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# Critical Events, Commitment, and the Probability of Civil War

Ursula E. Daxecker
*University of New Orleans*

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Ursula E. Daxecker

B.A.Equivalent Leopold-Franzens Universität Innsbruck, 2001
M.A. University of New Orleans, 2003

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**Abstract**

This dissertation investigates how political instability is related to the probability of civil war. According to the literature in comparative politics, regime breakdown is caused by critical events such as economic decline, defeat in interstate war, death of a leader in office, or changes is the international balance of power. Drawing on Powell (2004, 2006), I conceptualize such critical events as shifts in the domestic distribution of power that can lead to a bargaining breakdown and, in consequence, military conflict. Following a shock to government capabilities, current leaders and the opposition are bargaining for a share of authority. The government has incentives to grant concessions to other groups within the state, yet such promises are not credible given that the leadership may regain its strength. Similarly, opposition groups lack the ability to make credible commitments as they expect to be more powerful in the future. Both the government and opposition groups could benefit from striking bargains, but cannot credibly commit because of incentives to renege on agreements in the future. Unable to commit, both actors may use force to achieve their preferred outcome. The dissertation then shifts the focus to solutions to such commitment problems. I expect that (1) the institutional structure of government and opposition groups and (2) the distance between groups have important consequences on the range of feasible agreements during this bargaining process. The arguments are tested in a statistical study of all countries for the 1960-2004 time period and in a small-sample analysis of democratization processes in Algeria and Chile. Findings show that critical events increase the probability of civil war as hypothesized and empirical evidence also provides strong support for the proposed solutions to the commitment problem.

Keywords: Civil war, critical events, credible commitment

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

Over the course of his 28-year stay in power, Zimbabwe's president Robert Mugabe has

led his country to the verge of economic collapse. Zimbabwe's economy has shrunk by one-third

since 1999, and disastrous economic policies have resulted in inflation rates exceeding 100,000

percent in early 2008.[1] Mugabe's continued rejection of international pressure for reform turned

the country into a pariah in international relations. Amid these destabilizing conditions,

presidential elections were held in March 2008. The contest pitted long-serving autocrat Mugabe

against the leader of the main opposition party, Morgan Tsvangirai. Following the election, local

democracy advocates projected an election victory for the opposition candidate. The country's

electoral commission, however, failed to publish official results for more than three weeks after

the election. Mugabe's party then offered that he would participate in a runoff election with the

opposition leader if neither candidate received an absolute majority in the elections.[2] This

proposal was swiftly rejected by opposition leaders, who argued that Mugabe's past history of

election rigging made such promises incredible, as the offer was simply a tool to buy more time

to distort election results. Over the next few days, reports of violence against opposition

supporters spread in Zimbabwe, seemingly confirming the opposition's fears.[3] Lacking

credibility to negotiate with opposition groups for future influence, the government used force to

secure its continued power.

In late 2007, Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto was killed in a suicide bombing

at an election rally. Her death occurred only two weeks before Pakistan's first democratic

elections since President Pervez Musharraf's military coup in 1999. With her party leading in the

polls, her assassination unleashed street violence and riots with over 50 deaths. Throughout his

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[1] Angus Shaw, "Zimbabwe Inflation Passes 100,000 Percent," *The Guardian*, February 22, 2008.
[2] Celia W. Dugger, "Leaders of Ruling Party Say Mugabe Will Fight On," *New York Times*, April 5, 2008.
[3] Celia W. Dugger, "Accounts of Violence Spread in Zimbabwe," *New York Times*, April 9, 2008.

leadership, Musharraf had repeatedly promised to hold elections and return power to a civilian government, but never put reforms into practice. In November 2007, he proclaimed emergency rule, dismissed all Supreme Court justices, and replaced them with followers when the court challenged his quest for a third term as president. Intended as an attempt to strengthen his waning power, the declaration of emergency rule triggered intense domestic and especially international pressure by Pakistan's allies, and Musharraf eventually agreed to hold elections in January of 2008. His regime's credibility, however, was severely tainted, and many doubted his true commitment to reform.[4] Immediately following Bhutto's assassination, supporters of opposition parties instantly blamed members of the military regime for her death. While responsibility for the attack has not been determined, Bhutto and other observers have criticized her security protection by the government as insufficient in the past.[5]

The above discussion of recent events in Pakistan and Zimbabwe shows how political instability contributes to the eruption of violence. In both countries, the regimes' past actions and subsequent credibility problems seemingly contributed to the occurrence of violence at election time. It is the goal of this dissertation to demonstrate that the current events in Zimbabwe and Pakistan are examples of a more general class of events. To develop a general explanation of the consequences of political instability on the occurrence of violence within states, the dissertation asks two key questions.

First, why does political instability increase the probability of civil war? The argument developed here expects that critical events weaken the government's capabilities and result in bargaining over the future distribution of power. When a shock or critical event weakens the

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[4] Ironically, Musharraf's campaign used the slogan "confidence and credibility."
[5] Randall Mikkelsen, "Musharraf: Bhutto Bears Responsibility for Her Death," Reuters, January 5, 2008, http://www.reuters.com/article/newsOne/idUSISL1624120080105 (accessed April 26, 2008). In an interview for the CBS show "60 Minutes" broadcast on January 6, President Musharraf also suggested that the opposition leader exposed herself to danger and bears responsibility for the attack.

government's capabilities, neither the current regime nor the opposition can credibly commit to a regime with shared powers. Once domestic authority is challenged through a shock to its strength (such as a change in the international balance of power, economic crisis, war defeat, or the death of a leader), uncertainty over the future distribution of power dominates, and relevant groups in society will compete for a piece of the domestic pie. Although a regime challenged by a shock has incentives to provide concessions to other groups in society, such promises lack credibility, as the regime has incentives to renege since it may regain its strength in the future. Equally, an opposition group can expect to be more powerful in a future government, thus also having incentives to renege on agreements in the future. Commitment problems experienced by government and opposition groups thus increase the risk for bargaining failure and, in consequence, civil war.

Second, how can actors solve the commitment problem caused by political instability? To develop solutions to the commitment problem, variations in the type of government and opposition group are analyzed. In particular, it is expected that (1) the institutional structure of the government, (2) the cohesiveness of opposition groups, and (3) the distance between actors influences their ability to make credible commitments. First, leaders in authoritarian regimes that rely on a small group of supporters and are therefore more likely to be punished when challenged will face greater difficulty in making a commitment to peaceful settlements than other authoritarian leaders. Leaders in single-party regimes or democracies, on the other hand, will be more successful at securing a role in future governments at least for the short term, as can be seen in the case of Communist parties in the recent transitions in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Second, opposition movements with cohesive organizational structures and links to existing social organizations are more likely to make credible commitments to sharing power.

Cohesive, hierarchical organizations are better at in-group policing and can therefore coerce more radical opposition members and enforce compromises (Fearon and Laitin, 1996: 715-35). In addition, linkages with existing social institutions such as the church or unions make it easier for opposition movements to keep extremists at bay (Kalyvas, 2000). Finally, groups with divergent preferences will have greater difficulty at making credible commitments. Ethnic divisions, for example, can result in competing preferences over possible agreements and will therefore reduce the possibility of credible and peaceful negotiation.

The dissertation develops important insights for international organizations and policymakers engaged in the areas of democracy promotion, state failure, and conflict resolution. Civil wars are the most common form of military conflict today, cause tremendous suffering, and have the potential to undermine regional stability (Sambanis, 2002). In addition, democratization and regime transitions more generally have attracted increasing interest in the international community. The dissertation's focus on the conflict-exacerbating effects of political instability, therefore, is of great importance for the international community. By demonstrating what types of actors or mechanisms are susceptible to the risk of violence change, this research will help in identifying the set of cases in which political instability will be most dangerous, and precautionary measures by international actors can be taken.

The arguments developed in the dissertation fit into the broader literature on the relationship between political instability and civil war. Three different arguments can be distinguished in the existing literature. First, political grievances and changes in states' political opportunity structures are expected to influence the probability of civil war (Hegre et al., 2001; Gurr, 2000). States that are neither strongly authoritarian nor true democracies are expected to experience more grievances and therefore greater conflict propensities. In addition, regime

change represents a change in states' opportunity structure and thus provides incentives for violent mobilization. A second explanation argues that diversionary tactics prompt leaders' use of domestic violence (Snyder, 2000; Figuerdo and Weingast, 1999). Threatened leaders incite nationalist violence in order to deflect challenges to their power. Third, the security dilemma has been applied to the domestic sphere (Posen, 1993; Walter, 1999). When domestic authority breaks down, uncertainty and fear trigger militarization and the occurrence of conflict.

The dissertation makes two important improvements to the literature on the political causes of civil war. First, current arguments suffer from endogeneity problems. Regime change, democratization, or the collapse of government authority may already entail the use of force. For example, violence is common in coup d'états, which clearly represent instances of regime change. The critical events (such as economic crisis or leader death) emphasized in the theoretical argument and operationalized in the empirical section avoid endogeneity problems. While critical events function as triggers of the bargaining process between government and opposition, they do not include the use of force between domestic groups. Second, existing arguments fail to explain why actors choose violence – a costly and risky strategy – over the peaceful negotiation of agreements (Fearon, 1995). The bargaining argument developed here lays out how rapid power shifts can result in bargaining inefficiencies and conflict, thus demonstrating how instability can lead to violence among rational actors (Fearon, 1995; Powell, 2004).

More generally, the dissertation makes three key contributions to our understanding of civil war. First, by focusing on the effects of shocks on civil war, the argument takes the dynamic nature of civil war seriously. Many theories of civil war look at concepts that change little or not at all over time, such as relative poverty, ethnicity, or natural resources. While such arguments

are valuable in the sense that they can tell us which states are expected to have a higher baseline probability of civil war, they do not explain why countries move from peace to war. An analysis of critical shocks (such as economic crisis, the death of a leader, or defeat in interstate war) identifies events that help understand a shift from a stable equilibrium to war.

Second, the argument shows that shocks to government capabilities represent a shift in the domestic distribution of power and thus provide a valuable empirical referent for the commitment problems described in Powell (2004, 2006). Economic decline, the death of a leader, defeat in war, and changes in the international balance of power are identified as events leading to regime weakness, and, in consequence, civil war. Identifying critical events as rapid power shifts helps specify the micro-foundations for the inefficient use of force and avoids "black-boxing" these changes (Powell, 2004: 237).

Third, while work on commitment issues provides a compelling explanation of interstate or intrastate war occurrence, it does not lay out the conditions under which actors can avoid such inefficiency. As outlined above, the dissertation expects that variations in the type of government and opposition group influence actors' ability to make credible commitments. Identifying solutions to the commitment problem has important consequences for international organizations and policymakers alike.

The remainder of the dissertation proceeds as follows. Chapter two provides an overview of existing explanations of civil war onset. To place the central questions of this dissertation within previous research, economic, ethnic, political, and bargaining theories on the occurrence of civil war are reviewed in this chapter. Since the dissertation puts forward a political explanation of civil war onset, such theoretical accounts are reviewed in more detail. Three distinct arguments can be distinguished. First, grievance and opportunity structures have been

argued to explain the relationship between regime change and conflict. Secondly, research has analyzed situations of government collapse as an intrastate security dilemma. Finally, diversionary-conflict arguments claim that leaders divert from their temporary weakness by engaging in violence at the domestic level. After assessing the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, I develop an argument based on a commitment problem between the incumbent regime and opposition groups. To place the argument into the larger literature on commitment problems, I assess recent work in this area.

Chapter three presents a detailed account of the two-sided commitment problem that arises following shocks to domestic authority. When a critical event such as economic decline, defeat in interstate war, the death of a leader, or a change in the international balance of power threatens the domestic equilibrium, the incumbent regime and opposition groups will bargain for a share of authority. However, neither the current leadership nor opposition groups can credibly commit to peaceful agreements following such events. The incumbent regime, while having incentives to buy off the opposition, cannot credibly grant concessions since it expects to regain its strength in the future. Opposition groups, on the other hand, may expect to become more powerful in the future, and thus have incentives to renege on agreements. Lacking the ability to credibly commit to negotiated agreements, both actors have the option of using force to achieve their most favorable outcome.

I then analyze solutions to the commitment problem. What types of actors or strategies will be most successful in making credible commitments? Since not all shocks lead to the onset of violence, better knowledge of the types of actors that enable such nonviolent outcomes is crucial for researchers and policymakers alike. I expect that the organizational features of government and opposition and the distance between actors affect their ability to make credible

commitments. Specifically, I argue that military and personal regimes have smaller winning coalitions than single-party or democratic regimes and are therefore less credible when threatened in their power. Military and personalist dictators cannot easily extend their circle of supporters and therefore have little to offer when their power is challenged. Unable to credibly grant concessions, leaders of such regimes are therefore more likely to use force. For the opposition, groups possessing strong, hierarchical organizational structures will better be able to police demands by radicals, thus enhancing their credibility and reducing the potential for violence. Finally, greater distance between groups in society (arising because of ethnic, religious, or ideological differences) reduces the range of acceptable agreements and thus makes peaceful agreements less likely.

Chapter four provides a statistical test of the commitment problem outlined in the previous chapter. The empirical implications of the hypotheses are tested in a cross-sectional dataset including all leaders for the 1960-2004 period. The dataset includes information on all types of critical events during the time period analyzed, as well as information on the institutional structure of actors and the distance between them. Results show that critical events increase the risk of civil war as hypothesized, and this result is consistent across different model specifications. Economic decline, war defeat, and changes in the international balance of power lead to an increased probability of civil war onset.

Analyzing only countries that experienced such critical events, I then assess whether military and personalist regimes are more likely to experience civil war. Empirical results confirm the hypothesis, showing that both types of regimes have greater conflict propensities than single-party and democratic regimes. In addition, it is shown that cohesive opposition groups are less likely to use force following critical events. As hypothesized, countries with

established opposition parties have a reduced risk of civil war onset. Finally, countries with greater ethnic diversity have increased probabilities of civil war, confirming the hypothesis on the distance between actors.

Chapter five provides a more detailed historical account of the theoretical expectations by examining transition processes in Algeria and Chile. The case studies focus on variation in the organizational structure of opposition groups for two reasons. First, little research on opposition groups in authoritarian regimes exists, despite the fact that such groups operate in many noncompetitive regimes. Second, the cohesion of opposition groups is a concept that is difficult to measure in a large-N quantitative analysis. While the statistical results support the theoretical argument, detailed process-tracing of historical cases allows for a more accurate operationalization of the concept. Therefore, I chose cases that exhibit variation in the organizational structure of opposition groups, but are similar in the other independent variables emphasized in the theoretical section.

In the 1980s, critical events altered the domestic balance of power in Algeria and Chile and triggered moves toward liberalization by the military leadership. In Algeria, economic recession and youth protests forced the military regime to negotiate with opposition groups (Quandt, 1998). The authoritarian regime decided to liberalize and called for elections, only to later cancel the election results and use force against the Islamist opposition. In contrast, Pinochet's defeat in the 1988 plebiscite was followed by a peaceful transfer of power and successful democratization in Chile. I argue that institutional structure of opposition groups explains these divergent outcomes. The Islamist Salvation Front (FIS), the primary opposition party in the Algerian elections, suffered from competition between radical and moderate forces. Marred by internal divisions, organizational deficiencies, and the lack of a clear program, the FIS

was unable to define itself as a unified and credible alternative to the authoritarian regime. Fearful that the opposition movement would renege on its commitment to a democratic regime and establish an Islamist state, the military canceled election results and took up arms against the Islamists. In addition, the FIS failed to establish coalitions with other opposition parties (Roberts, 1994a; Martinez, 2000). Conversely, opposition groups in Chile were able to overcome divisions and polarization that had brought the country to the brink of civil war in the early 1970s. Socialist groups, long beset by internal tensions, united behind a moderate message after a failed coup attempt on Pinochet's life. This development opened up the door for negotiations with Christian Democrats. Parties in the center and on the left eventually formed a united, cohesive coalition against the military regime. Moreover, party ties to the Catholic Church and unions also facilitated the emergence of a unified opposition. The Church, while traditionally closer to the Christian Democrats, attracted Socialists because of its engagement in human rights issues. Chile's peaceful transition to democracy in the late 1980s thus can be credited to the unified appearance of opposition elites, which signaled credibility to the incumbent military leadership.

Chapter six offers concluding remarks on the relationship between political instability and civil war. In addition to summarizing key findings, the chapter also advances suggestions for policymakers and addresses recommendations for future research.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Do shocks to the government increase the probability of violent internal conflict? If so, how can actors avoid the onset of violence following a weakening of the government? To place the central questions of this dissertation within previous research, existing theoretical explanations on the occurrence of civil war are reviewed in this chapter. The chapter proceeds in six sections. The first section analyzes the intersection of international relations and comparative politics with respect to the study of civil war. The second section addresses theoretical and methodological challenges in the civil war literature. The subsequent three sections summarize economic, ethnic, and political explanations of civil war.[6] Multiple theoretical explanations and a large body of empirical research exist on the causes of civil wars (Sambanis, 2002). Since this dissertation puts forward a political explanation of civil war onset, such theoretical accounts are reviewed in more detail. Bargaining theories and their applicability to the study of internal conflict are the subject of the sixth section of this chapter. A final section summarizes the main theoretical approaches and addresses linkages to the theoretical argument developed in the subsequent chapter.

*The Intersection of International Relations and Comparative Politics in the Study of Civil War*

Academic interest in civil wars has increased exponentially since the end of the Cold War. While scholars in comparative politics have long studied insurgency and political violence at the domestic level - such as revolutions, social movements, riots, and other forms of protest - the last two decades have witnessed increasing contributions by international relations scholars. Traditionally focused on military conflict between states, international relations researchers have

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[6] Consistent with the focus of this analysis, the review of the civil literature centers on explanations of civil war onset, not duration or termination.

extended their research to explanations of violence within states, thereby challenging the traditional distinction between comparative politics and international relations.

Traditionally, the study of international politics has concentrated on relations between sovereign states and their interactions, while comparative politics engages in the comparison of states' domestic structures. Recent developments within both research areas, however, increasingly question the validity of this demarcation line. First, international relations scholars today explicitly consider the influence of domestic factors on the relations between states. This shift is evident in research on the democratic peace or economic interdependence, which stresses the influence of domestic political institutions and economic structures on the relations between states (Oneal and Russett, 2001). Similarly, comparative scholars now acknowledge the impact of international factors on the domestic structure in areas as diverse as democratization, globalization, and the emergence of the state system (Gourevitch, 1978). Second, the anarchy assumption, often argued to be the main primary boundary line separating domestic and international politics, has been questioned by critics such as Milner (1991). Neorealist theory argues that anarchy at the international level results in decentralized competition among sovereign equals, where the absence of centralized control results in a self-help system with states relying on the use of force for survival (Waltz, 1979). Yet this argument neglects the fact that groups - at times violently - compete for power in the domestic sphere. The occurrence of civil wars, for example, demonstrates that anarchy does occur at the domestic level.

While the theoretical distinctions between international relations and comparative politics with respect to domestic violence seem blurry at best, some important differences remain. First, unlike military competition between states, where states (or leaders) are the main parties to a conflict, civil wars lack a stable set of actors. Therefore, research on civil wars needs

to address the question of how and why rebel groups emerge and survive (Gates, 2002). Second, anarchy is not a constant condition at the domestic level. This limits the applicability of international relations theories such as neorealism, which assumes a permanently unregulated environment in the international system (Waltz, 1979). As such, research on civil wars, unlike that on international relations, needs to consider the conditions leading to the breakdown of order.

