
territorial threat against the state is a measure of threats to homeland territories in the form of
territorial claims. Huth and Allee (2002) identify all cases of territorial claims—what they term
territorial disputes—between pairs of states in the international system during the years 1919 to
1995. These claims do not necessarily include cases of militarization by either state; rather, these
are instances in which the leader(s) of at least one state expressed a claim to the territories of
another state. We again include only those instances of territorial claims between neighbors so as
to better capture threats to homeland territories.

Our theory expects a change in the nature of the state over time, so we, therefore, also include
two variables intended to proxy the periods in the state’s history when threats to the state have
diminished or resolved. For both the rivalry and the territorial claim indicators we identify the last
year in the sample during which there was a threat to the state. All years after that final year are
then considered to be in a period in which threats were settled. In other words, if a rivalry ended in 1990, then the states involved in that rivalry would be in a post-threat period of development for years 1991 and after.

There are two concerns with developing these measures. First, the end of a rivalry or territorial claim does not necessarily coincide with the final settlement of threats to that state. Future rivalries and claims could still emerge in the years that follow our sample. While true, we believe that including these unresolved threats in the data should actually bias against our finding a strong relationship between state capacity and the absence of civil war. States are likely to be stronger after having experienced and resolved the external threats to the state; our mis-identifying these still-threatened cases as resolved will only weaken the effects we find for the states that have actually resolved their external threats.

Our second problem results from right-censoring in the data. The Huth and Allee (2002) territorial dispute data is coded for all years until 1995, but our analyses include the years 1996 to 1999. There are multiple methods of dealing with these four years of missing data, but we chose to simply treat each threat that was ongoing in 1994 as having ended in 1995. Thus, years 1996 through 1999 are considered periods of post-threat for these states. Again, we believe including these cases as resolved threats biases against finding a negative relationship between state capacity and conflict, making confirmation of our argument more difficult. However, to confirm this, we also replicated each model we present here using only data to 1994; the estimates are indeed quite robust since none of the coefficients in any of the models changes in direction, statistical significance, or approximate substantive effect.

4 Analyzing External Threat, State Capacity, and Civil War

We begin the analyses of our argument with a replication of the findings published in Fearon and Laitin (2003). Our Model 1 in Table 1 confirms the estimates originally presented in Fearon and Laitin (2003, Table 1: Model 5), which is the model that uses the Correlates of War civil war measure as the dependent variable. We use the newest version of that civil war data (Sarkees, Wayman and Singer 2003), which enables us to expand the temporal domain to the full period of the original study, but our estimates are nevertheless substantially similar to the original study. States with poor, religiously fractionalized populations, governed by politically unstable regimes, near areas with rugged terrain are most likely to witness an increased likelihood of civil war onset. Oil producing states are also more likely to have civil wars. Interestingly, the lagged civil war term is now statistically significant (and negative) which implies that current conflicts do not necessarily spread to other conflicts within the state. Further, like Fearon and Laitin, we find no effects from temporal dependence in any of the models when using the base, square, and cube terms of years since last conflict (see Carter and Signorino 2010). The additional data makes the size of the population within the state statistically insignificant as a predictor, contrary to the original study, and our use of a combined, 21-point democracy-autocracy measure from Polity IV renders regime type statistically meaningless in the models.2

2Fearon and Laitin (2003) found evidence suggesting that anocracies are related to civil conflict, but that may be a product of how the indicator is constructed (Vreeland 2008).
Table 1: The Effects of External Territorial Threat on Civil War Onset

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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
<td>(0.017)</td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Rivalry</td>
<td>-0.254</td>
<td>-0.327</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.462)</td>
<td>(0.425)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Strategic Rivalry Year</td>
<td>-0.313</td>
<td>-0.345</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.462)</td>
<td>(0.429)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial MID (lagged)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.710**</td>
<td>0.739**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.249)</td>
<td>(0.263)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial Claim</td>
<td>-0.603*</td>
<td>-0.566*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.274)</td>
<td>(0.256)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Territorial Claim, Years 1-10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.863*</td>
<td>-0.804*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.390)</td>
<td>(0.394)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Territorial Claim, Years 11+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.184</td>
<td>-0.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.315)</td>
<td>(0.309)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-5.726***</td>
<td>-5.420***</td>
<td>-5.278***</td>
<td>-5.042***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.637)</td>
<td>(0.783)</td>
<td>(0.725)</td>
<td>(0.789)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>5,622</td>
<td>5,557</td>
<td>5,556</td>
<td>5,556</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard errors in parentheses; * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

The base, square, and cube of peace years are statistically insignificant in each model and have been omitted to save space.
We add the rivalry indicators of external threat to the state in Model 2 of Table 1, but neither has an effect within the model of civil war onset. That changes, however, if we focus primarily on territorial threats to the state. In Model 3 we add four separate indicators for the presence of both active territorial disputes and latent territorial claims. First, the presence of a territorial dispute involving a neighboring state increases the chance of a civil war onset. This is consistent with recent evidence that refugee flows from neighboring civil conflicts provoke international conflict (Salehyan 2008a). It could also be the case that the international conflict itself is driving a domestic-level response or the boundary is simply separating a domestic conflict (Salehyan 2008b). However, we experimented with several types of lagged effects to determine the causal sequence of this relationship, and we only find evidence, in this large sample, for the one-year lag that is presented in the table. Regardless, we include this indicator in the estimate only to hold constant the effects of militarized conflict. Our primary variable of interest is the underlying territorial claim, and our estimates do suggest that territorial claims decrease the likelihood of civil war for the states involved. This is true even after controlling for the presence of an ongoing MID over territory.