### *Theoretical and Methodological Issues in the Study of Civil War*

Before proceeding to an evaluation of theories of civil war onset, I present a brief outline of challenging theoretical and methodological issues in the civil war literature. Among theoretical approaches, one can distinguish between macro- and micro-level explanations, with the main emphasis until recently on macro-level arguments.[7] Examples of such macro-level theories of internal conflict are approaches stressing the importance of political or economic grievances or ethnic divisions (Gurr, 2000; Horowitz, 1985). Yet such approaches leave questions on individuals' motives and actions largely unaddressed – why, for example, do individuals take the risk of joining rebellion, and how is violence sustained over time?

Recent research by Kalyvas (2006) and Gates (2002) has started to fill in these gaps. Kalyvas (2006) explores the logic of violence in civil wars at the individual level. In his argument, actors use selective violence because it functions as a powerful deterrent, as it creates the perception that actors can monitor and sanction behavior. Using selective violence, however, is costly since it requires verifying of collaborators' information. Random violence, while less

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[7] A similar divide exists in the literature on revolutions. Macro-level approaches, such as relative deprivation arguments or structural analyses rooted in Marxism dominated revolutionary analysis until the 1980s, but came under increasing criticism for failing to explain and predict the "surprise" revolutions in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (Kuran, 1991; Goldstone, 2001). Subsequent research stressed the importance of agency and analyzed the motives of revolutionaries (Kuran, 1991; Weede and Muller, 1998; Wood, 2003).

difficult and costly to use, cannot induce compliance. It is therefore used only when selective violence is infeasible. A combination of quantitative and qualitative data on the Greek civil war is used to test his arguments, and results show that the type and level of violence used varies as a result of change in actors' control over territory. Gates (2002) examines (1) why individuals make the costly decision of joining a rebel group and (2) why they remain members of the group despite having to engage in violence and endure personal hardship. Gates concludes that geographical proximity, shared ethnicity, and a common ideology are mechanisms facilitating compliance and enforcement in rebel organizations.

In addition, bargaining theories of war provide theoretical accounts that help understand individuals' actions. By emphasizing the strategic nature of civil war, they explicitly focus on the motivations of actors and the interactions between them. Informational approaches, for example, outline how actors in civil war have incentives to misrepresent their own capabilities and resolve to gain a military advantage (Fearon, 1995, 2004). Economic models of civil war have stressed the opportunity costs of rebellion, where the availability of rents (such as natural resources, foreign aid, or donations from diasporas) and the capacity of the state influence individuals' decisions to rebel (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Fearon and Laitin, 2001; Skaperdas, 2002).

Yet while bargaining and economic models of civil war provide increasingly detailed accounts for individual and group behavior, a gap persists between theoretical explanations and the empirical tests. The vast majority of empirical evidence is based on the state, or macro-level of analysis. Both Fearon and Laitin (2003) and Collier and Hoeffler (2004) propose micro-level theories, but use macro-level data to test their expectations. To date, two possible solutions to this problem exist. First, as Sambanis (2004a) suggests, researchers can use case studies to develop and test micro-level theories. Collier and Sambanis (2004), for example, present a two-

volume collection of case studies that provides a systematic application of the Collier and Hoeffler (2004) model of civil war onset. A focus on individual cases allows for an understanding of the dynamic and strategic nature of civil war and does not constrain its focus to variables that change little or not at all over time. However, a drawback of this approach is the limited generalizability of case studies.

A second solution would be to use data more appropriate for micro-level arguments. Cunningham et al. (2007), for example, take the strategic nature of civil war seriously when modeling it as a dyadic phenomenon between a state and a rebel actor. The authors investigate the effect of rebel strength, group location, and alternative means of participation on civil war duration. Yet a shortcoming of this approach is that it does not allow studying civil war onset – how can one know *ex ante* which group will rebel against the state? Also, since the onset and duration of conflict may not be independent events, such analyses may suffer from selection bias (Lemke and Reed, 2001). Data collected by the Minorities at Risk (MAR) project provide another possible alternative, as they allow one to model empirically interactions between the state and minority groups. Since not all internal conflict is ethnically motivated, however, this approach might leave out a large number of potentially relevant cases.


*Economic Theories of Civil War*

Among economic theories of civil war, two competing explanations can be distinguished. I will first discuss economic approaches based on rational choice theories that understand civil war as a result of utility calculations. A second part will analyze approaches emphasizing economic grievances in society and their effect on the probability of civil war.

Studies by Grossman (1995) and Hirschleifer (1995) mark the beginning of the use of rational choice theories in the study of civil war. Both see civil war as a result of economic tradeoffs by actors, where the expected utility gained from conflict influences the decision to rebel. Hirschleifer (1995) argues that parties calculate potential net benefits from a conflict and engage in it when a successful outcome is likely. Grossman (1995) models rebellion as an industry that generates profits from looting and that is motivated by greed. When the opportunity of rebellion seems profitable, it will not be passed up.

Both Collier and Hoeffler (2004) and Fearon and Laitin (2003) argue that the expected gains from rebellion influence actors' decisions regarding violence. In Collier and Hoeffler's (2004) model, the opportunity costs of rebellion determine the demand and supply of civil war. Countries with low levels of per capita income have a higher probability of civil war since the opportunity costs for rebellion are small. In addition to income and development levels, the opportunity cost of rebellion is also influenced by the availability of natural resource extortion, donations from diasporas, and subventions to rebel movements from hostile foreign governments. Testing these expectations against country-level data, the authors find support for their greed-based explanation. Fearon (2004) and Ross (2004), however, are critical of the authors' measure of natural resources, which is operationalized as the ratio of primary commodity exports to GDP. As Fearon (2004) points out, oil is the major component of primary commodities. He argues that oil increases the risk of civil war because oil producing states exhibit lower state capacity, and not because it is used to finance rebellion.[8]

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[8] While theories of civil war have become increasingly elaborate and fine-grained, empirical tests often use the same variables for different underlying theoretical concepts (Sambanis, 2002). Per capita income, for example, is used as a measure of the opportunity for rebellion in Collier and Hoeffler (2004), whereas Fearon and Laitin (2003) argue it to be a proxy variable for state strength.

Fearon and Laitin (2003) expect that the size and likelihood of insurgency is influenced by the opportunity for insurgency and the government's response to insurgents. Opportunities for rebellion are greater when rebels are able to hide from the government (such as in rough terrain or mountainous areas), when they receive support from foreign actors, or when the local population supports the rebels. The government's ability to contain insurgencies is a function of its strength, which Fearon and Laitin (2003) see influenced by income levels, the degree of political stability, and whether or not states are oil exporters. Empirical tests show that per capita income strongly increases the probability of civil war. In addition, newly independent states and states experiencing political instability are at greater risk of civil war. Finally, Fearon and Laitin (2003) also show that states in which oil revenue produces more than one-third of all export revenue are more likely to be involved in civil conflict.

Skaperdas (2002) develops an economic model of warlord competition in which warlords compete over rents (such as diamonds, gold, foreign aid, and foreign direct investment). This competition over rents results in the crowding out of other production, reduces the overall welfare of the state, and increases the probability of civil war. Addison and Murshed (2002) and Buhaug and Gates (2002) find support for this expectation, showing that the presence of natural resources increases the overall probability of civil war and also prolongs its duration. De Soysa (2002) demonstrates that a shortage of renewable resources (such as water or timber) relative to an abundance of non-renewable resources (such as diamonds or oil) increases the risk of civil war. Evidence by Collier and Hoeffler (2004) on the availability of natural resources and their effects on the opportunity of rebellion also seemingly supports Skaperdas' (2002) model, but the authors make a different theoretical argument.

Apart from economic approaches based on rational-choice theories, scholars have emphasized the importance of economic grievances and their effect on rebellion. Gurr (1970, 2000) sees relative deprivation as a primary cause of violence, and feelings of deprivation are influenced, among other factors, by economic inequality. In this model, relative deprivation results from a discrepancy between perceived rewards and actual rewards. Violence is subsequently triggered by changes in the perceived level of income compared to people's actual income level. Empirical evidence for the expected relationship between inequality and civil war is inconsistent at best. Collier and Hoeffler (2004) and Sambanis (2004b) find no support for the conflict-exacerbating effect of inequality on civil war. More recently, research has suggested that this non-finding may be the result of an indirect relationship between economic inequality and internal conflict (Cramer, 2003; Sambanis, 2004b; Alesina and Perotti, 1996). Sambanis argues that inequality may result in greater political instability, which has been shown to influence civil war likelihood and thus indirectly influences the risk of violence. Similarly, Alesina and Perotti (1996) argue that inequality can lead to violence through political effects. In unequal democracies people push for greater redistribution, which consequently discourages investment, hampers growth, and thereby increases the chances of domestic violence. The evidence supporting this conjecture remains inconclusive. These expectations, however, have not been subject to thorough empirical testing.

*Ethnicity and Civil War*

Theoretical arguments on ethnicity and civil war generally stress the role of ethnic identity as a negotiation and enforcement mechanism within groups. Horowitz (1985) argues that ascriptive differences (such as language, appearance, or religion) shared by a group result in

the development of trust, and facilitate coordination and enforcement of agreements within the group. A similar argument is developed by Gates (2002), who expects that shared ethnicity contributes to rebel groups' ability to motivate and sustain participation. While Gates (2002) also considers geographic proximity and shared ideology, he thinks of ethnicity as the strongest mechanism. Ethnic identity cannot be changed easily and thus carries a lower risk of defection. Ethnicity, therefore, facilitates intra-ethnic cooperation, but makes the negotiation of conflicts between different ethnic groups – lacking trust and coordination and enforcement mechanisms - more difficult.

Caselli and Coleman II (2006) provide an explanation of ethnicity and conflict that conceptualizes society as group competition over the control of wealth-creating assets. Groups that succeed in controlling the country's riches will suffer from infiltration by joiners who attempt to free-ride on the group's efforts. Absent easy detection of such free-riders, the group faces the dilution of benefits provided to its members. However, in societies with ethnic heterogeneity, groups and coalitions can be formed along ethnic lines. Ethnicity then functions as a marker for identifying infiltrators and lowers the cost of enforcement. Group competition over resources will therefore be more intense in ethnically diverse societies, resulting in a greater probability of civil war in such countries.

Empirical results for the consequences of ethnic heterogeneity on the probability of civil war, however, are mixed. Fearon and Laitin (2003) and Collier and Hoeffler (2004), for example, do not find that ethnic heterogeneity increases the probability of conflict. Some authors argue that this may be due to a parabolic relationship between ethnic fractionalization and civil war (Elbadawi and Sambanis, 2000; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Blimes, 2006). According to this research, ethnic dominance, rather than heterogeneity itself, raises the potential for violence.

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Data on ethnic polarization (measuring the size of groups and the nominal distance between them) presented in Reynal-Querol (2002) and Montalvo and Reynal-Querol (2005) show that such societies indeed are at a greater risk of civil war. Their research argues that the greatest risk of conflict occurs at a critical threshold of ethnic polarization, when societies are dominated by two large ethnic groups. Highly fractionalized societies incur a lower risk of civil war as coordination costs for rebellion are higher.

Blimes (2006) presents a different explanation for the inconclusive findings on ethnicity and civil war. He argues that ethnic diversity does not present a constant cause for conflict and affects conflict only indirectly. Ethnicity becomes salient only when other causes of civil war are present, such as a weakening of the state or low economic development. Using a heteroskedastic probit model, Blimes (2006) shows that ethnic fractionalization and ethnic dominance increase the probability of civil war when other variables known to increase the likelihood of civil wars are present. Finally, some authors have argued that non-findings on ethnicity may be a function of a more fundamental difference between ethnic and non-ethnic civil wars (Sambanis, 2001, 2004a). According to this view, ethnic wars arise over issues related to ethnicity. Ethnic diversity lends itself to manipulation and can be used to generate collective action. For this reason, ethnic diversity increases the probability of ethnic wars, but does not affect the likelihood of civil wars lacking an ethnic component.

*Political Explanations of Civil War*

This dissertation puts forward a political explanation of civil war, and existing explanations of this kind will therefore be evaluated in more detail. I will first review three arguments on the relationship between political instability and civil war in the international

relations literature. Authors have emphasized the role of political grievances and opportunity structures, elite persuasion tactics, and the security dilemma. In addition to research in international relations, an extensive literature on regime change, revolutions, and other forms of protest exists in the field of comparative politics. While most authors do not explicitly address the issue of violence during these processes, I will review research to the extent that it informs the research questions posed here.

The first group of arguments in the international relations literature highlights political grievances and opportunity structures as determinants of civil war. Focusing on opportunity structures and grievances, Lichbach (1987) expects that dissident groups will substitute violent protest for nonviolent protest depending on the state responses of repression. Groups will pursue the most effective strategy as a function of the state's response. If the state represses in response to nonviolent behavior, groups will choose violence. If the state, however, represses violent behavior, movements will switch to nonviolent forms of protest. Gupta et al. (1993) add a regime-type dimension to Lichbach's (1987) model. They expect that repression is more likely in authoritarian regimes, and dissidents are therefore more likely to engage in violent internal conflict. Dissidents in democracies, however, can select from nonviolent forms of expression, and this freedom reduces the potential for violence. Moore (1998) empirically tests both Lichbach's (1987) and Gupta et al.'s (1993) models. He finds support only for Lichbach's argument, which does not differentiate among different types of regimes. Moore's (1998) test, however, uses only two cases and selects Peru as a democracy for the 1955-1991 period, although it is debatable whether Peru should be considered a stable democracy for this time frame. The selection of this case is especially problematic since Gupta et al. expect variation in group behavior across different types of regimes.

Building on work by Lichbach (1987) and Gupta et al. (1993), Hegre et al. (2001) argue that the probability of violence will depend on the existing level of grievances within a society. Democratic regimes prevent grievances since the expression of needs and demands is guaranteed in the political process. Regimes in the middle of the autocracy-democracy spectrum, however, do not have similar mechanisms and will therefore have greater chances of civil war occurrence. Authoritarian regimes are able to suppress grievances through repression. Combining these expectations, the authors expect a U-shaped relationship between level of democracy and the probability of civil war. In addition to their argument on the level of democracy, Hegre et al. expect that domestic regime change provides an opportunity for dissatisfied groups to struggle against the regime in power. Finally, while authoritarian regimes can curb grievances through repression, they are also less stable than democratic regimes and therefore more susceptible to violent regime transitions. Hegre et al.'s (2001) expectation on the role of regime change is similar to that of Fearon and Laitin (2003: 81), who argue that conditions for insurgency are favorable in situations of "political instability at the center, which may indicate disorganization and weakness and thus an opportunity for a separatist or center-seeking rebellion." Gurr (2000) develops a related argument, in which civil war is understood as a function of the salience of ethno-political identity, the level of grievances in society, the capacity for mobilization, and opportunities for action. The level of grievances is approximated by the level of democracy, since groups in democratic societies are provided with nonviolent means of conflict resolution.

Empirical findings in Hegre et al. confirm a U-shaped relationship between democracy level and civil war and show that regime change increases the risk of civil war. Combining these findings with evidence of lower survival rates for non-democratic regimes, Hegre et al. (2001: 44) expect that all states will eventually reach a "democratic civil peace." Their findings

regarding the effect of level of democracy and instability on conflict receive mixed support in other research. Subsequent research has largely confirmed Hegre et al.'s results on the conflict-exacerbating effects of political instability. Fearon and Laitin (2003), Strand (2006), and Hegre and Sambanis (2006) all demonstrate that political instability increases the probability of civil war, thus demonstrating consistency across different model specifications. Results regarding the conflict proneness of semi-authoritarian regimes, however, are not as consistent. Elbadawi and Sambanis (2002) find that the level of democracy influences the risk of civil war, and Reynal-Querol (2002) shows that greater political rights, especially regarding representation, reduce the probability of civil war. Yet Collier and Hoeffler (2004) and Fearon and Laitin (2003) do not find a significant relationship between the level of democracy and the likelihood of civil war. More recently, Buhaug (2006) has shown that the U-shaped relationship between democracy and civil war holds only for insurgencies that target the state. He argues that group capability relative to the state influences whether rebels will target the state or attempt secession. States that are transitional and politically inconsistent will more often face challenges to the government.

Approaches focusing on grievance and opportunity suffer from two weaknesses. First, the institutional logic of semi-authoritarian regimes may help us understand why grievances are likely to result in group mobilization, but need not imply the occurrence of a civil war. A regime facing domestic opposition could, for example, decide to accommodate group demands and thus attempt to avoid the eruption of violence. It is not clear under what circumstances groups would choose violence – admittedly a dangerous and costly strategy - over peaceful opposition. In addition, what level of grievance is sufficient to trigger violent mobilization? Considering the large number of semi-authoritarian regimes, we certainly do not observe continuing violent struggle in all such states. Second, while regime change certainly creates a window of

opportunity for opposition groups, it is not clear why actors would engage in costly civil war, rather than negotiating with the ruling elite (Fearon, 1995).

A second line of arguments in international relations is the diversionary-conflict argument developed in Snyder (2000) and Figuerdo and Weingast (1999).[9] Snyder's "elite-persuasion" argument maintains that threatened elites in democratizing states use nationalist violence as a tool to generate public support and secure their power. According to this view, ethnic nationalism is usually not developed before a political opening occurs. Democratization creates the opportunity for the promotion of exclusionary nationalism and, in turn, civil or interstate war. Snyder argues that nationalism allows for generating effective collective action on a national scale, yet can be achieved only through the exclusion and repression of some groups in society. Conflict is thus not caused by inherent tensions or ancient hatreds between groups, but is "constructed" by weakened political elites. De Figuerdo and Weingast (2000) argue that people may act irrationally and support civil war when elites manipulate their latent fears. Threatened leaders will exaggerate citizens' uncertainty about the probability of victimization by another group, and thus motivate the preemptive use of violence.

Such arguments, however, seem based on the irrationality of the masses and a positive level of victimization (Sambanis, 2002). Why should individuals pay the high price of mobilization for politicians' selfish objectives absent any preexisting tensions between groups? Elite persuasion arguments, probably for this reason, are often combined with arguments on ethnicity. It seems that such approaches, in order to be compatible with rational behavior, assume that there is preexisting fear and distrust among groups, which can then be utilized by political

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[9] A related research program focuses on the linkage between regime change and interstate conflict. The argument claims that threatened elites initiate conflicts abroad in order to divert attention from domestic problems (Mansfield and Snyder, 2005). Colaresi (2004) also finds evidence that elites pay a domestic-political price for acting dovishly in relations with rivals. Thus, inter-state conflict is exacerbated by weak elites that opt for hawkish policies to remain in power.

elites.[10] In addition, the use of violence is only one of several options leaders may choose to maintain power, and it is not clear why leaders would engage in a risky gamble rather than using repression or offering concessions (Enterline and Gleditsch, 2000). Finally, while elites' diversionary motives cannot be empirically observed, the argument nevertheless suggests that such strategies are successful in lengthening an embattled leader's tenure. This expectation, however, is not borne out in recent research on diversionary war (Chiozza and Goemans, 2003; Chiozza et al., 2006). Snyder (2000) finds empirical support for his argument in several case studies, yet this finding suffers from selection on the dependent variable, since only countries in which conflict occurred are analyzed.

A third political explanation of civil war is developed in research on the domestic security dilemma. Influenced by research on the interstate security dilemma, Posen (1993) compares the collapse of multiethnic states to the problem of anarchy in the international realm. Absent domestic authority, he argues, groups provide for their own security, but greater security is perceived as a threat by nearby groups. Actors strive for territorial integrity and political autonomy, yet because of domestic anarchy, they are not granted sovereign status. Similarly, Walter (1999) argues that the breakdown of domestic authority leads to the absence of enforcement and arbitration mechanisms within the state. Absent a central enforcement authority, groups are uncertain about the future distribution of power. The parties involved may fear that their status will be challenged, or that others may take advantage of the power vacuum, resulting in an intra-state security dilemma. Even if actors prefer to settle conflicts peacefully, they may feel threatened and militarize to protect themselves (Walter, 1999: 262). Approaches emphasizing this security dilemma, however, have not been subjected to thorough empirical

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[10] At the interstate level, Mitchell and Prins (2004) show that rival states use military force abroad to divert from domestic problems. Rivalry, as it is characterized by mutual fear and distrust, presents an environment with ample opportunity for the use of diversionary force.

testing (Sambanis, 2002: 233). In addition, the analogy to the international system suffers from the problem that anarchy is not a constant in the domestic realm and therefore cannot explain why regimes fail in the first place.

I now turn to a discussion of arguments developed in the field of comparative politics, in which I evaluate the literature on regime change and democratization as it relates to the question of violence. A subsequent section discusses research on revolutions and social movements. A final part assesses the small but informative literature on elections and violence.

While most research on democratization does not focus on the question of violence, authors such as Przeworski (1991) and Colomer (2000) include civil war as one possible outcome in their game-theoretic models of democratization. Przeworski's (1991) model of democratization processes discusses three potential scenarios that affect the outcome of bargaining in transitional democracies.[11] First, the distribution of forces (among actors) can be known and unbalanced. In these cases, institutional choice is usually biased toward the interest of a particular person, party or alliance, and they will consequently fail to maintain long-term stability (Przeworski, 1991: 82). Second, the distribution of forces can be known and balanced. Przeworksi (1991) considers this scenario the most unlikely for democratic consolidation. In this setting, civil war is an option available to the parties. Yet, actors may foresee the instability and danger of such situations and therefore negotiate temporal agreements involving suboptimal outcomes. The final scenario concerns cases in which the relation of forces is not known. Przeworski considers these cases the most promising for democratic stability, since uncertainty

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[11] Przeworksi (1991: 67) distinguishes between two aspects of democratization: Transitions from the authoritarian regime (extrication) and a second phase that deals with the establishment democratic rule (constitution). He admits that these two phases can coincide temporally, and may be difficult to distinguish empirically.

on actors' strength will induce all actors to support institutions with checks and balances, institutions that provide guarantees against political adversity.[12]

Colomer (2000), also using a game-theoretic model, sees two possible outcomes to political liberalization. First, groups may compete for mutual elimination, leading to civil war and an eventual victory of one side. Second, actors may foresee the risk of losing the conflict, as well as the level of destruction involved in civil war, and negotiate intermediate agreements between democracy and dictatorship (Colomer, 2000:1). These intermediate agreements, or "semi-democracies," are Colomer's (2000) main focus. He argues that such negotiated transitions fall short of consolidated democracy, yet can be beneficial immediately after authoritarian breakups as they avoid the eruption of violent conflict. The absence of "maximalist" actors (such as radical opposition or radical hardliners) is crucial for the possibility of peaceful agreements. Colomer (2000) identifies three factors that influence the presence of such extremist factions: Relative deprivation, utopian expectations, and restrictive institutions.[13] In addition to the models presented in Przeworski (1991) and Colomer (2000), research on the conditions for successful democratization and consolidation can be informative for the research questions analyzed here. Regimes that successfully transition to a stable democratic regime have presumably avoided the risk of violence. Burton et al. (1992) emphasize the importance of elite settlements for democratization success. The authors contend that such settlements enable peaceful competition among elites and allow for the eventual emergence of stable democracy (Burton et al., 1992: 14). This emphasis on elite settlements is similar to other work focusing on the importance of power-sharing and elite pacts (Lijphart, 1999; O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986;

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[12] Uncertainty, however, may well have the opposite effect. If the distribution of power and bargaining strength of actors are not known, parties may miscalculate each other's strength and pursue institutions that will favor their own estimated position. In addition, uncertainty makes it impossible for actors to credibly commit to a certain outcome, and actors cannot anticipate that institutional choices will be abided by on the part of all actors.

[13] Yet these factors are quite ambiguous and not clearly defined in the text.

O'Donnell, 1992; Przeworski, 1992). Lijphart (1999) argues that consociational democracy is the best way to successful consolidation. His work also stresses the need for elite negotiation, but it is narrower in its applicability because of its detailed outline for the necessary institutional arrangements. Lijphart's model of consociational democracy requires the adaptation of certain institutional mechanisms (such as grand coalitions, minority representation), which limits its scope compared to other research focusing on elite agreements.

O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) argue that elite pacts are important for democratic consolidation as they lay out "rules governing the exercise of power on the basis of mutual guarantees for the 'vital interests' of the actors entering it" (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986: 37). The authors support this with evidence on Latin American democracies, where countries with pacted transitions were able to withstand authoritarian reversals. In later work, however, O'Donnell (1992) seems more skeptical of pacts as a means to stable democracy. He sees extensive "accordism" as a threat to democratic competition and successful consolidation and argues that such pacted transitions often lead to the slow death of democracy. Yet he also points out that intense elite competition (following democratic ruptures) bears the danger of immediate reversals to authoritarian rule. Striking the right balance between agreement and competition seems to be the difficult task to manage. Przeworski (1992) sees political pacts as a (short-term) solution to the instability and uncertainty arising in democratic transitions. He acknowledges that pacts can offer short-term stability and the protection of embryonic democratic institutions, yet cautions that the long-term consequences of such pacts contradict democratic values.

Existing research on democratization, therefore, sees pacted transitions as a way to avoid coups or authoritarian reversals. It seems that negotiated transitions, even though falling short of democracy, can offer the stability necessary to avoid periods of prolonged violence. Yet largely

unanswered remains the question under what circumstances actors can find such negotiated solutions. Przeworski (1991) points to uncertainty as a factor, and Colomer (2000) stresses the absence of extremist factions, yet these scenarios remain underdeveloped.

The extensive literature on revolutions and social movements speaks to the question of violence as a response to political change. Structural theories of revolutions dominated the field up until the 1980s. These arguments, often rooted in Marxist theory, emphasize the role of class struggles, state conflicts with elites, and external military competition (Moore, 1966; Skocpol, 1979). This research defines revolutions as major transformations of socio-economic and political institutions that are accompanied by class upheavals from below, thus focusing on a small set of "great revolutions" in Europe and Asia (Skocpol, 1979). In addition, the occurrence of violence is an important facet of revolution in structural analyses. Skocpol's (1979) theory of social revolutions, the seminal work in this research tradition, stresses the importance of international factors in combination with social transformation and its consequences for mobilization.[14] Investigating revolutions in China, France, and Russia, Skocpol (1979) sees revolutions as the result of intense competition for military and economic power with other states, forcing them to undertake costly domestic reforms to increase their competitiveness. In cases where the dominant class had an independent economic base, it opposed reforms, leading to splits in the regime. The landed elite in China and France had no interest in supporting costly armies and extensive bureaucracies, and subsequently overthrew the state. In Russia, conflicts with more powerful adversaries simply crushed the infrastructure of the monarchy, creating a

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[14] Skocpol's work has since been criticized on a variety of grounds. First, scholars have questioned the overly deterministic nature of her model, where structural conditions all but preclude choice (Laitin and Warner, 1992). Second, authors have applied her model to other cases with limited success. The Mexican Revolution, for example, occurred despite the absence of a threatening international environment (Knight, 2001). Finally, Geddes (1990) critiques Skocpol's case selection. While Skocpol discusses contrasting cases at two points in her chain of arguments, she fails to do so for the claim that external military competition has contributed to all revolutionary outbreaks (Geddes, 1990: 143). As Geddes points out, many countries have encountered threatening external conditions throughout history, yet revolutions remain rare.

massive disgruntled peasant class that eventually mobilized against the regime. While the Russian upper class lacked an independent economic base, the existence of autonomous peasant villages explains the occurrence of revolution in this case.

Yet structural theories came under increasing criticism following a number of revolutions from the 1970s through the 1990s. Revolutions in Iran and Afghanistan, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, as well as anticolonial struggles in the Third World, challenged structural analyses in two ways. First, the class-based understanding of revolutions in structural theories was incapable of explaining multi-class coalitions toppling regimes in a variety of these cases (Goodwin, 1989). As a consequence, researchers studying the more recent revolutions emphasized the role of individuals for revolutionary mobilization and objectives, thus shifting the focus from structural elements to conscious agency. Wood (2003), for example, provides a micro-level analysis of the peasant insurgency during El Salvador's civil war. She suggests that two path-dependent processes – patterns of past state violence and the proximity of insurgent forces – created the necessary conditions for peasant mobilization in rural El Salvador. However, *campesinos* only mobilized when they also developed emotional and moral commitments to the cause. Wood (2003) finds that participants in the insurgency differed from nonparticipants in their view of participation as a moral commitment to social justice and as a demonstration of their outrage at government authority.

Second, revolutionary struggles in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union seemed to provide a new model of revolution, where the breakdown of the regime was coupled with mostly nonviolent transitions to more democratic regimes (Diamond and Platter, 1993). As a response to this changing nature of revolutions, a new research area covering a variety of events such as democratization, revolutions, rebellion, protests, riots, and civil wars emerged under the

label "contentious politics" (McAdam et al., 2001). In this research, scholars of revolutions and social movements are combining insights from both research areas, realizing that many of the processes underlying them are similar (Goldstone, 2001).

More generally, the social movements literature focuses on the causes of movement mobilization, but – as in research on contentious politics - does not usually distinguish between violent and nonviolent movements. Theoretical arguments on movement formation are similar to approaches emphasizing grievances and opportunity structures (Gurr, 1970, 2000). Early approaches on grievances were later appended by arguments emphasizing the need for opportunities to rebel. The resource mobilization theory argues that movement formation is a result of changes in the opportunity structure (Jenkins, 1983). Liberalization of an authoritarian regime could function as one such change and result in movement formation as a response to the possibility of renegotiation of authority.

Finally, a small literature in comparative politics addresses the subject of violence during elections in newly established democracies. Chaturvedi (2005) expects that the potential for violence at election time is lower as the number of undecided voters increases, an argument similar to that of Przeworski (1991). However, this model has not been tested empirically. Ellman and Wantchekon (2000) and Wantchekon (1999) expect variation in the probability of violence depending on which party controls the threat to violence. When the stronger party has the means to use force, and the threat of using force is serious, voters will overwhelmingly choose the strong party (presumably to reduce the risk of violence after elections). Preliminary evidence from post-conflict elections in Liberia and El Salvador supports their argument, but no systematic tests are conducted. Allison (2006) finds that the performance of armed opposition groups in post-conflict elections is a function of the groups' success during the armed struggle.

Based on a sample of Central American countries, groups successful in the military competition are found to be more likely to do well in post-conflict elections. This evidence seems compatible with Ellman and Wantchekon (2000) and Wantchekon (1999), as voters may support these groups out of a fear of continued violence.

### *Bargaining Theories of War*

While political explanations of civil war in the international relations literature have emphasized opportunity structures, the security dilemma, and elites' diversionary motives, the argument advanced here analyzes regime change as a bargaining process. Bargaining theories of war have generally analyzed inefficient outcomes (such as war) as the result of informational and/or commitment problems (Fearon, 1995).[15] After a brief discussion of arguments emphasizing informational effects, I will evaluate approaches to the commitment problem in more detail.

In a seminal article, Fearon (1995) analyzes three rationalist explanations for war, one of which highlights informational problems. Bargaining inefficiencies arise when actors have private information on their payoffs to prevailing in a conflict and have incentives to hide this information (since it can provide a military advantage during confrontation). These incentives to misrepresent can make bargaining difficult and undermine nonviolent signaling. The use of force, while inefficient, can function as a credible means of revealing private information on capabilities, thereby facilitating a war-ending agreement. Work on informational problems has flourished over the past decade. Yet, as Fearon (2004) and Powell (2004) point out, informational problems provide a poor account of prolonged conflict. One potential explanation

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[15] Fearon (1995) also suggests issue indivisibilities may lead to violent conflict, although he remains skeptical of this rationalist explanation.

for this can be found in Goemans (2000) analysis of war duration and termination. Goemans (2000) argues that battle victories increase leaders' demands and elites' expectations therefore fail to converge.

Commitment problems are the second cause for inefficient outcomes in the bargaining literature. Recent research by Powell (2004, 2006) shows that issues as diverse as war, secessionist conflicts, civil war resolution, public debt, inefficient democratic decision-making, and administrative ineffectiveness can be understood in terms of a commitment problem. In all instances, actors fail to locate more efficient solutions to the bargaining problem at hand and are therefore left with a suboptimal provision of the good, or "pie," in pursuit. This inefficiency is explained by the inability of involved actors to credibly commit to an agreement, since they may have incentives to renege and thus gain from defection.

In an article focused primarily on conflict between states, Fearon (1995) identifies three types of commitment problems arising in (1) preventive wars, (2) preemptive attacks resulting from first-strike attacks, and (3) wars involving issues that impact future bargaining power.[16] In an application to interstate war, Powell (2006: 169) extends this research by indicating a common mechanism in all three scenarios. Large and rapid shifts in the distribution of power create a commitment problem and therefore increase the risk of war. Following a power shift, a weakened state must offer concessions large enough to deter its strengthened opponent, yet such offers are not credible given that the state may regain its strength in the future. Fearon (1996) shows that commitment problems arise when objects in dispute are determinants of future

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[16] Fearon points out that while anarchy plays an important role for these problems, it differs from the role of anarchy in security dilemma models. Anarchy becomes relevant only when "opportunities for action imply that one or both sides in a dispute have incentives to renege on peaceful bargains, which, if they were enforceable, would be mutually preferred to war" (1995: 401).

bargaining power. States may prefer fighting in the present if committing to a settlement could decrease their bargaining leverage in the future.

Also focusing on interstate relations, Prins and Daxecker (2008) argue that commitment problems hinder rival states from terminating costly and competitive relationships. Rivalry is characterized by fear and mistrust, and rival states fail to reach mutually beneficial agreements out of fear of reneging. The authors argue that the adoption of liberal institutions such as democracy or membership in international organizations should help overcome fears of future exploitation and solve the commitment problem. Results show that the combined effect of democracy and development, change to democracy, and membership in international organizations that include dispute-settlement mechanisms increase the probability rivalry termination as hypothesized. Research by Bapat (2006) analyzes bargaining between states and terrorist organizations as a commitment problem. He expects that states' ability to monitor agreements and impose moderate costs on terrorist groups increases the chances for negotiated settlements. In an analysis of terrorist events from 1968 to 1991, he shows that host governments that impose costs that are neither too low nor too high are more likely to form credible commitments.

Other authors apply the commitment problem to incidents of internal violence (Fearon 2004; Walter, 2002). In Fearon's analysis of peripheral insurgencies and coup attempts, a short-term shock to government capabilities "gives coup plotters or rebels a window of opportunity" (Fearon, 2004: 290). While the ruling elite may want to grant concessions in order to buy off a rebellion, such a commitment is incredible since the government expects to regain its strength in the future, and civil war can occur.

Analyzing civil war termination, Walter (2002) argues that civil war settlements fail frequently because of an inability of participants to commit to the terms of the agreement. This is because the demobilization of military forces as well as the future distribution of power within the state is not yet consolidated when settlements are signed. Combatants, therefore, have incentives to renege on the terms of a settlement, since they may fear the use of military force or attempts to gain hegemonic control by the opponent. Solutions to the commitment problem, in consequence, will depend on the adoption of power-sharing agreements as well as the presence of third-party actors. Guarantees of power-sharing and third-party support will reduce actors' fears of exploitation and therefore increase the likelihood of a peaceful civil war settlement. Walter's (2002) arguments are supported in a quantitative analysis of the post-WWII era and an in-depth study of two cases. Using data on 72 civil wars for the 1940-1992 period, she shows that third-party guarantees and power-sharing pacts were crucial for the peaceful implementation of settlements to the war. An analysis of the negotiating process during Zimbabwe's and Rwanda's civil wars shows that post-treaty security questions played an important role for successful settlements. The UN's failure to extend third-party support as promised, then, explains the tragic breakdown of the peace process in Rwanda.

Finally, regime change itself has been analyzed as a commitment problem (Nalepa, 2005; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2001). Acemoglu and Robinson's work on political transitions identifies conditions under which regimes fluctuate between democratic and authoritarian regimes because of actors' inability to commit. They expect that unequal societies are particular prone to such fluctuations. In highly unequal societies, fiscal policy can vary greatly between different regimes, thus creating incentives for groups to mount a coup, or start a revolution. In the model, two groups, the rich and the poor, compete for political control and the setting of the

tax policy. When economic conditions are bad and the poor are in power, they want to offer the rich enough to avoid a coup, but cannot do so since they are unable to commit to future tax rates. The same scenario unfolds when the rich are in power and economic conditions worsen, resulting in iterations of highly unstable regimes.

A similar picture arises in transitions to democracy and the use of transitional justice against the outgoing authoritarian regime. Nalepa (2005) argues that promises by democrats not to prosecute the old regime are incredible following a transition to democracy, thus resulting in a commitment problem. Once autocrats give up power, they have no guarantee that the new regime will abide by its promises, and such uncertainty should keep them from stepping down in the first place. The above situation can be observed empirically, such as in Hungary's or Poland's transition to democracy. Possible sources of credibility, according to the Nalepa (2005), arise from the extent of divisions between Anticommunists and Liberals, collaboration of Liberals with the ancient regime, the likelihood of regime implosion, and public support for transitional justice (Nalepa 2005: 42).


### *Towards a Dynamic Theory of Civil War*

In this chapter, I have reviewed key theoretical arguments and empirical evidence in the literature on civil wars. This final section provides a brief synopsis of the main arguments and summarizes them in a table. I conclude with a preview of the theoretical argument developed in the next chapter. The study of civil wars, as pointed out earlier, straddles international relations and comparative politics, thus challenging the traditional demarcation line between the two research areas. Traditionally, international relations researchers have focused on conflict between states, but interest in civil war has increased greatly since the end of the Cold War (Sambanis,

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2002). While comparative scholars have long studied rebellion, revolutions, or other instances of violence at the domestic level, recent theoretical and empirical contributions by international relations scholars have spurred tremendous development and growth of the field.

Nevertheless, several theoretical and methodological challenges persist. First, unlike wars between states, civil wars lack a stable set of actors. Therefore, researchers need to consider the question of how and why violent opposition emerges, an effort that has begun only recently (Gates, 2002). Second, since the absence of authority is not a permanent condition at the domestic level, the applicability of international relation theories such as neorealism is limited. Finally, a disconnect between theoretical arguments and empirical testing exists. While economic theories of civil war provide increasingly detailed accounts of individual, i.e. micro-level behavior, much theoretical testing uses states, i.e. macro-units, as the primary units of analysis.

This chapter identifies three distinct explanations of civil war onset. First, economic theories stress the importance of economic cost-benefit calculations or inequality for the onset of civil war. One set of explanations, based on rational-choice approaches, expects that civil war is the result of utility calculations, where actors weigh the opportunity cost of rebellion (Grossman, 1995; Hirschleifer, 1995; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Skaperdas, 2002). Empirical evidence confirms that countries with low economic development, weak state capacity, and abundant natural resources have increased probabilities of civil war (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Addison and Murshed, 2002; Buhaug and Gates, 2002; De Soysa, 2002). A second explanation argues that grievances caused by economic inequality result in feelings of deprivation and, in turn, violent mobilization (Gurr, 1970, 2000). Little

empirical support, however, has been generated for this argument (Sambanis, 2004b; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004).