As we expected, the period following a territorial claim also demonstrates a marked decrease in the likelihood of civil conflict. We report a dummy variable for the first 10 years, but the period can be identified with a 3-, 5-, or 15-year cutoff and would produce results similar to those reported. The effects do wane over time since any variable that includes the additional, post-territorial-claim years is almost always statistically significant. In the model reported, a variable for years 11 to 81 is negative, but the standard error is almost twice the size of the coefficient.

We also experimented with a curvilinear relationship for the years following the territorial claim. Using a count variable for years since the claim ended, and its square, we found no evidence of an upward increase in the likelihood of civil conflict in later years. Rather, our results could be best interpreted as the ability of external-threat-derived state capacity to pacify civil conflict decreases over time. The absence of this state capacity, however, does not increase the likelihood of civil conflict in future years. We return to this interpretation in our assessment of the results.

Our final model includes both measures of external threat within the same estimate. Very little changes in Model 4 as the rivalry variables remain statistically insignificant, and, importantly, the territorial dispute and claim data remain unaffected. The rivalry and territorial claim variables are correlated (\( p < 0.49 \)), but the lack of any substantial changes across these models suggests that the presence of a territorial claim is what strengthens the capacity of the state with regard to civil conflict. Extended rivalries have no effect.

We demonstrate the substantive effects of our estimates in Table 2, and we differentiate between periods with and without a territorial dispute. We report the estimated probability of civil war onset for each condition in column one, and in column two we list the 95% confidence interval of that estimate (as compared to a 0.000 mean effect). The changes in the probability of civil war onset from the base category of no territorial claim are in column three.

In states that are not experiencing a territorial dispute, the likelihood of a civil war onset decreases by almost 50% when the state is involved in a territorial claim. The pacifying effect is even larger during the periods following territorial claims (a decrease of 55%). This pacifying effect continues even in years in which the state is involved in a territorial dispute. The changes in civil war likelihoods are approximately the same as those years without a dispute, but the base probability of conflict in dispute years is much higher. States without a MID have about a 1 in 66 chance of a civil war onset in our sample [\( \Pr(\text{civil war})=1.5\% \)], when all other variables are held at their respective means, but a state in a territorial dispute has a 1 in 50 chance of a civil war onset [\( \Pr(\text{civil war})=3.2\% \)]. Nevertheless, the (domestically) pacifying effects of having external threats remain in these dispute years, even returning the state to pre-territorial-dispute levels once territorial claims have been resolved.
Table 2: Onset of Civil War by Status of Territorial Claims, 1945-1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status of Territorial Claims</th>
<th>Onset of Civil War Probabilities</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>% Change from base probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>without a Territorial MID</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Territorial Claim</td>
<td>0.015 (0.008,0.025)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial Claim Year</td>
<td>0.008 (0.005,0.013)</td>
<td>-47.24%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10 Years after last Territorial Claim</td>
<td>0.007 (0.003,0.012)</td>
<td>-55.00%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with a Territorial MID</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Territorial Claim</td>
<td>0.032 (0.014,0.060)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial Claim Year</td>
<td>0.017 (0.008,0.030)</td>
<td>-46.83%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-10 Years after last Territorial Claim</td>
<td>0.014 (0.007,0.026)</td>
<td>-55.44%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Territorial claim defined as presence of Huth and Allee territorial dispute. Probabilities of civil war onset calculated with all other variables held at their respective means.

Our results suggest that certain forms of external conflict do indeed decrease the likelihood of civil war onset. Strategic rivalries have little ability to strengthen the capacity of the state in this way, but territorial claims do seem to give the state the ability to prevent the outbreak of civil wars. We believe these estimates also provide evidence that the effect of external threat is more than simply a call for insurgents to rally and support the state, either out of nationalism or because of conscription. Instead, the ability of the state to handle civil conflict is much better following external threats which is a crucial test for differentiating among competing explanations for the external-threat—domestic-peace hypothesis. State capacity seems to be enhanced after the state has survived a claim to its territories.

Assessment

We find confirming evidence for a link between external threats to the state and domestic peace. We argue that state capacity increases during these periods of external threats, and this increased capacity deters challenges to state authority in two wars. First, the connectedness of the state is increased by threat; the average citizen feels more closely tied with the state identity and is less willing to tolerate radical challenges to authority. Second, the repressive strength of the military increases when the state is targeted by certain types of threats, and this allows elites better control over their territories when the threat passes. Both factors are most likely found in states that have been targeted by territorial challenges, and this is why we find a reduction in the number of civil wars both during and after territorial claims.

This argument links state development path to civil war proneness. However, the effects of territorial threats are not permanent. Over time, the ability of elites to deter and manage challenges returns to normal levels. This implies either a decreasing level of connectedness in peaceful societies or a decay of the repressive power of the state over time, or both. We believe that a next step in development, toward political integration of popular groups and democracy, is necessary before there will be a permanent reduction in the likelihood of civil conflict and violence.

Our argument implies that weak states in peaceful regions will be those most likely to suffer future civil war onsets. This differs from the empirical role that is now afforded to the conditions that favor insurgencies. Instead, our results imply that insurgency is most likely in the politically fractured and repressively weak states that have not experienced serious external challenges to their authority for some time. The conditions for insurgency in other states will produce many fewer challenges to state authority.
References