Second, ethnic theories argue that while ethnicity functions as a bargaining and enforcement mechanism facilitating cooperation within groups, the absence of such a mechanism between different ethnic groups increases the probability of conflict (Horowitz, 1985; Gates, 2002; Caselli and Coleman II, 2006). Empirical evidence for a linear relationship between ethnic heterogeneity and civil war, however, is mixed (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). Researchers have developed three explanations to account for this inconsistency. First, Reynal-Querol argues that ethnic polarization rather than diversity in itself increases the probability of conflict. Secondly, authors have hypothesized a conditional relationship between ethnicity and conflict, where ethnic diversity becomes salient only when other factors increasing conflict propensities are present (Blimes, 2006). Finally, Sambanis (2001, 2004a) expects that a linear relationship between ethnicity and conflict holds only for identity wars, which are believed to be fundamentally different from non-identity civil wars.

Political explanations can be separated into three distinct categories. One argument emphasizes grievances and opportunity structures (Hegre et al., 2001; Gurr, 2000). States in the middle of the autocracy-democracy spectrum are expected to experience more grievances, and therefore, a greater likelihood of civil wars. In addition, regime change opens up a window of opportunity for rebellion and for this reason also increases the probability of fighting. Empirical studies have found support for the expected relationship between instability and civil war, yet are inconsistent on the effect of level of democracy (Fearon and Laitin, 2001; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Buhaug, 2006). A second explanation views civil war as a result of leaders' diversionary tactics (Snyder, 2000; Figuerdo and Weingast, 1999). In this argument, weakened leaders

manipulate people's fears by appealing to nationalism which in turn leads to violent conflict. While the motives of leaders cannot be subjected to empirical scrutiny, implications of this argument have found little empirical support (Chiozza and Goemans, 2003; Chiozza et al, 2006). Lastly, the security dilemma, prominent in international relations, has been applied to the domestic sphere (Posen, 1993; Walter, 1999). When domestic authority breaks down, uncertainty among actors triggers militarization and the occurrence of conflict. Such arguments, however, border on tautology as the collapse of the domestic equilibrium is a defining feature of any civil war. One would need to know more on the types of events that cause the breakdown of authority for this approach to be useful.

Table 1: Main Theoretical Arguments on Civil War Onset

| Theory | Argument | Authors | Empirical Evidence |
|---|---|---|---|
| Economic | 1. Civil war is the result of utility calculations – when the opportunity cost for rebellion is low, the probability of civil war increases. | Grossman (1995) Hirschleifer (1995) Collier and Hoeffler (2004) Fearon and Laitin (2003) Skaperdas (2002) | strong |
| | 2. Grievances such as economic inequality cause feelings of relative deprivation and increase the likelihood of civil war. | Gurr (1970, 2000) | weak |
| Ethnicity | Ethnicity functions as an enforcement mechanism within ethnic groups - the absence of such mechanisms between different groups leads to a higher probability of conflict. | Horowitz (1985) Gates (2002) Caselli and Coleman II (2006) | mixed |
| Political | 1. Political grievances and changes in the political opportunity structure result in a greater probability of civil war. | Gurr (1970, 2000) Gupta et al. (1993) Hegre et al. (2001) Fearon and Laitin (2003) | mixed |
| | 2. Threatened leaders appeal to nationalism and encourage violence to divert from their weakness and stay in power. | Snyder (2000) Figuerdo and Weingast (1999) | weak |
| | 3. Absent a central enforcement authority, groups are uncertain over their status and militarize to protect themselves. | Posen (1993) Walter (1999) | not tested |

In addition, a brief review assessed contributions in the comparative literature on social movements, revolutions, democratization, and elections and violence. With the partial exception of the study of revolutions, most research does not explicitly address the occurrence of violence.[17] Colomer's (2000) and Prezeworski's (1991) studies of democratization mention violence as one possible outcome of the transition process, but do not elaborate on the conditions for its occurrence. Research on elections and violence focuses primarily on post-conflict elections and is thus seemingly applicable to only a small set of cases (Wantchekon, 1999; Ellman and Wantchekon, 2000; Allison, 2006). In theories of revolution such as Skocpol's (1979), only cases experiencing widespread violence are included in the analysis. However, the in-depth nature of her argument combined with the narrow definition of revolution make it difficult to be extended to a large set of cases.

Economic theories of civil war and arguments stressing ethnicity are similar in the fact that they emphasize variables that change little or not at all over time. Variables such as resource wealth, the ethnic makeup of a state, relative poverty, or economic inequality exhibit little to no variation over time. While these factors may help us understand why some countries have a higher baseline probability of civil war as compared to others, they don't explain much about why a country moves from a stable political and economic system to war.[18] Civil wars, however, are dynamic events, and an explanation of civil war should take into account the occurrences triggering the use of force.

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[17] As mentioned earlier, the question of whether violence is a defining characteristic of revolution has arisen since the peaceful "revolutions" in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union challenged the conventional wisdom (Goldstone, 2001).

[18] Butler (2005) stresses this point in their social network analysis of the Nicaraguan civil war, but argue that the country-year nature of the datasets used is the root of the problem. Yet it seems possible to identify dynamic events and integrate them into a country-year format.

Political theories of civil war do a better job at identifying changes that result in a shift from peace to war.[19] Arguments on political opportunity structures specifically address the importance of change, arguing that changes in these structures (such as a regime change) represent discrete events that can trigger the use of force (Hegre et al., 2001). In a similar argument, Fearon and Laitin (2003) expect that political instability provides an opportunity for rebellion. Instability and regime change are emphasized repeatedly as the cause of domestic conflict, and empirical studies have shown strong and consistent support for these propositions (Hegre and Sambanis, 2006). While these arguments better explain war as the outcome of a dynamic, strategic process, two problems remain.

First, the processes of regime change and civil war may be endogenous. The occurrence of a regime change may already entail the use of force, rather than precede the actual outbreak of violence. Particularly problematic is the fact that most studies use the Polity project's data to identify instances of regime change or political instability (Marshall and Jaggers, 2005). Fearon and Laitin (2003), for example, use changes in Polity's composite democracy scores to indicate whether a regime change occurred. Included in these changes, however, are periods of "transition" and "interregnum", indicating a collapse of domestic authority. As Marshall and Jaggers (2005: 17) describe, "interregnum" is "most likely to occur during periods of internal war" and thus can hardly be seen as an exogenous cause of conflict. Second, Hegre et al. (2001) claim that regime change provides an opportunity for conflict, yet it seems that actual regime change indicates the endpoint of such opportunity, rather than the beginning.[20] The opportunity

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[19] Arguments on the level of grievances usually emphasize the high level of grievances present in semi-authoritarian regimes (Hegre et al., 2001). While a country's level of democracy shows greater variation than many of the variables emphasized in economic or ethnic explanations of civil war, many semi-authoritarian regimes have exhibited great stability in the past.

[20] Part of the problem may stem from confusion over what the term "regime change" in fact means. The empirical test used in Hegre et al. does not measure actual leadership change; rather, it measures fluctuation in democracy scores.

to challenge the regime should be greatest when the first signs of a loss in power for the incumbent regime appear, thus before the regime actually changes.

The argument developed in detail in the following chapter, though stressing the dynamic and strategic element of civil war as do other political theories, avoids both problems elaborated above. The explanation put forward here views civil war as the result of a commitment problem. Following Powell (2004), I expect that rapid shifts in the domestic distribution of power create a commitment problem and thus an increased probability of civil war. The comparative politics literature on regime change provides examples for such power shifts. Economic decline, the death of a leader, defeat in war, and changes in the international balance of power have been identified as instances triggering regime change (Geddes, 1999a; Colomer, 2000; Przeworski et al., 2000; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2001; Boix, 2003). By focusing on the effect of these shocks on civil war, I develop an argument that takes the dynamic and strategic nature of civil war seriously, but avoids the problems elaborated above. First, a focus on shocks, rather than regime change, steers clear of potential endogeneity problems. Coups and assassinations, for example, often entail violence, and thus cannot be seen as independent causes of civil war. Secondly, shocks to the incumbent government's power seem to be a more natural starting point for bargaining between government and opposition than actual regime change itself. I expect that opportunities for violence are greatest prior to the renegotiation of political power, not once authority has been handed over to a new government.

Placed squarely in the larger literature on commitment problems, this dissertation makes two contributions to existing research. First, it models leadership weakness as a commitment problem that can result in civil war in the domestic arena. Shocks to government capabilities represent a shift in the domestic distribution of power and thus can provide a valuable empirical

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referent for the commitment problems described in Powell (2004, 2006). This research identifies

economic decline, the death of a leader, defeat in war, and changes in the international balance of

power as events triggering regime weakness, and, in consequence, civil war. Second, while work

on commitment issues provides a compelling explanation of interstate or intrastate war

occurrence, it does not lay out the conditions under which actors can avoid such inefficiency

even when external conditions suggest otherwise. Although shocks to the government represent

large and rapid shifts in the distribution of power, nevertheless examples for peaceful transfers of

power exist. The subsequent theoretical chapter outlines the commitment problem during

leadership weakness and presents possible solutions.

**Chapter 3: Critical Events and the Commitment Problem**

In this chapter, I further develop how shocks to the domestic distribution of power can lead to commitment problems and, subsequently, civil war. The chapter proceeds as follows. A first section explores which cases are most pertinent for this analysis. The literature on regime transitions in comparative politics identifies critical events such as economic decline, international war defeat, the death of a dictator, and changes in the international balance of power as causes of regime breakdown. A second section elaborates when and how these critical events shift the domestic balance of power and trigger competition for power among relevant actors in society. While the weakened regime and opposition groups could gain from negotiating a settlement, they lack the ability to make credible commitments. This is because both actors have incentives to renege on agreements in the future, and these incentives hinder cooperation in the present. A third section investigates possible solutions to the commitment problem, expecting that (1) the organizational structure of regime and opposition and (2) the distance between actors influences actors' ability to credibly commit.

*Identifying Critical Events*

Following a shock or critical event that leads to a dramatic shift in the distribution of power, bargaining between actors can result in commitment problems (Fearon, 2004; Powell, 2006). More specifically, a shift in capabilities leads to bargaining between actors, and credibility problems obstruct the negotiation of peaceful agreements. The argument developed here expects that precisely these conditions arise when a critical event shifts the domestic balance of power. A shock to government capabilities weakens the current leadership and leads to bargaining over authority within the state. However, to translate this argument into a testable

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proposition, it is necessary to know more about the types of events constituting such shocks. What events represent such sudden changes in the domestic balance of power?

The breakdown of authoritarian and democratic regimes is triggered by critical events, or shocks. Colomer (2000), for example, points out that regime change is provoked by a significant crisis of the regime, thus modifying actors bargaining power and inducing them to develop new strategies of behavior. The literature identifies economic decline, international war defeat, the death of a dictator, and changes in the international balance of power serve as these shocks and can trigger regime change (O'Donnell, 1973; Geddes, 1999a; Colomer, 2000; Przeworski et al., 2000; Acemoglu and Robinson, 2001; Boix, 2003). For example, all transition specialists argue that economic decline increases the likelihood of authoritarian and democratic breakdown, and this expectation has been supported in quantitative analyses (Prezworski et al., 2000). Similarly, the death of a leader or defeat in an international conflict opens up space for a renegotiation of authority within the state, resulting in bargaining over the domestic distribution of power. Finally, changes in the international balance of power, such as a crisis in a foreign imperial power, will have comparable repercussions. During the period of 1985-1991, reforms in the Soviet Union promoted major changes in Eastern European satellite states and resulted in the eventual collapse of the USSR itself (Colomer, 2000).

While the extant research on regime collapse is not per se interested in the consequences these shocks have on bargaining inefficiency between political groups within society, it can help in locating the cases most relevant for the analysis here. The period following such shocks, preceding a potential handover of authority, bears the greatest potential for violence. This emphasis on the weakening of government authority is different from existing explanations of the relationship between political instability and conflict. Previous research has not paid clear

attention to timing issues, usually identifying actual regime change as the catalyst for conflict. Hegre et al. (2001), for example, argue that regime change increases the opportunity for conflict. In contrast, this research expects that opportunities for violence are greatest when a shock weakens government authority, thus prior to a renegotiation of political power.[21] The period preceding a transition to democracy or a reversal to authoritarianism is dominated by strategic interaction and bargaining and should be distinguished from later phases in the process. The relation of forces among actors will be much clearer once the initial transition period is over, and institutions will constrain possible interactions among actors.

The above review of the transition literature demonstrates clear parallels between the scenarios addressed by Powell (2006) and Fearon (2004) and the focus of this research. Similar to Powell's (2006) explanation of commitment problems arising between states due to power shifts, critical events change the distribution of power within states and open up space for bargaining. The following theoretical section elaborates in detail on the bargaining inefficiencies occurring in such situations.

### *The Two-Sided Commitment Problem*

When a critical event weakens the position of the incumbent government, challengers can compete for a redistribution of domestic authority. Actors will contend for a share of power, yet uncertainty over the prospective distribution of forces prevails, and opposition groups will

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[21] While the empirical test used in Hegre et al. (2001) can be reconciled to an extent with the focus on shocks in this paper, a disconnect between their theoretical argument and the empirical analysis persists. Hegre et al. claim that regime change presents an opportunity for violent mobilization. It is likely, however, that the opportunity for mobilization would be greatest when the regime's weakness first becomes apparent, not once a new regime has taken power. To operationalize the concept of regime change, the authors create a variable that measures fluctuations in polity scores. While such fluctuations may correspond to a concept such as political instability more broadly, it is doubtful that it measures actual regime change.

attempt to secure future influence. Immediately following a shock to government capabilities, at least two groups compete for a piece of the domestic pie.[22]

However, the competing parties cannot anticipate the outcome of the bargaining process, and the relevant actors do not know *ex ante* whether agreements on sharing power can be negotiated. The incumbent regime would like to protect its vital interests and future access to power, but has to offer some benefits to challengers in order to buy off a potential rebellion. The government thus has incentives to make concessions following a weakening in its power, yet such commitments seem incredible given its earlier behavior.[23] If the destabilized regime was unwilling to transfer power in the past, how can the opposition know whether it is serious about transferring authority, or is simply attempting to provide temporary buyoffs? Opponents of the regime may worry that the regime's offers are merely an attempt to appease opposition groups, which will then be followed by the re-establishment of hegemonic control once the regime recovers from its weakness. The incumbent government faces a credibility problem, being unable to commit to outcomes it has tried to avert in the past.

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[22] It is assumed here that at least one group within society will challenge the current leadership in situations of regime weakness. While there may be cases in which no challengers are present, one should expect that individuals within the elite would take advantage of the leadership's weakness. The empirical literature on the relationship between regime change and the probability of violence confirms this suggestion, indicating a positive and significant relationship between instability and rebellion using different operationalizations of the concepts (Tarrow, 1998; Hegre et al., 2001; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Zanger, 2000). Finally, the common definition of politics as the struggle of groups for authority also seems to lend some credibility to the assumed existence of a challenger to state authority.

[23] Why would leaders - at least in authoritarian regimes - not use repression rather than offer concessions? First, repression is likely a constant in authoritarian regimes. When faced with a major challenge to their leadership, dictators cannot simply pursue the same strategy, and need to offer some benefits or perks to opposition groups. Second, research suggests that the strategies of concession and repression are not mutually exclusive, and are often used simultaneously. Franklin (2006) points out that theorists use the same explanatory variables to explain both phenomena. Rasler's (1996) analysis of the Iranian revolution shows how the Shah and his government used both concessions and repression as a response to popular mobilization. Importantly, the combined use of repression and concession likely exacerbates the credibility problems emphasized in this research. How could the opposition trust that the government's offers are sincere when it also arrests and jails its followers? Finally, while leaders may be tempted to apply particularly harsh repression when faced with a challenge to their power, empirical evidence shows that this strategy usually backfires. Schatzman (2005) demonstrates that the use of repression increases the probability of violent rebellion. Similarly, Francisco's (2005) analysis of government massacres indicates that harsh repression results in backlash mobilization, and thus contributes to the eventual demise of dictators.

A brief discussion of events during Marcos' dictatorship in the Philippines illustrates this scenario. Following the 1972 imposition of martial law, Marcos came under increasing pressure to grant authority to the Muslim independence movement that had emerged in the region of Mindanao. Faced with an open rebellion by the armed wing of the insurgent movement, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Marcos administration attempted to negotiate an autonomy agreement with the MNLF (May, 2002). While the initial agreement was signed by both parties, the MNLF pulled out of talks when negotiations stalled over the implementation of concessions by the Marcos regime. The insurgents were wary of the government's true willingness to implement the terms of the agreement, essentially being "forced to rely on Marcos to agree to and help implement an arrangement that was contradictory to the essence of his government." MNLF leaders "had to trust him (Marcos) to give them governing powers," yet his government lacked the ability to establish such credibility, as Marcos had incentives to renege on the terms of the agreement (Noble, 1981: 1104). When Marcos subsequently announced his decision to hold a plebiscite over autonomy in the proposed region, the MNLF boycotted the referendum and resumed its armed insurrection (May, 2002). While admittedly anecdotal, this example serves to illustrate the fundamental problem encountered by weakened regimes and their opponents. Strained by increasingly open opposition to his regime, Marcos attempted to buy off a rebellion through concessions, yet these attempts were ultimately rejected as incredible by the insurgent movement.

In addition to the commitment problems encountered by the government, a similar situation arises for the opposition. Based on its expectation to be more powerful in the future, the opposition has an incentive to renege on agreements in order to itself gain hegemonic control of the state. Emboldened by the current weakness in regime capabilities, opposition movements will

attempt to secure power to enact favorable policies and programs. While opposition groups would like to accept concessions offered by the government, they can use this increased bargaining power by reneging on a settlement in later interactions with the government. The weakened regime will anticipate this behavior, and thus be increasingly anxious to maintain its influence. Governments, in consequence, may be reluctant to transfer power, fearing that such transfers may empower their opponents to make even greater demands in the future (Fearon, 2004: 298 fn.43).

Georgia's experience following its independence from the Soviet Union can serve as an example for this situation. Included as part of the new Georgian republic were the three regions Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Abjaria, and all three regions were able to preserve autonomy rights in Georgia's first elected government (Cornell, 2002). When Georgia's first elected President Zviad Gamsakhurdia was ousted in a coup d'état in 1992, however, activists in Abkhazia and South Ossetia saw an opportunity to push for even greater self-determination. In the summer of 1992, Abkhaz militants took over the region's capital and declared its formal independence from Georgia. This was followed by military action of Georgian forces, and a yearlong civil war between government and separatists ensued (Jones, 1997). This brief discussion of Georgia's post-independence history shows that during times of government weakness, challengers can feel strengthened and place ever-increasing demands on a destabilized leadership. In the Georgian case, the granting of autonomy rights did not satisfy the requests of an emerging separatist movement. The Abkhaz' declaration of independence led to the government's use of force as an attempt to hold on to its power and defuse future challenges to its power. In other words, Georgia's leadership was concerned that any additional concessions

would lead to further demands by the separatist movements, ultimately threatening the territorial integrity of the newly independent state.

The commitment problem encountered during leadership weakness, therefore, is a two-sided one. Both government and opposition groups suffer from credibility problems, which hinder their capacity to negotiate agreements. Lacking the ability to fashion credible commitments, both the incumbent regime and the opposition have the option to achieve their preferred outcome through the use of force (Powell, 2004). The government may use military force in an attempt to hold on to power and to avoid increasing demands by the opposition in the future. The opposition, on the other hand, could choose violence because offers by the weakened regime are not considered sincere. The use of force, however, is inefficient because it is costly, uses resources, and destroys some of the flow of benefits available (Fearon, 1995, 2004; Powell, 2004, 2006). To avoid such inefficiency, actors need to make credible guarantees to share power in the future. They are unable to do so since they have incentives to renege on agreements once they recover from temporary weakness (for the government) or achieve greater strength (for the opposition). It is therefore expected that the commitment problems caused by shocks to government capabilities increase the probability of civil conflict.

$H_1$: *A shock to government authority increases the probability of civil war.*

### *Making Credible Commitments*

Under what circumstances can actors overcome the credibility problems elaborated in the preceding section? The main emphasis will be put on the importance of actors' institutional structure and the distance between them in the bargaining process.

Although commitment problems hamper actors' ability to fashion mutually enforceable agreements during leadership weakness, the empirical record presents instances of bargaining after shocks in which actors avoided resorting to arms and succeeded in establishing regimes with mechanisms for power sharing.[24] In the recent transitions in Central and Eastern Europe, Gorbachev's shift to a policy of non-intervention into the internal affairs of its Warsaw Pact allies triggered intense bargaining between the old elite and opposition forces in the satellite states. The peaceful outcome of this process shows that actors can devise strategies that allow them to cooperate and transition without the use of force. Communist elites discussed the terms of the power transfer with members of the opposition at so-called "round tables" (Welsh, 1994). These negotiations led to the establishment of compromises acceptable to both sides, and the redistribution of power was settled peacefully. Similarly, economic decline and increasing international pressure forced the South African apartheid regime to enter negotiations with opposition groups in the late 1980s. Despite the occurrence of a shock that could trigger the use of force, the country subsequently went through a largely peaceful transition with built-in mechanisms of power sharing, resulting in its first democratic elections in 1994. This outcome was even more surprising given that the country was long thought to be home to intractable political conflicts (Jung et al., 2005).

Yet little is known on how political leaders can enhance their credibility and reduce the potential for violence following a shock to their authority. I develop an argument that specifies how (1) the institutional structure of government and opposition groups and (2) the distance between them affect their ability to commit credibly to peaceful agreements.[25]

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[24] The occurrence of a shock does not necessarily lead to regime change, but theoretical expectations and empirical evidence suggest a strong relationship between both concepts (Przeworski et al., 2000).

[25] A possible objection is that neither the incumbent regime nor opposition groups may have a true interest in sharing power. While it is certainly true that bargaining may result in the establishment of an authoritarian regime,

### *Bargaining for Authority*

Following the weakening of domestic authority at the center, government and opposition groups compete for a favorable distribution of power. While cooperation and power-sharing may be mutually advantageous and avoid costly conflict, the use of military force remains on the bargaining table since both actors suffer from credibility problems. Government leaders may expect to regain their strength in the future and hence have incentives to renege on temporary concessions to the opposition. Equally, the opposition may hope to be more powerful, making the government fearful of attempts to achieve control of the state.

What factors are expected to explain variation in actors' commitment abilities in the bargaining process? First, it is argued that the institutional structure of incumbent regimes impacts elites' ability to negotiate peaceful settlements. Leaders of regimes with low expectations of political survival in future governments are hypothesized to suffer from greater credibility problems. Second, the credibility of opposition movements will be evaluated according to the cohesiveness of their organization. Groups that lack clear, cohesive organizations will have difficulty to maintain control over radical elements, and should therefore be less able to guarantee compliance. Finally, the distance between government and opposition actors will also influence actors' commitment abilities. Actors that are far apart from each other (because of ethnic, religious, ideological, or economic differences) will have greater difficulty overcoming commitment problems than groups that lack such contentious variation. Solutions to the commitment problem must therefore focus on the organizational structure of government and the opposition and on the distance between relevant actors.

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one cannot assume an outcome of one or another type of regime *ex ante*. In addition, a shock implies that there is at least temporary uncertainty over the future distribution of power, where neither actor can immediately prevail. A weakened regime can attempt to buy off opponents with benefits or perks and establish a broadened dictatorship, but cannot simply seize power without bargaining (Przeworski, 1991).

*Leadership Type*

The institutional structure of the regime in power will influence whether a weakened government can negotiate a peaceful outcome in the bargaining process. The institutional differences between democratic and non-democratic regimes are well established in the literature. Yet, in addition to the distinction between these two basic institutional types, important variations can be found within authoritarian regimes, and these variations will be evaluated here in regard to actors' ability to make credible commitments. Non-democratic regimes differ significantly in decision making procedures, access to political office, leadership choice and succession mechanisms, as well as in their degree of institutionalization. More refined typologies of authoritarian regimes are now available, and different incentives inherent in these different types have been identified (Geddes, 1999a, b; Slater, 2003; Ulfelder, 2005; Lai and Slater, 2006; Weeks, 2008).

The elite's expectation of political survival in future regimes is expected to be the crucial factor influencing its commitment abilities. Elites that cannot anticipate continued political influence will suffer from greater credibility problems as they have more to lose in a handover of power. Regimes in which the fate of the ruling elite is closely tied to the fate of the leader will feel threatened by a potential transition and can be ousted only with the use of force.

Military and personal regimes depend on a relatively small group of supporters that receive particularistic benefits in exchange for enforcement (Geddes, 1999a). Regimes relying on narrow segments of the population will, on average, face greater difficulty in making credible commitments to power-sharing. This is because elites maintain control through repressive tactics rather than co-optation and therefore cannot expect to receive political support from significant parts of society once opposition groups demand a share of power. They feel threatened by

challenges to power, as they cannot expect to survive politically in a new regime and are therefore more likely to block a takeover with force. Military and personalist regimes have little to offer when attempting to negotiate concessions with opposition groups, since their hold on power is based on the exclusion of the vast majority of the population.

These two types of authoritarian regimes, therefore, feature winning coalitions that are much smaller than single-party or democratic regimes (Bueno de Mesquita, et al. 2003). Accordingly, elites feel highly threatened when a crisis weakens their grip on power, and fear punishment in the case of a regime transition. Haggard and Kaufmann (1995), for example, argue that military regimes in crisis situations have greater difficulty negotiating favorable exit terms than single-party regimes. Similarly, since personalist dictatorships "exclude all but a tiny proportion of elites from sharing the fruits of power" they are unable to offer credible concessions when faced with domestic pressure (Goldstone, 2001: 149). Bratton and Van De Walle (1997: 84) point out that personal dictators "are unlikely to initiate political liberalization or relinquish power without a struggle, they have to be forced out". Their inability to credibly share power, thus, increases the probability of armed conflict.

Military and personalist regimes further tend to be less institutionalized than single-party and democratic regimes, not having developed mechanisms to penetrate large parts of society (Lai and Slater, 2006). This limitation reduces their chances for participation in future governments, since their organizations cannot easily be transformed into political parties. When an international event, economic crisis, or war defeat forces personalist or military regimes to negotiate with the opposition, they will have little prospect of maintaining even partial control in

the future and will attempt to thwart the transition process with violence. Concessions promised by personalist and military leaders will therefore not be credible. [26]

Single-party regimes differ from military and personalist regimes in that they incorporate significant segments of society into the regime through the party organization. In addition, the party ventures into many areas of social life, allowing for the inclusion of large parts of the population. Through the party organization, leadership successfully co-opts and controls social groups. The single-party regime in Kenya, for example, uses "the lure of state jobs to buy off opposition politicians" (Mwenda, 2003). In the case of an economic or political crisis, dominant party regimes can adapt by broadening the base of their regimes without giving up control.[27] Elites in such regimes can make use of the party organization to adjust to changing external circumstances. The long-ruling Mexican Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), as Haggard and Kaufman (1995: 267) describe, could draw on "the organizational resources available through the PRI to initiate wide-ranging economic adjustments".

When single-party regimes are unable to withstand the pressure to liberalize, officials can negotiate a transition to a regime with shared powers, rather than risking a costly military contest. As Geddes (1999a: 141) points out, elites in single-party regimes will be inclined to negotiate when facing pressure as they can "expect life as they know it to continue after liberalization or even regime change". Leaders in dominant party regimes realize that they are

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[26] Findings in the literature on authoritarian regimes support this argument. Research shows that personal and military regimes face greater insecurity in their leadership tenure, having a median duration of 17.3 years (personal) and 11.6 years (military), compared to 32.6 years for single-party regimes (Ulfelder 2005: 320). Furthermore, leaders of military and personal regimes are much more likely to experience punishments (such as exile, prosecution, or death) following their tenure than other leaders, which is supported empirically in the analyses below. These findings conform to the expectation posited here.

[27] This is not to say that military and personalist dictators will not attempt to buy off opponents. However, the institutional logic of their regimes greatly reduces their ability to do so. First, personalist leaders must defend themselves from potential rivals, and extending their circle of supporters thus threatens their hold on power. Geddes (1999a: 132) points out that personalist dictators must constantly eliminate the most able and ambitious potential successors. Second, the military as a group is much less permeable than a dominant party, and thus could only offer credible concessions to challengers who are already members of the military.

better off to negotiate and secure favorable exit terms rather than risking punishment. Furthermore, single-party regimes possess the political organization necessary for contestation and can therefore expect to secure a political future under a regime with shared powers at least for the short term. Post-Communist parties in Central and Eastern Europe, for example, participated quite successfully in democratic elections. The former Communist Party of the German Republic (PDS), for example, garnered 19% of the vote in the Eastern part of Germany in the 1994 elections (Buchstein, 1995).

Finally, it is necessary to consider the commitment abilities of democratic leaders in the case of an economic or political shock. Democracies have constitutional or informal mechanisms to respond to national crises that bypass normal legislative procedures. In addition, executives in democratic regimes can choose from routine forms of legislative authority to react to critical events. In presidential systems, the executive can issue vetoes, introduce legislation, and pronounce decrees subject to congressional approval. Legislatures can use impeachment to remove the executive. Prime ministers in parliamentary systems can dismiss parliaments and call for new elections, and parliaments are able to issue votes of no confidence. Leaders in consolidated democracies, therefore, can choose from a variety of tools when faced with challenges to their regime. In addition, reforms undertaken by democratic leaders are credible as the commitment problem is resolved through repeated elections. Incumbents turn over power to their challengers after losing elections, and stable expectations over such power transfers exist.[28] One may argue that newly democratic states are more susceptible to breakdown when faced with a shock to its capabilities (Linz, 1978). Yet, given that democratic leaders in new democracies have already committed to sharing powers with political opponents, they should suffer from

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[28] Supporting this intuition, Gates et al. (2006) find that democracies are significantly more stable than both authoritarian and inconsistent regimes.

fewer credibility problems than other types of regimes. Consistent with this notion, Linz (1978; 56-57) points out that violence rarely plays a role in the breakdown of democratic regimes.[29] Democratic leaders' behavior should therefore be similar to the expectation developed for single-party regimes.

To conclude, I expect that personalist and military leaders suffer from greater credibility problems than single-party or democratic rulers, problems which in turn increase the probability of civil war.

> $H_2$: *Following a shock to government authority, states with personalist and military regimes are more likely to experience civil war than single-party or democratic regimes.*

### *The Cohesiveness of Opposition Actors*

Opposition groups also encounter credibility problems in situations of leadership weakness. Even when a threatened regime is willing to negotiate, it may fear that granting concessions could result in greater opposition demands in the future or even hegemonic control by the opposition. As pointed out in the initial discussion of Georgia's experience since independence, fear of ever-increasing demands by opposition groups can result in the use of military force by the threatened regime. The opposition, therefore, must find ways to signal credibly its willingness to negotiate, and to deflect the government's fears over future demands or a takeover of control.

Little systematic research on opposition groups in authoritarian regimes and emergent democracies exists (Lawson, 1993). Much of the existing literature on opposition movements and parties focuses on consolidated democracies. This literature, however, neglects the fact that

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[29] Hitler, for example, came to power through legitimate elections. While violence was central to Hitler's maintenance of political authority, the Nazi Party secured 33 percent of the vote in 1932, and President Hindenburg legally selected Hitler as Chancellor in 1933 (Linz, 1978: 56).

such groups exist and operate in noncompetitive regimes. While in some regimes these groups function clandestinely and are excluded from the political process, other authoritarian regimes allow for the presence of legal opposition parties. Critical for this analysis is the credibility of opposition groups during government weakness. Which types of movements will be able to credibly signal their commitment to cooperation with the incumbent regime?

It is argued here that the organizational structure of opposition groups will affect their ability to cooperate when the government is weakened. Groups with cohesive, developed organizational structures are expected to signal more credibly their commitment to a regime with shared powers.[30] This is because opposition groups are often divided into moderate and radical challengers, and groups without developed organizational structures cannot limit radicals' demands (Kalyvas, 2000; Fearon and Laitin, 1996). Lacking the institutional strength to punish defectors, weakly organized groups cannot deflect the regime's fear of greater demands in the future. Groups without clear leadership or a cohesive organization cannot signal resolve to a negotiated settlement, thus hindering the prospect for cooperation (Kalyvas, 2000). In a comparison of Belgium's and Algeria's democratization, Kalyvas (2000) finds that the presence of a hierarchical, centralized challenger party in Belgium deflected fears of a radical takeover of the old regime. Conversely, Islam's decentralized, vertical organizational structure led to competition between radical and moderate forces within the opposition during Algeria's short experiment with democracy in the early 1990s. Quandt (1998) points to leadership struggles within the Islamist movement, where the rhetoric of Islamist leader Ben Hadj "seemed considerably more extreme than Madani's" (Quandt, 1998: 58). Fearful that the opposition

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[30] The focus on the cohesiveness and organizational strength of opposition creates obvious measurement problems, especially for quantitative analysis. Unorganized groups lacking a strong party organization are expected to be less credible, but the presence of such groups will be difficult to measure in large-N analysis. These measurement problems will be discussed in more detail below.

movement would renege on its commitment to a democratic regime and establish an Islamist state, the military canceled election results and took up arms against the Islamists.

This intuition is consistent with insights from the study of ethnic conflict, where only strong, hierarchical organizations that can effectively police extremists succeed in inducing compromise for cooperation (Fearon and Laitin, 1996). Pointing to the relative prevalence of interethnic cooperation, Fearon and Laitin (1996) argue that the organizational structure of groups plays a crucial role for the outbreak of conflict. Groups with dense social networks and interactions allow for in-group policing, and radicals threatening interethnic cooperation can be identified and sanctioned (Fearon and Laitin, 1996: 719). Yet when institutional arrangements allowing for in-group policing are absent, defection can lead to the breakdown of cooperation in the form of spiraling violence.

In addition to the organizational structures emphasized above, links to existing social institutions can further enhance the credibility of opposition movements. Ties to established institutions such as churches or unions make compromise more likely as they provide additional credibility and legitimacy to a movement.[31] Such linkages can signal to the government that moderates are in control, as existing institutions tend to ally with forces that will maximize their political impact (Kalyvas, 2000: 391).

The Polish Solidarity movement, for example, had a strategic partnership with the Catholic Church, which lent legitimacy to the movement (Meardi, 2005). Collaboration with the Catholic Church, a hierarchical, conservative, and risk-averse institution, signaled that moderate

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[31] A possible objection is that the effect of such linkages will depend upon the nature of the respective institution. North's work on institutional stability, however, suggests that institutions are generally status-quo oriented. Consequently, it is unlikely that preexisting social organizations would establish linkages with extremist groups. In addition, the appeal of radical groups stems at least in part from marketing themselves as "anti-establishment" alternatives to existing, more moderate groups and organizations. For example, research by Adams et al. (2006) shows that extremist parties that moderated their positions are punished at the polls. Therefore, it is likely that links to established institutions function as a signal of moderation.

forces were in control, and thus helped to reduce Communists' fears of radical demands. Conversely, opposition groups lacking ties to other institutions, such as the Islamist movement in Algeria's regime transition, cannot convincingly commit to power-sharing and democracy (Kalyvas, 2000). Islam's structure is "loose and decentralized with no clergy, and religious discourses and idioms compete on several levels" (Kalyvas, 2000: 389). The movement failed to establish linkages to preexisting social institutions and could not convince the regime that moderates were in control. Fearing an Islamist takeover of the state, the military canceled election results and the country descended into a long civil war. An analysis of social movements in Israel, South Africa, and Northern Ireland by Meyer (2004) comes to a similar conclusion. The author finds that groups considering contact with existing institutions as "neither feasible nor desirable" were more likely to engage in violent protest activity (Meyer, 2004: 177).

Cohesive opposition groups with ties to existing organizations, therefore, are expected to be able to make credible commitments, and these characteristics consequently reduce the probability of civil war.

*$H_3$: Following a shock to government authority, states with cohesive, organized opposition groups are less likely to experience civil war.*

While the above discussion concentrated on the independent influence of government and opposition structures on the incidence of civil war, different institutional configurations will likely result in different conflict propensities. If a regime that is unable to commit (such as a personal dictatorship) encounters a cohesive and unified opposition, its promises to grant concessions will not be deemed credible, and the probability of peaceful resolution decreases. A similar scenario ensues when a weakened regime that could make credible commitments faces an

opposition group lacking clear authority structures. While the leadership could credibly devolve authority, it will not do so out of fear of reneging by the opposition, and either actor may choose violence to compel an opponent to its preferred outcome.

Furthermore, it is easily conceivable that variation in the institutional structure of government and opposition groups can result in a number of outcomes apart from the war and peace dichotomy emphasized here. Civil wars, in the end, are rare events, and the absence of war does not convey a uniformity of outcomes. Democracies, for example, will likely respond with policy change and reform when experiencing economic crises or other shock events, whereas single-party leaders may choose repression. Since the focus on civil wars does not allow for such distinctions, more fine-grained distinctions should be developed in future research. Highlighting civil wars, however, restricts the focus to the most violent, costly, and destructive of possible outcomes and therefore seems worthwhile in its own right.

### *The Distance between Government and Opposition*

The discussion of the government's and the opposition's institutional structure emphasizes actor-specific elements that affect their ability to commit credibly. It thus neglects the fact that divergence in actors' preferences may also impact the bargaining process. When government and opposition groups have widely different preferences over what types of agreements are acceptable, bargaining can break down because the range of possible negotiated outcomes is too small.[32] In the domestic arena, divergent preferences may arise from ethnic, religious, ideological, or economic differences between the relevant actors.

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[32] One may argue that divergent preferences can preclude bargaining if no area of overlap between actors' win-sets exists. In the past, Fearon (1995) has suggested that conflict over indivisible goods can lead to such a scenario. Powell (2006: 171), however, argues that the costliness of fighting ensures that a bargaining range exists even if the dispute concerns an indivisible issue. In addition, Schelling (1960, 1966) points out that much bargaining is implicit.

Putnam's (1988) work on win-sets makes a similar point in the area of international political economy. He expects that the size of negotiators' win-sets (the range of possible negotiating outcomes) and the areas of overlap between these win-sets influence the likelihood of an agreement. When there is no overlap between negotiators' win-sets, bargaining breaks down as no acceptable agreements can be found. Applying this argument to the domestic arena, societies with greater differences are less likely to have overlapping win-sets. If government and opposition exhibit greater distance due to ethnic or other differences, acceptable agreements may not exist.[33]

The role of competing preferences in the occurrence of violence is stressed in research in the area of regime change and civil war. Examining different actor constellations during a transition to democracy, Przeworski (1991: 83-87) argues that conflicting preferences over the organization of political life can result in bargaining breakdown, and that may mean civil war. If actors are diametrically opposed on what type of institutional system should be adopted, no win-set exists, and cooperation becomes impossible. Similarly, Hirschleifer (1995) notes that parties' divergent preferences can develop into opportunities for civil war. In this scenario, contrary preferences reduce the bargaining range, and actors choose conflict when it is expected to be more lucrative than peace (Hirschleifer, 1995, Sambanis, 2002). Yet largely unanswered remains the question of what types of actors suffer from such opposed preferences.

Ethnicity is suggested as a possible cause of civil war in much of the literature.[34] While shared ethnic identity provides a mechanism for trust and enables cooperation for members of an

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Tacit bargaining, therefore, may have occurred in cases of negotiation failure that are claimed to stem from indivisible issues.

[33] When win-sets do overlap, smaller areas of overlap do not necessarily indicate that agreements are more difficult to achieve. If win-sets, for example, intersect in a single point, negotiators should immediately settle on the single possible agreement. If the area of overlap is small, a negotiator with a small win-set may in fact experience a bargaining advantage, as the actor with the larger win-set can be "pushed around" to accept an agreement favoring his opponent (Putnam, 1988: 440).

[34] See Sambanis (2002) for an overview.

ethnic group, the presence of ethnic divisions can complicate collaboration across different

ethnic groups (Sambanis, 2002). Scholars disagree on whether ethnic fragmentation,

polarization, or dominance is the appropriate operationalization of the concept. Some authors

argue that ethnic fractionalization should be positively related to conflict, claiming that the

presence of multiple small groups increases the probability of secessionist movements

(Horowitz, 1985; Buhaug, 2006). Others speculate that countries with ethnically dominant or

polarized groups are at the greatest risk of violent domestic conflict (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004;

Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, 2005). Societies dominated by two large groups rather than many

diverse ones are more prone to violent rebellion, since the coordination costs of rebellion are

smaller. Empirical results on the relationship between ethnicity and civil war are inconsistent,

with results varying across different operationalizations of the key concepts (Hegre and

Sambanis, 2006).

The effect of ethnic differences on commitment ability is of concern here. When

domestic authority is weakened in countries with large numbers of ethnic groups, compromise

may be more difficult to achieve since government and opposition groups will likely split across

ethnic lines. Ethnicity works as one possible source for diverging preferences among actors,

which in consequence limits the bargaining range. If members of one group see themselves as far

apart or polarized from others, a commitment to negotiation becomes less likely, increasing the

probability of conflict. Political instability also helps explain why ethnic diversity has divergent

effects on conflict propensities. As Fearon and Laitin (1996) point out, many ethnic groups

coexist peacefully for extended periods, yet at times conflict breaks out and quickly spirals out of

control. As long as the institutional equilibrium is stable, ethnic differences should not result in

the use of force, yet when the renegotiation of authority becomes feasible, such differences can exacerbate the commitment problem present during leadership weakness.[35]

Apart from ethnic differences, ideological and economic differences also may generate preference divergence, and subsequently civil war. Yet, as Gates (2002: 122) points out, ethnic differences should be expected to present a more salient cleavage, as ethnicity is difficult to change and therefore unlikely to result in significant group defections. Furthermore, empirical studies to this date have not confirmed a significant effect of ideological distance or inequality on the probability of civil war (Sambanis, 2004b).[36] For the theoretical and empirical reasons laid out above, I therefore focus on ethnic distance as one possible source of preference divergence. Ethnic differences, I hypothesize, will increase commitment problems between the relevant actors during regime change and, in consequence, the risk of civil war.

$H_4$: *Following a shock to government authority, states with high ethnic fractionalization are more likely to experience civil war.*

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[35] As a corollary, high ethnic fractionalization may also impact the cohesiveness of opposition actors. During regime weakness, groups in such societies will find it more difficult to make credible commitments as the presence of many small groups makes it difficult to form a cohesive opposition with clear leadership.

[36] Sambanis (2004b) points out that one reason for the non-finding regarding economic inequality may be that it is related to the probability of political instability, which has been shown to increase the risk of civil war.

Table 2: Summary of Hypotheses

| Concept | Associated Hypothesis | Expectation | Expected Direction |
|---|---|---|---|
| Leadership Weakness | Hypothesis 1 | A shock to government authority increases the probability of civil war. | + |
| Leadership Type | Hypothesis 2 | Following a shock to government authority, states with personalist and military regimes are more likely to experience civil war than single-party or democratic regimes. | + |
| Opposition Cohesion | Hypothesis 3 | Following a shock to government authority, states with cohesive, organized opposition groups are less likely to experience civil war. | - |
| Ethnic Distance | Hypothesis 4 | Following a shock to government authority, states with high ethnic fractionalization are more likely to experience civil war. | + |

**Chapter 4: Empirical Test I: Critical Events and the Threat of Civil conflict**

In the preceding chapter, I argued that shocks to government capabilities create a commitment problem for relevant actors within the state. I then focused on potential solutions to such credibility problems by emphasizing the organizational structure of actors and the distance between them. This chapter tests the theoretical arguments against data on civil conflicts and civil conflicts for the 1960-2004 time period. The analysis aims to answer two questions: First, do critical events such as economic crisis, the death of a leader, or defeat in war increase the probability of civil conflict, as outlined in the theoretical section? Second, do the factors put forward to alleviate the commitment problem influence the likelihood of civil conflict as hypothesized?

This chapter proceeds in five parts. The first part outlines the structure of the dataset used to test the empirical expectations. In the second part, I briefly summarize the empirical findings to be presented in the subsequent section. The next two parts present empirical results for the different statistical models. Each of these parts includes a discussion of the statistical methodology, the operationalization of variables, and empirical results. The first part analyzes whether shocks in fact increase the probability of civil conflict. In the subsequent part, a selection model is constructed to investigate the effect of leadership type, opposition cohesion, and the distance between actors on actors' commitment abilities. A final section summarizes results and gives a short preview of the next chapter.

*Data*

Goemans et al.'s (2006) data base on political leaders is used to create a dataset for testing the hypotheses outlined in the previous chapter.[37] In these data, leaders, rather than countries, are the primary unit of analysis. This choice was made for two reasons. First, a growing body of research emphasizes how leaders, not states, are the primary actors in international politics (Chiozza and Goemans, 2003, 2004a, b; Enterline and Gleditsch, 2000, Bueno de Mesquita and Siverson, 1995). Decisions in international relations are made by government leaders, not states, and rates of leadership survival differ across regimes. Second, using states rather than leaders would significantly reduce the number of cases available for the analysis, since countries can have multiple leaders who hold office during the same year. This would lead to the exclusion of cases in which leaders experienced political instability or challenges to their authority, which are the most important observations for the substantive focus of this analysis. The unit of analysis in this dataset is the leader-year, including one observation for each leader and year for the 1960-2004 period. The first hypothesis, investigating the basic relationship between shocks to the government and civil conflict, is tested using a dataset for all leader-years. The final three hypotheses, analyzing solutions to the commitment problem for weakened leadership and opposition, are tested on data including only cases that experienced political instability.

*Summary of Findings*

The empirical findings confirm the hypotheses outlined in the theoretical section. First, shocks increase the probability of civil conflict, lending support to the expectation that actors suffer from commitment problems when faced with a weakening of government authority.

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[37] Data are available online at http://mail.rochester.edu/%7Ehgoemans/data.htm. Version 2.5 is used here.

Critical events such as economic decline, defeat in interstate war, and the end of the Cold War represent sudden shifts in power, resulting in commitment problems for government and opposition. All three types of events significantly increase the probability of civil conflict, confirming the first hypothesis. Second, solutions to the commitment problem outlined in the previous chapter are corroborated. Hypotheses 2 and 3 stated that the organizational structure of leadership and opposition will influence actors' commitment abilities. As laid out in hypothesis 2, personalist and military regimes are more likely to experience civil conflict after a weakening of government authority. The expected effect of the cohesiveness of opposition groups is also confirmed in the statistical analysis. I show that states with cohesive and organized opposition groups have a lower probability of experiencing violence following critical events. The fourth hypothesis argued that greater distance between actors reduces the bargaining range, and in consequence increases the probability of civil conflict. Findings show that greater ethnic heterogeneity does in fact result in a greater risk of violence. Finally, a Heckman selection model is used to account for potential selection effects between factors influencing the probability of a shock and the probability of civil conflict respectively. Results indicate a correlation of the disturbance terms, thus confirming the selection model as an appropriate modeling choice.

### A Probit Model of Critical Events and Civil Conflict

*Methodology*

The first hypothesis argues that leadership weakness increases the probability of civil conflict as a result of the commitment problem. To test this hypothesis, data on all leader-years for the 1960-2004 time period are included in the analysis, resulting in more than 7,700

observations.[38] Probit analysis is used to investigate the relationship between leadership

weakness and civil conflict. Because of the binary nature of the dependent variable, civil conflict

onset, probit analysis is an appropriate estimation method.

*Dependent Variable*

The onset of civil conflict is the dependent variable in the probit model. Entry dates for

leaders are available in Goemans et al.'s (2006) data base on political leaders. Data on civil

conflict onset come from the Uppsala Armed Conflict Project and are described in Gleditsch et

al. (2002).[39] Armed conflict is defined as "a contested incompatibility which concerns

government or territory or both where the use of armed force between two parties results in at

least 25 battle-related deaths. Of these two parties, at least one is the government of a state"

(Gleditsch et al., 2002: 619). The Uppsala dataset on armed internal conflict uses a lower

threshold, 25 battle-deaths per year, than the Correlates of War (COW) project, which specifies

that a civil conflict must involve 1,000 battle deaths in a single year (Sarkees, 2000: 129).  While

the data also provide information on interstate conflicts, I only include internal armed conflicts

and internationalized internal armed conflicts in this variable. The civil conflict onset variable is

dichotomous and coded 1 for years with an onset of internal armed conflict, 0 otherwise.

I believe that a lower threshold on battle-deaths is useful for several reasons. First, a low

threshold reduces endogeneity problems. A large body of research highlights the effect of

economic conditions on the probability of civil conflict. Civil conflict, however, has also been

shown to negatively impact economic growth. Using a high battle-death threshold, therefore,

runs the risk of demonstrating the negative effects of civil conflict on economic development,

since fighting may have started long before a conflict reaches 1,000 battle-deaths. The argument

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[38] The number of cases in the probit model is smaller because of missing data in some of the independent variables.
[39] Data are available at http://new.prio.no/CSCW-Datasets/Data-on-Armed-Conflict/UppsalaPRIO-Armed-Conflicts-Dataset.

developed here expects that critical events such as economic decline increase the potential for civil conflict. It is important to avoid the possibility that these shocks are the result of civil conflicts, and a lower battle-death threshold is therefore more appropriate. Second, a lower battle-death threshold is attractive because it does not exclude conflicts that may be major for countries with small populations. Finally, as war is a relatively rare event, the inclusion of a larger number of conflicts also solves statistical problems associated with the analysis of rare events data (Gleditsch et al., 2002).

However, to ensure that results are not driven by the definition of civil conflict employed here, I also use data on civil conflicts using the 1,000 battle-death threshold to define civil conflict onset. The data are described in Gleditsch (2004) and use the same coding criteria for intrastate wars as the Correlates of War (COW) project (Sarkees, 2000: 129). Cases are then updated based on Gleditsch and Ward's (1999) list of independent states and Uppsala data on armed conflict for the post-1997 period.[40]

*Independent Variables*

The first hypothesis investigates whether the occurrence of critical events increases the probability of civil conflict occurrence. I argued that shocks such as economic decline, war defeat, the death of a leader, or changes in the international balance of power constitute power shifts that weaken incumbent governments. While such shocks create incentives for government and opposition groups to bargain, credibility problems keep them from committing to negotiable agreements. I construct four separate variables to operationalize the concept of a "critical event," or "shock."

First, I include a measure that indicates whether a country experienced a period of recession, or economic decline. Researchers in comparative politics argue that economic decline

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[40] Data are available at http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~ksg/expwar.html.

increases the likelihood of authoritarian and democratic breakdown, and this expectation has

been supported in quantitative analyses (Prezworski et al., 2000). I use data on economic growth

from the World Bank Development Indicators to operationalize this concept. The standard

definition of recession is a decline in a country's gross domestic product (GDP) for two or more

consecutive quarters.[41] Since quarterly data on GDP growth rates are not available for a large set

of countries, states with negative growth rates during a given year are defined as being in

recession. I create a dummy variable coded 1 if a country experienced a decline in GDP growth

during a given leader-year, 0 otherwise.

Defeat in interstate war is the second indication of leadership weakness operationalized

in this paper. Data on interstate wars provided in the Correlates of War (COW) project include

information on war outcomes.[42] Specifically, the data include a variable indicating whether a

country was on the winning or losing side of a conflict. I constructed a dichotomous variable

coded 1 if a leader was on the losing side of an interstate war during a given leader-year, 0

otherwise. For the period of 1960-2004, 28 leaders experienced defeat in international wars.

Third, I have argued that the death of a leader while in office constitutes a shift in the

regime's power and will trigger a bargaining process between followers of the incumbent regime

and opposition. Data for leader deaths are available in the Goemans et al. (2006) data.[43] I include

a measure of death in office, coded 1 for leaders that died of natural causes while in office, 0

otherwise. In the time period analyzed here, 99 leaders died in office.

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[41] While this is the standard newspaper definition, the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) uses a more complex procedure to define recession in their data on the U.S. business cycle. The NBER definition considers the depth and duration of economic decline, includes a broader set of indicators than GDP, and uses monthly indicators. Data for the United States are available at http://www.nber.org/.

[42] Data are available at http://cow2.la.psu.edu/.

[43] The variable available in Goemans et al. (2006) codes whether a leader left office because of regular loss, natural death, irregular loss, or deposition. I construct a dummy variable coded 1 for leaders that died of natural causes while in office, 0 otherwise. While irregular leadership exit (due to assassinations or coups) or depositions also indicate bargaining over power, they often imply the occurrence of domestic violence, and are therefore endogenous to a model of leadership weakness and civil conflict.

Fourth, changes in the international balance of power can weaken the domestic distribution of power and open up space for bargaining. While "change in the international balance of power" is difficult to operationalize in a large-N setting, the upheaval triggered by the end of the Cold War presents an instance of such changes. Reforms in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s led to crises of legitimacy and subsequent regime changes in the Central and Eastern European satellite states, followed by the eventual collapse of the USSR (Colomer, 2000). To account for this change in the balance of power, I include a dichotomous variable coded 1 for the years 1990-1995, 0 otherwise.

Finally, I created a variable combining all four of these event types. This measure is labeled "shock" and is a dummy variable created from the four previously described indicators. It is a dichotomous measure coded 1 for countries experiencing recession, war defeat, leader death, and/or changes in the international balance of power, 0 otherwise.

The operationalization of political instability used here differs from earlier research. Hegre et al. (2001) and Fearon and Laitin (2003), for example, operationalize instability by measuring fluctuations in polity scores.[44] While this measure gauges variation in states' level of democracy, it fails to identify the precise conditions triggering a bargaining process between actors for a share of authority. Hegre et al. and Fearon and Laitin argue that political instability opens a window of opportunity for potential rebellion, but the variable used to measure this concept is rather abstract. This research operationalizes the shocks identified as causes of regime change in the comparative literature, and can thereby more accurately identify opportunities for rebellion.

In order to control for alternative explanations of civil conflict, several variables are added to the model testing the first hypothesis. To allow for comparability with earlier research, I

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[44] The composite polity score is a 21-point scale ranging from most autocratic to most democratic.

will use covariates similar to those of Hegre et al. (2001). First, the polity score, a measure accounting for the level of democracy, is added to the model.[45] The squared term of this variable is also included in order to allow for the curvilinear relationship proposed by Hegre et al. (2001). Second, the level of economic development is expected to influence the risk of civil conflict occurrence. Collier and Hoeffler (2000) show that the probability of civil conflict is reduced by increases in GDP per capita, as the economic opportunity costs for rebels from fighting become greater.[46] To control for economic development, I include a variable measuring GDP per capita per leader-year.[47] Because of high skewness, this variable is log-transformed. Conforming to Collier and Hoeffler's (2004) finding, increases in GDP per capita are expected to lower the risk of internal war.

To account for temporal dependence in the model, I follow Beck et al.'s (1998) advice and include cubic spline variables in the probit models presented below.[48] To ensure that results are not influenced by the particular set of control variables employed, I also present models without the control variables. Finally, I discuss results on the relationship between leadership weakness and civil conflict using a battle-death threshold of 1,000.[49] Table 3 provides summary statistics for the independent variables used in the probit model.

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[45] The composite score ranges from -10 (most autocratic) to +10 (most democratic). Data come from the Polity IV project, available at http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/polity/. The variable used here is called Polity 2, designed to facilitate the use of the Polity regime measure in time-series analyses. This variable revises the combined annual polity score by applying a simple treatment, or "fix," to convert instances of "standardized authority codes" (i.e., -66, -77, and -88) to conventional polity scores (i.e., within the range, -10 to +10).
[46] Hegre et al. (2001) also include a squared GDP per capita variable based on earlier research by Collier and Hoeffler (1998). Since Collier and Hoeffler (2004) do not hypothesize such a relationship, I did not include a squared term.
[47] GDP data come from the the World Development Indicators 2004.
[48] Coefficients for the spline variables are not reported to conserve space.
[49] Results are presented in table 6 in the appendix.

Table 3: Summary Statistics for Variables in the Probit Model

| Variable Name | Mean | SD | Min | Max | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Civil conflict (25 battle deaths) | 0.03 | 0.16 | 0 | 1 | Coded 1 for armed conflict onset |
| Civil War (1,000 battle deaths) | 0.01 | 0.12 | 0 | 1 | Coded 1 for civil war onset |
| Recession | 0.18 | 0.38 | 0 | 1 | Coded 1 for recession |
| War Defeat | 0.004 | 0.06 | 0 | 1 | Coded 1 for defeat in interstate war |
| Death in Office | 0.013 | 0.11 | 0 | 1 | Coded 1 for leader death while in office |
| End of Cold War | 0.15 | 0.36 | 0 | 1 | Coded 1 for years 1985-1995 |
| Critical Event | 0.37 | 0.58 | 0 | 1 | Coded 1 for recession, leader death, war defeat, and cold war |
| Democracy Level | 0.24 | 7.49 | -10 | +10 | Composite autocracy-democracy score |
| Democracy squared | 56.3 | 32.4 | 0 | 100 | Composite autocracy-democracy score, squared |
| Economic Development | 1.5 | 0.57 | 0.72 | 4.23 | GDP per capita, logged |

*Results*

The first model presented here includes four variables measuring the effect of different types of shocks on the probability of civil conflict. Results for this model are presented in the first column of table 4 and show strong support for the expected relationship between leadership weakness and the probability of civil conflict. The variable measuring whether a country experienced a recession is positive and significant ($z=4.48$, $p<0.01$), indicating that economic decline indeed increases the potential for violence. Undergoing a recession results in a 0.02 increase in the probability of internal armed conflict, which equals a 109% increase (all other variables held constant). This result supports the expectation that critical events weakening the incumbent government create commitment problems and increase the risk for violence.

War defeat is the second variable employed to operationalize the concept of a critical event. It was argued that defeat in war signals the government's weakness to opposition groups,

which in turn leads to bargaining over power. The coefficient for this variable is significant and

positive ($z$=3.43, $p$<0.01), thus supporting the expectation that war defeat generates credibility

problems among actors and thus increases the likelihood of civil conflict. The substantive effect

of war defeat is immense. The probability of civil conflict onset increases by 0.15 when war

defeat is varied from 0 to 1, representing a 774% increase.

Table 4: Probit Model of Critical Events and Civil conflict (25 battle-deaths)

| Variable Name | Model 1 Estimate (Robust S.E.) | Model 2 Estimate (Robust S.E.) | Model 3 Estimate (Robust S.E.) | Δ Probability Model 1 | Δ Probability Model 2 | Δ Probability Model 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Recession | 0.324*** (0.07) | 0.238*** (0.078) | — | +0.021 | +0.014 | — |
| War Defeat | 1.12*** (0.327) | 1.189*** (0.33) | — | +0.155 | +0.17 | — |
| Death in Office | -0.302 (0.383) | -0.246 (0.387) | — | — | — | — |
| End of Cold War | 0.238*** (0.076) | 0.272*** (0.086) | — | +0.015 | +0.017 | — |
| Shock | — | — | 0.267*** (0.053) | — | — | +0.016 |
| Democracy Level | — | -0.002 (0.006) | -0.003 (0.006) | —[a] | —[a] | —[a] |
| Democracy Squared | — | -0.005*** (0.001) | -0.005*** (0.001) | —[a] | —[a] | —[a] |
| Economic Development | — | -0.289*** (0.094) | -0.281*** (0.094) | — | -0.017 | -0.015 |
| N | 6,796 | 5,217 | 5,217 | | | |

Note: Coefficients for cubic splines are not presented to preserve space. Columns 4-6 show the marginal effect of the significant variables on the probability of civil conflict. Variables are varied from one standard deviation below their mean to one standard deviation above for continuous variables, and from 0 to 1 for dichotomous variables. All other variables were held at their mean or modal values. Probabilities were calculated using the mfx command in Stata 9.2.
[a] Since the effect of democracy squared is non-linear, a linear change in probability cannot be calculated.
*** $p$<0.01 ** $p$<0.05 * $p$<0.1

The end of Idi Amin's regime in Uganda provides an illustration of this finding.

Following Uganda's defeat in the war against Tanzania in April of 1979, Uganda witnessed a

"winner-takes-all" struggle between members of the old regime, the Ugandan National

Liberation Front (UNLF, formed by Ugandans in exile), and followers of former President

Obote, Uganda's leader after independence in 1962. While the UNLF moved quickly in setting up the National Consultative Council, it represented only the more radical elements within the UNLF and excluded pro-Obote groups from the government (Gertzel, 1980). In addition, years of arbitrary personal rule had left the new government with an institutional and political vacuum as well as a crippled economy. Following a string of temporary leaders, former President Obote was reinstalled as the country's leader in late 1980, but this move was vehemently opposed by a UNLF faction led by Museveni, which started a six-year guerilla war against the Obote regime.

The third variable used to measure the occurrence of a shock is the death of a leader. When a leader dies during his term in office, one should expect intense bargaining between members of the old regime and opposition groups over the future distribution of power. While peaceful agreements may be mutually preferable, both groups have incentives to renege on agreements, and these incentives can lead to bargaining inefficiencies and fighting. The coefficient for this variable, however, is negative and fails to meet conventional levels of statistical significance. Therefore, I cannot support the expectation on bargaining inefficiency and violence after leader death.

There are two possible reasons for this finding. First, especially in cases where the death of the leader is foreseeable, instability and violence may in fact precede the leader's death. Second, many regimes have pre-arranged succession arrangements that may reduce the potential for violence following the death of a leader. However, whether such arrangements will be adhered to after a leader's death will vary across different types of regimes.[50] Single-party regimes, for example, have the organizational structure of the party to arrange for an orderly transfer of power. Four out of seven Soviet Union leaders, for example, died of natural causes

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[50] To account for this possibility, I create a variable measuring a leader's death in office in personalist and military regimes only. While the coefficient for this variable was positive, it nevertheless failed to reach conventional significance levels.

while in office, but the party organization swiftly and effectively installed successors. In military and personal regimes, on the other hand, the death of a leader should have much greater destabilizing effects (Geddes, 1999a). Following the death of dictator, pre-established succession mechanisms are often ignored, or successors do not survive long in office. Marcello Caetano, chosen by Portuguese dictator Salazar as his successor, was thrown out of office four years after Salazar's death.

Finally, the comparative politics literature also identifies changes in the international balance of power as instances related to leadership weakness and regime change. This concept is operationalized with a measure accounting for the destabilizing effects of the end of the Cold War. As hypothesized, the coefficient is statistically significant and positive ($z$=3.13, $p$<0.01). The probability of civil conflict increases from 0.02 to 0.035 when the indicator is varied from 0 to 1 (and all other variables are held constant), which equals a 73% increase. The collapse of a foreign tutorial power evinces the current government's weakness and thus results in bargaining over a new distribution of authority. The disintegration of the former Soviet Union and the subsequent end of the Cold War divide have therefore triggered increased probabilities of civil conflict. Violent struggle in the Caucasus, for example, demonstrates how shocks to the balance of power can lead to conflictual outcomes.

The second model presented in table 4 includes control variables similar to those of Hegre et al. (2001). Results for the variables testing the first hypothesis are very similar to those of the first model. Recession, war defeat, and the end of the Cold War significantly increase the probability of civil conflict, thus strongly supporting hypothesis 1. As in the previous model, however, a leader's death in office has no significant effect on the likelihood of armed conflict. The control variables included in the second model perform mostly as expected. I find support

for the curvilinear relationship between level of democracy and civil conflict, as indicated by the negative and significant coefficient for the squared democracy term ($z=-3.98$, $p<0.01$). This confirms research by Hegre et al. (2001). The variable measuring economic development shows a negative and weakly significant relationship between GDP per capita and the risk of civil conflict occurrence ($z=-3.05$, $p<0.001$). When varied from one standard deviation below its mean to one standard deviation above (and all else held constant), the probability of civil conflict decreases by 0.016, or 55%. This finding is consistent with expectations by Collier and Hoeffler (2000).

The third model in table 4 uses the variable combining all four types of shocks. The measure combines economic decline, defeat in war, leader death in office, and the end of the Cold War into a single dichotomous variable. While death in office failed to have a significant effect on the probability of civil conflict, it is included in the measure for theoretical reasons. Consistent with the evidence in the first model, the occurrence of a shock significantly increases the probability of civil conflict ($z=4.23$, $p<0.01$). The likelihood of civil conflict increases by 0.02 if the variable is varied from 0 to 1 (with all other variables held constant), which equals an 86% increase. The first hypothesis, therefore, is supported using individual types of shocks and the measure combining all four types of events. Among the control variables, the curvilinear relationship between the level of democracy and civil conflict is confirmed in the second model. The coefficient for the squared democracy variable is negative and significant at the 99% confidence level. A negative and significant relationship between economic development and the probability of civil conflict is again confirmed in the second model.

Finally, I also tested the expectation developed in the first hypothesis using data on civil wars with more than 1,000 battle-deaths per year. Results are presented in table 7 in the appendix

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and are largely consistent with the above results. Economic decline and war defeat significantly increase the risk of civil war using a higher battle-death threshold. As in the models discussed above, the variable measuring whether a leader died in office is not significantly related to civil war onset. The dichotomous variable accounting for the end of the Cold War fails to meet conventional levels of statistical significance, contradicting the findings in the models using a 25 battle-death threshold. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union led to the emergence of a large number of new states with small populations. As mentioned earlier, conflicts with fewer than 1,000 battle deaths would arguably be major for such states, and the exclusion of such cases may drive the non-finding for this variable.

### *A Selection Model of Critical Events and Civil conflict*

*Methodology*

Thus far, this paper has emphasized the commitment problems following shocks to government authority, not addressing whether the causes of such critical events could be related to the model. Since the absence of domestic authority is not a constant feature of the domestic political arena (as in the international system), the reasons leading to regime weakness in the first place may well be related to the likelihood of violence following such shocks. It seems reasonable to expect that factors related to the collapse of regimes are not independent from whether subsequent interactions between relevant actors turn violent.

The literature on civil conflicts has generally failed to account for such selection effects. Sambanis' (2004b) and Alesina and Perotti's (1996) investigations of the effects of economic inequality on civil conflict are partial exceptions. Both works suggest that the reason for the non-relationship between inequality and civil conflict in many studies may in fact be a result of an

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omitted intervening variable, political stability. Alesina and Perotti (1996) show that inequality in fact is related to political instability, although their research suffers from the use of an instability measure that also includes the use of force. Sambanis' (2004b) measure of instability does not include violent incidents, yet while demonstrating that inequality is related to instability, he fails to then relate instability to civil conflict, hence omitting the second stage of the model.

A growing body of research on conflict between states, however, emphasizes the importance of such selection effects and proposes various solutions to these problems (Reed, 2000; Lemke and Reed, 2001; Fearon, 2002; Sartori, 2003; Boehmke et al., 2006). Lemke and Reed (2001), for example, argue that the causes of war between international rivals (a small group of states that fight repeatedly) are related to the formation of such rivalries. The decision to enter a rivalry, therefore, is not independent from the decision to fight once a rivalry has started. Using a selection estimator, the authors present evidence for a significant relationship between the two stages (Lemke and Reed, 2001).

Nonrandom sample selection - situations in which factors influencing actors' choices also affect whether the outcome in question is observed - is present in many political phenomena, such as war onset, revolution, crisis escalation, rivalry termination, and civil conflict settlements. When selection effects are present, not accounting for them makes it impossible to know whether the results present true relationships, or simply are the result of selection bias.

To allow for a correlation between factors influencing the occurrence of a shock and the subsequent onset of civil conflicts, I specify a set of two equations in which unobserved factors are accounted for in the error term. The selection equation considers the causes of shocks to government authority such as economic crises, the death of a leader, war defeat, and changes in

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the international balance of power. The outcome equation analyzes the causes of civil conflict following these critical events, thus only including cases that experienced shocks. When selection effects are present, the error terms in both equations will be correlated.

To appropriately model possible selection effects, I employ a Heckman selection model, also known as a probit model with sample selection, or censored probit (Heckman, 1979; Dubin and Rivers, 1989). This model uses a two-stage estimator to account for non-random sample selection. Since the onset of civil conflict after shocks may be systematically related to the cause of such shocks itself, the Heckman model is a useful modeling technique. This model estimates the effect of independent variables for both the selection and the outcome stage of the model and also estimates the correlation of errors between the two stages.

Hypotheses 2 through 4 investigate solutions to the commitment problem arising during political instability. Specifically, I analyze the effects of the institutional structure of government and opposition and the distance between actors on the probability of civil conflict occurrence. Since the purpose is to evaluate the solutions to the commitment problem outlined in chapter 3, only cases that experienced shocks are included in the second stage of the Heckman model, which predicts the likelihood of civil conflict onset. I use the variable combining all shock events to identify the set of cases for this analysis. This results in approximately 1,800 observations.[51]

*Dependent Variables*

In the first stage of the Heckman model, the selection equation, the variable indicating whether a shock occurred is used as the dependent variable. As outlined earlier, this variable codes whether leaders have experienced critical events such as recession, war defeat, death, or

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[51] As a result of missing cases in some of the independent variables, the number of uncensored observations in table 4 is slightly lower.

changes in the international balance of power while in office.[52] The variable is coded 1 if a leader experienced a critical event, 0 otherwise. In the second stage of the model, the outcome equation, civil conflict onset is the dependent variable. Data for this variable come from the Uppsala Armed Conflict Project (Gleditsch et al., 2004). Only cases that experienced shocks, the dependent variable in the selection stage, enter the outcome equation.

*Independent Variables*

**Selection Equation:** The first stage of the Heckman model predicts the probability of a shock. While the hypotheses highlighted in the theoretical section focus on the outcome stage, predicting the probability of civil conflict, I develop a simple model predicting shocks to avoid potential selection bias. Two variables commonly associated with the probability of political instability are a country's level of democracy and economic development (Epstein et al., 2006). The polity score is added to the model as a measure of the level of democracy.[53] The squared term of this variable is also included in order to allow for the curvilinear relationship. To measure the effect of economic development, I include a variable measuring GDP per capita per country-year.[54]

In addition, several variables included in the outcome equation of the model are also expected to have an effect on the probability of a shock. These variables are described in more detail in the section on independent variables in the outcome equation below. First, Geddes (1999a) and Ulfelder (2005) expect that the stability of regimes varies across different types of

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[52] While it would be preferable to analyze all event types independently, the small number of cases for two types (defeat in war and leader death in office) makes it necessary to combine them into a single measure. As a consequence, the model includes events that may be poorly predicted by the independent variables included. In particular, the model includes no variables (such as age) that would be useful predictors of leader death. To ensure that this is not influencing the results, I also specified models that excluded the variables measuring leader death and the end of the Cold War, respectively. Results, however, were very similar to the ones presented.

[53] The composite polity score ranges from -10 (most autocratic) to +10 (most democratic). Data come from the Polity IV project, available at http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/polity/.

[54] GDP data come from the Penn World Tables, version 6.2, available at http://pwt.econ.upenn.edu/ and the World Development Indicators 2004.

authoritarian regimes. Specifically, personalist and military regimes are expected to be less stable

than single-party regimes.[55] Dummy variables for the different types of authoritarian regime

types, described in more detail below, are included in the first stage of the model. Second, the

organizational structure of opposition groups may well have an effect on the probability of

regime change. If cohesive, organized opposition groups exist in society, we should expect that

challenges to the regime are more likely. A dummy variable indicating the presence of

opposition parties is added to the selection equation.

**Outcome Equation:** The outcome equation of the Heckman model predicts the probability of

civil conflict following a shock and is the main focus of this analysis. The second hypothesis

expects that personalist and military regimes are more conflict prone following a critical event

because of their heavy reliance on a small support circle and a high probability of post-transition

punishment.[56] To test this hypothesis, I use data on authoritarian regime types by Geddes (1999a,

b) as well as updates by Ulfelder (2005) to create four separate dummy variables.[57] The first

variable indicates a personalist regime, coded 1 for regimes in which a leader "has consolidated

control over policy and recruitment in his own hands" (Geddes, 1999a: 20), 0 otherwise.

Authoritarian regimes are considered military when a group of officers influences decisions of

policy choice and appointment. The second dummy variable, therefore, is coded 1 for military

regimes, 0 otherwise. Single-party regimes, characterized by a single party that controls

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[55] Ulfelder (2005: 320) shows that personal and military regimes face greater insecurity in their leadership tenure, having a median duration of 17.3 years (personal) and 11.6 years (military), compared to 32.6 years for single-party regimes.

[56] The Goemans et al. (2006) data include a variable indicating leaders' post-tenure fate, which allowed me to investigate whether personalist and military leaders do in fact face more severe consequences after they leave office. A frequency table comparing the percentage of leaders that were punished (through exile, prison, or death) to those that were not punished showed that 74% and 53% percent, respectively, of all personalist and military leaders experienced punishment, compared to 37% of single-party leaders.

[57] Not all regimes are coded as pure types in Geddes' (1999a) and Ulfelder's (2005) list of authoritarian regimes. Hybrid regimes, which comprise about one-third of the data, were coded according to the first characteristic indicated in the data. A single-party/military regime, for example, is thus included as a party regime in this paper.

accession, policy choice, and local-level organizations, are the third category included in the model. The fourth dichotomous measure comprises democracies (all non-authoritarian regimes), and is excluded from the model as the baseline category.

The third hypothesis focuses on the commitment problem encountered by the opposition. Here, opposition movements that are cohesive, are organized hierarchically, and thus have clear leadership responsibilities are expected to have improved abilities to commit to a peaceful agreement. In addition, I hypothesized that movements with links to existing organizations have better commitment abilities. Systematic data on the organization of social movements or opposition groups are not readily available, especially for noncompetitive regimes. Many noncompetitive regimes, however, allow for the existence of opposition parties, thereby approximating the characteristics outlined above. First, the existence of formal party organization implies a certain degree of organization as well as the presence of a leadership structure. Second, party organizations often venture into many areas of social life, thereby forging ties with existing social institutions. Data on opposition parties were collected from various editions of the *Political Handbook of the World*, which provides information on governing and opposition parties in all countries for the entire time frame under analysis (Banks et al., 2007). A dummy variable indicating the presence or absence of one or more formal opposition parties was created. The variable is coded 0 for countries without opposition parties, 1 for states with one or more parties.[58]

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[58] While Banks et al. (2007) occasionally provide data on the age or size of parties, which might work better as proxies for cohesion, this information is not available systematically. I also considered counting the number of parties rather than creating a simply dichotomous measure, but it is questionable whether the listing of parties is exhaustive, especially for earlier editions of the *Handbook*. To ensure that the data are not biased toward democratic regimes, which are arguably more likely to allow for opposition parties, I conducted cross-tabulations comparing the existence of opposition parties across different regime types. The results show that 79% of anocratic regimes (polity scores between -5 and +5), and 24% of autocratic regimes (polity scores < 5) allow for the presence of opposition parties.

Table 5: Summary Statistics for Variables in the Heckman Selection Model

| Variable Name | Mean | SD | Min | Max | Description |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Outcome Equation** | | | | | |
| Civil conflict (25 battle-deaths) | 0.03 | 0.16 | 0 | 1 | Coded 1 for civil conflict onset |
| Personalist Regime | 0.13 | 0.33 | 0 | 1 | Coded 1 for personalist regimes |
| Military Regime | 0.07 | 0.26 | 0 | 1 | Coded 1 for military regimes |
| Single-Party Regime | 0.21 | 0.4 | 0 | 1 | Coded 1 for single-party regimes |
| Opposition Party | 0.65 | 0.47 | 0 | 1 | Coded 1 for regimes with opposition party |
| Ethnic Fractionalization | 0.38 | 0.28 | 0.001 | 0.92 | Ethnolinguistic Fractionalization Index |
| **Selection Equation** | | | | | |
| Critical Event | 0.37 | 0.58 | 0 | 1 | Coded 1 for shock |
| Democracy Level | 0.24 | 7.49 | -10 | +10 | Composite autocracy-democracy score |
| Economic Development | 1.5 | 0.57 | 0.72 | 4.23 | GDP per capita, logged |
| Personalist Regime | 0.13 | 0.33 | 0 | 1 | Coded 1 for personalist regimes |
| Military Regime | 0.07 | 0.26 | 0 | 1 | Coded 1 for military regimes |
| Single-Party Regime | 0.21 | 0.4 | 0 | 1 | Coded 1 for single-party regimes |
| Opposition Party | 0.65 | 0.47 | 0 | 1 | Coded 1 for regimes with opposition party |

In the fourth hypothesis, it was argued that greater ethnic distance negatively impacts the credibility of actors. To test this expectation, I use data on ethnic fractionalization provided by Fearon and Laitin (2003). While recent research emphasizes the importance of ethnic polarization rather than fractionalization, the data collected by Montalvo and Reynal-Querol (2005) are available only for 138 countries. Such a limitation would severely reduce the number of cases in the analysis. The ethnolinguistic fractionalization (ELF) index represents the probability that two randomly selected individuals from a given country will not belong to the same ethnolinguistic group, where increases in the ELF indicate greater diversity.

I include spline variables to correct for temporal dependence. Spline variables are based on a variable measuring the years since the last civil conflict onset for the outcome equation, and a variable measuring the number of years since the last shock for the selection equation, respectively. Results for cubic splines are not reported. Summary statistics for dependent and independent variables included in the Heckman selection model are presented in table 6.

*Results*

Table 6 presents the results of the Heckman model of civil conflict occurrence after a shock to government authority. The model is useful for studying phenomena that deal with interrelated processes. The first stage models the probability of a shock, whereas the second stage identifies factors related to the occurrence of civil conflict. In keeping with the main focus of the analysis, results of the outcome equation, predicting the likelihood of civil conflict, will be discussed first. The results for the outcome stage of the model presented in table 6 show strong support for the hypotheses developed in the theoretical chapter.

The second hypothesis, expecting that countries with personal and military regimes are more likely to experience civil conflicts than other regime types, is upheld in the empirical analysis. The coefficient for personal regimes is positive and significant, albeit only at the 90% confidence level ($z$=1.70, $p$<0.1). In substantive terms, varying the personal regime variable from 0 to 1 results in an increase in the probability of civil conflict from 0.03 to 0.04, equaling a 21% increase. Military regimes are also more likely to experience civil conflict than single-party or democratic regimes, as hypothesized in the theoretical argument. The coefficient for military regimes is positive and significant and the probability of civil conflict increases by 0.02, or 51%, when the variable is varied from 0 to 1 (all other variables held constant). This confirms the

expectation that regimes in which the survival of elites is threatened by a shock are more likely to use force than other types of political regimes.

The overthrow of the military regime in the Dominican Republic of 1965 provides an example of the dangers inherent in such regimes. Having come into power by overthrowing the democratically elected government of Juan Bosch a few years earlier, the military junta led by Cabral, lacking support of broad segments the population, relied heavily on the consent of a small group of high-ranking military officials and oppression of the general population. Amid growing unrest and opposition, the junta promised to reestablish the Constitution in 1964, yet this promise was not seen as credible by opposition groups given that the Cabral regime had come to power by ousting a democratic regime. As a result, mass demonstrations "erupted in Santo Domingo as a large number of citizens, especially youths, rallied in majestic outrage to support the revolution" (Wedge, 1969: 186). Responding with "unprecedented violence" the military regime strafed the National Palace and began a full-scale attack on the National City, helped further by U.S. intervention on the side of the military regime (Ferguson, 1973: 522). This illustration, while admittedly anecdotal, helps to show how the location of bargaining agreements is hindered by the organizational structure of the outgoing regime.

The logic developed here, furthermore, runs counter to other assessments of military regimes. Geddes (1999a: 136) argues that military regimes are "more likely to negotiate orderly transitions," yet this expectation is not supported by the empirical evidence presented here. Relaxing the widely accepted assumption that leaders want to remain in power, Geddes argues that military officers value internal order and territorial integrity more than staying in office and therefore will "step down before conditions in the country have reached crisis" (Geddes, 1999a: 136). Yet contrary to this assumption, not all military regimes have scheduled their own

departures. The Argentine military dictatorship of 1976-1983, for example, was ousted without negotiation following severe economic decline and defeat in a war against a much stronger ally. Furthermore, while is true that military regimes have lower survival rates, it is not clear that they stem from officers' desire to simply restore order and return to the barracks. The Argentine junta, for example, claimed in 1976 that it had "no fixed term, only objectives" ("*no tiene plazos sino objetivos*"), and wanted to stay in power for 10-15 years (Munck, 1985: 85; Pion-Berlin, 1985: 55). Rather, the shorter life span of military regimes originates from their inability to extend authority beyond the inner circle of military officers. As indicated in the theoretical chapter, the military as a group is less permeable than elites in other regime types, and thus cannot grant authority to outside groups. Dictators in uniform, therefore, cannot grant credible concessions when challenged in their power. The theoretical argument combined with empirical evidence presented here, therefore, questions Geddes' evaluation of military leaders' motives.

The organizational structure of opposition groups was the focus of the third hypothesis. I argued that opposition groups with cohesive organizational structures are more credible in the bargaining process, and this credibility reduces the probability of civil conflict. Empirical results confirm this argument. The coefficient for the variable used to operationalize this concept is negative and statistically significant ($z=-2.12$, $p<0.05$), showing support for hypothesis 3.

Table 6: Heckman Selection Model of Critical Events and Civil Conflict (25 battle-deaths)

| Variable  Name | Model 4<br>Estimate (Robust S.E.) | Δ Probability<br>Model 4 |
|---|---|---|
| **Outcome Equation** | | |
| Personalist Regime | 0.123*<br>(0.076) | +0.007 |
| Military Regime | 0.345***<br>(0.091) | +0.017 |
| Single-Party Regime | 0.124<br>(0.082) | — |
| Opposition Party | -0.126**<br>(0.059) | -0.002 |
| Ethnic Fractionalization | 0.208**<br>(0.105) | +0.025 |
| **Selection Equation** | | |
| Democracy Level | -0.005<br>(0.003) | —[a] |
| Democracy Squared | -0.003***<br>(0.001) | —[a] |
| Economic Development | -0.043<br>(0.035) | — |
| Personalist Regime | -0.106<br>(0.064) | — |
| Military Regime | -0.316***<br>(0.07) | -0.11 |
| Single-Party Regime | -0.211***<br>(0.062) | -0.08 |
| Opposition Party | 0.135**<br>(0.052) | +0.05 |
| **Rho** | -0.963 *** | |
| **(S.E.)** | (0.003) | |
| **N (2nd stage)** | 5,136 (1,762) | |

Note: Coefficients for cubic splines are not presented to preserve space. Column 2 shows the marginal effect of the significant variables on the probability of civil conflict and leadership exit. Variables are varied from one standard deviation below their mean to one standard deviation above for continuous variables, and from 0 to 1 for dichotomous variables. All other variables are held at their mean or modal values.  Probabilities were calculated using the mfx command in Stata 9.2 for the selection and outcome equation.
[a] Since the effect of democracy squared is non-linear, a linear change in probability cannot be calculated.
*** $p<0.01$ ** $p<0.05$ * $p<0.1$

The diverging experiences of regime breakdown in Chile in the early 1970s and late 1980s nicely illustrate the effects of opposition cohesion. In the late 1980s, Christian Democrats, Socialists, groupings on the Christian left and a new faction within the Socialist party formed a united opposition that also planned to form a joint governmental coalition following general elections in 1989 (Cavarozzi, 1992: 208-225). Chile's peaceful transition to democracy in the late 1980s thus can be credited to the unified appearance of opposition elites. This peaceful outcome of the negotiation process can be contrasted with Chile's institutional breakdown and subsequent civil war in the early 1970s. The violent military takeover in 1973 is widely seen as a consequence of the division between the left and Christian Democrats and their failure to reach a compromise agreement (Cavarozzi, 1992: 221).

In substantive terms, the probability of civil conflict decreases by 5% when the opposition variable is varied from 0 to 1. While arguably a small substantive effect, it may result from a less than perfect operationalization of the concept at hand. The last chapter stressed how the cohesiveness of groups and connections to existing social organizations should enhance the opposition's credibility. The measure employed, however, does not provide precise information on the number, size, or age of opposition parties, the unity of party leadership, or the degree of institutionalization in society. Such information is either not available at all, or only on a case-by-case basis in Banks et al.'s (2007) *Political Handbook of the World*, especially for the earlier years in the time period analyzed here.

The next hypothesis anticipated that relations between groups in society would impact the probability of civil war after a critical event.[59] Here, I argued that greater ethnic distance between groups limits the range of negotiable settlements and should therefore increase the risk of

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[59] I also investigated possible interaction effects between the cohesion of opposition groups and ethnic diversity. In particular, I expected that a high degree of ethnic diversity would exacerbate the effect of opposition cohesion. The interaction term, however, was not statistically significant.

violence. Measured as the degree of ethnic fractionalization, the positive and significant coefficient supports this expectation ($z$=1.97, $p$<0.05). Apart from statistical significance, the substantive effect of ethnic diversity on civil war is large. Varying the fractionalization index from one standard deviation below its mean to one standard deviation above (and all else held constant), the probability of civil conflict increases from 0.02 to 0.05, or 110%. This result also helps explain some of the inconsistencies in empirical studies of the relationship between ethnic diversity and civil war (Sambanis, 2002). While ethnic fractionalization does not exert a significant effect on the probability of civil conflict in many studies on ethnicity and conflict, it increases the likelihood of violence during government weakness. In this sense, ethnic fractionalization is not a constant cause of conflict, but becomes salient once the existing equilibrium is challenged and groups bargain over a redistribution of power. The above finding is also consistent with recent research that suggests an indirect relationship between ethnic diversity and the probability of civil war (Blimes, 2006).

Ethnic strife in Chechnya and several former Soviet republics following the collapse of the USSR is consistent with this explanation. Gorbachev's resignation signaled the loss of the state's coercive and persuasive ability and opened up space for rebellion in this multi-ethnic empire. In 1991, ethnic Chechens declared formal independence from Russia, which responded with force in 1994 (Matveeva, 2007).

Finally, the Heckman model is based on the assumption that the processes determining leadership weakness and civil conflict are not independent.[60] The rho parameter estimates the correlation between the two dependent variables' disturbance terms. The coefficient for rho is

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[60] Heckman (1979) and Greene (2000) emphasize the importance of a robust selection equation when using the Heckman procedure. The covariates in the selection equation perform reasonably well, correctly predicting 75% of the variation in the shock variable.

statistically significant, indicating that the factors resulting in violence after critical events are related to the causes of such shocks ($z$=-4.77, $p$<0.01).

Results in the first stage of the model, predicting the probability of critical events leading to leadership weakness, are largely consistent with expectations in research on regime stability. Regimes in the middle of the democracy-autocracy spectrum are more likely to experience critical events, as can be seen in the negative and significant coefficient of the squared democracy variable (Hegre et al., 2001; Gates et al., 2006). Highly democratic and highly authoritarian regimes, therefore, have a lower chance to experience instability, or critical events. Secondly, the effect of economic development, measured as GDP per capita, is not significant. Changes in the level of economic development have no discernable impact on the probability of shocks. Overall, results in table 6 support the modeling technique chosen and also demonstrate support for the hypotheses developed in the theoretical section.

To conclude, results presented in this chapter largely support the theoretical expectations. The first set of statistical models shows that shocks to government authority increase the probability of civil conflict, thus supporting the argument on commitment problems during leadership weakness. Critical events such as economic decline, defeat in war, and/or crises in a foreign tutorial power send a sign of weakness to opposition forces and lead to bargaining for authority. Yet both actors suffer from credibility problems because of incentives to renege on agreements in the future, and these incentives increase the risk of violence.

The models presented thereafter investigate solutions to this commitment problem. Here, I demonstrate that certain types of actors have greater difficulty in making credible commitments. Threatened leaders in personalist and military regimes (given their exclusionary nature and slim chances of political survival in more broadly based regimes) suffer from greater

credibility problems than single-party or democratic regimes. Empirical results confirm this hypothesis, indicating that such regimes have higher conflict propensities. In addition, I anticipated that opposition groups with cohesive organizational structures can more credibly commit to negotiated agreements. Empirical findings show that states with established opposition parties are less likely to experience civil conflict. Finally, I show that the distance between relevant actors also influences the probability of violent outcomes. When actors have divergent preferences (because of ethnic, religious, ideological, or economic differences), the location of peaceful agreements is more difficult. Confirming this argument, results show that countries with high ethnic heterogeneity are more likely to see armed internal conflict following a critical event. Taken together, the arguments and findings presented in chapters three and four offer a comprehensive explanation for the complex causal path between political instability and civil conflict. I have shown how the effects of critical events are filtered through existing political institutions of the incumbent government, organizational features of opposition groups, and the ethnic composition of society.[61]

The subsequent chapter presents a second, small-N empirical test for the hypotheses outlined in chapter 3. Certain implications of the theoretical argument lend themselves to small-N comparisons that allow for detailed process-tracing. The analysis of the hypothesized effects of organizational features on actors' ability to make credible commitments, for example, is difficult to operationalize in a large-N quantitative analysis. This concept will gain from examination in narrative detail. In the next chapter, the argument on opposition groups

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[61] The findings thus confirm earlier case-study research on the relationship between political instability and civil war. A case study of Chechnya and Dagestan by Andrienko and Shelley (2003) demonstrates how regional differences in political institutions and ethnic composition resulted in secessionist violence in one case but not the other.

developed in the theoretical chapter is evaluated by analyzing bargaining after shocks in Chile

and Algeria.

**Chapter 5: Empirical Test II: Critical Events, Opposition Cohesion, and Civil War in Algeria and Chile**

The theoretical chapter outlines how critical events alter the domestic balance of power in countries, result in commitment problems, and subsequently increase the probability of civil war. The chapter then shows how the effect of these critical events is mediated by the type of government, the institutional structure of opposition groups, and the level of polarization between groups. The statistical analysis conducted in the preceding chapter provides valuable support for the arguments developed in the theoretical section. Findings indicate that shocks indeed make the onset of civil war more likely. In addition, the institutional structure of governments, the cohesiveness of opposition groups, and the distance between groups influence actors' credibility and the likelihood of civil war as hypothesized.

Quantitative research has the advantage of producing general results with external validity, but lacks the descriptive accuracy, internal validity, and ability to disentangle causal processes possible in qualitative research (King et al., 1994; Poteete and Ostrom, 2005). Qualitative analysis is better suited for process-tracing, for exploring critical junctures that shape processes of change, and for providing more nuanced insight in the findings of quantitative studies (Tarrow, 2004). As George (1979: 46) points out, only a detailed analysis of a single case can "establish whether there exists an intervening process, that is, a causal nexus, between the independent variable and the dependent variable."

Criticizing the heavy reliance on statistical models in the study of civil war, Sambanis (2004a) stresses the need for case studies to address several shortcomings in formal-quantitative models of civil war. Case studies, Sambanis (2004a: 260) claims, can help identify causal mechanisms, detect measurement problems, discover new variables and highlight interactive

effects between variables neglected in statistical models. Furthermore, case studies can alleviate the gap between micro-level theories and macro-level empirical tests common in the literature on civil war (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Fearon and Laitin, 2003).

While the trade-offs between quantitative and qualitative approaches are well-established in the literature, scholars increasingly perceive these approaches as complementary rather than antithetical (George, 1979; King et al., 1994; Tarrow, 2004; Poteete and Ostrom, 2005). Increasingly, research combines quantitative and qualitative research to maximize the leverage of empirical tests.

The goal of this chapter, then, is to test the theoretical arguments developed in chapter three by conducting an in-depth analysis of actual cases. Since the importance of critical events on regime stability is well established in the comparative literature, the case-study analysis focuses on solutions to the commitment problem outlined in the theoretical section. Three concepts are expected to influence actors' ability to make credible commitments in the wake of political instability. First, regimes with small support networks have greater difficulty credibly committing since leaders feel highly threatened by a potential loss of power. Second, opposition groups lacking a cohesive and unified organizational structure cannot credibly signal a commitment to negotiated agreements. Finally, groups that are polarized across ethnic dimensions have difficulty credibly committing since the trust built through shared identity within groups is missing among them.

Testing the implications of all three theoretical concepts in a small-sample setting, however, would require a set of six case studies in which all three concepts are varied independently from each other. The chapter will focus on the organizational structure of opposition groups for three reasons. First, existing research on internal violence often neglects

the role of dissident groups. This is largely a function of the difficulty in accounting for these actors in a large-N context. Second, the indicator used to operationalize the institutional structure of opposition groups in the statistical analysis is far from ideal. The presence of opposition parties undoubtedly indicates a certain level of organizational cohesion and thus roughly approximates the conditions outlined in the theoretical concept. Yet the measure is unable to evaluate precisely how the internal dynamics of opposition groups influence their credibility. In addition, it cannot tell us how these internal dynamics impact the relations with other opposition groups. Opposition groups marked by internal competition will likely have greater difficulty establishing alliances with other parties. Finally, the theoretical arguments also emphasize linkages to existing social organizations. Certain parties are more likely to have such ties (such as Christian Democrats with the Church, or Social Democrats with unions), yet a dichotomous measure indicating the presence or absence of opposition groups cannot tell us much about these linkages. Third, the theoretical concept regarding opposition groups extends upon Kalyvas' (1999) research on religious parties in emerging democracies by showing that the organizational features of opposition groups matter outside a religious context. Kalyvas (1999) investigates how the cohesiveness of religious parties affects their credibility by comparing two cases where such parties have received electoral mandates. He argues that religious challengers suffer from greater credibility problems since their program includes the rejection of liberal democracy as a principle. It is, however, plausible that the cohesion of opposition forces, whether religious or not, will influence their credibility when faced with the opportunity of gaining control of the state.

Following the method of "focused, structured comparison" outlined in George (1979), the next sections examine the theoretical argument on opposition groups in detail. I analyze how

the institutional features of opposition groups can affect the commitment problem caused by critical events. The purpose of the case comparison is to explain the occurrence of civil war as a function of opposition groups' institutional structure. The cases to be studied, therefore, must have experienced critical events that triggered a period of liberalization. As King et al. (1994: 139) point out, nonrandom sample selection is appropriate in small-N analysis since random selection can easily fail to capture the full range of variation on the variables of interest. To allow for causal inference, I chose cases that exhibit variation on the key independent variable of interest while other independent variables of interest are held constant (George, 1979; King et al., 1994). This case selection strategy thus corresponds to a "most similar systems" design (Prezworski and Teune, 1970). For the purposes of this study, cases should show variation in the institutional structure of opposition groups (the key independent variable of interest), but should be similar with respect to leadership type and ethnic polarization (the remaining independent variables).

Based on this logic, Algeria and Chile were selected for analysis. Both countries experienced critical events that triggered bargaining over power in the late 1980s. As laid out in the theoretical argument, the occurrence of a critical event leads to commitment problems between government and opposition. The collapse of oil prices in the mid-1980s led to a massive increase in Algerian debt and shortages of essential goods. Discontent over growing inequality and unemployment culminated in a popular uprising in October 1988 and resulted in liberalization measures by the incumbent regime (Lowi, 2005). In Chile, a sharp economic downturn in 1982-1983 put the military regime in a vulnerable position for the upcoming

plebiscite over General Augusto Pinochet's continued stay in office (Valenzuela, 1999: 229).[62]

The cases are also similar with respect to the other key independent variables of interest. With

respect to leadership type, both countries were governed by military regimes when political

liberalization occurred. Since achieving independence in 1962, Algeria was formally governed

by a single party, the National Liberation Front (FLN). The FLN, however, was never a party in

the traditional sense, but "in reality, and in the first place, an army" (Roberts, 2003: 40).[63]

Following the collapse of democracy in Chile, the country was abruptly transformed into a

military regime, and coup leader Pinochet soon made it clear that he did not intend to return

power to civilian rule (Valenzuela, 1999). In addition, neither country displays significant ethnic

or religious fractionalization.[64] The cases differ significantly, however, in the institutional

structure of opposition groups. In Algeria, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), the dominant

opposition party, was marred by internal divisions and tensions between radical and moderate

elements (Roberts, 1994; Ciment, 1997; Quandt, 1998; Kalyvas, 1999). In addition, the FIS

failed to establish coalitions with other opposition parties (Roberts, 1994; Martinez, 2000).

Opposition leaders in Chile, however, united behind a single goal and presented their coalition as

a clear and unified alternative to the Pinochet regime (Cavarozzi, 1992; Valenzuela, 1999).

The chapter proceeds as follows. For each of the two cases, I provide a discussion of

historical events leading up to political liberalization. A subsequent section analyzes how

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[62] The economic crisis undercut Pinochet's central claim for his regime's legitimacy, namely the economic stability and growth achieved initially. The crisis, while not immediately resulting in a struggle for power, contributed to the reassertion of political parties and the opposition's success in the 1988 referendum.
[63] Algeria is classified as a military/single-party regime in Geddes (1999b).
[64] Algeria's ethnic fractionalization index is at 0.43, its religious fractionalization at 0.01. Chile's index on ethnic fractionalization is at 0.14, the religious fractionalization index at 0.19. While Algeria's degree of ethnic fractionalization is slightly higher than Chile's (with Berbers being the most significant minority), Algeria's civil war was fought between Arabs, thus lacking an ethnic dimension.

organizational features of opposition groups influenced the probability of civil war, the dependent variable of interest, in each case.

### *Political Liberalization in Algeria*

To place the economic crisis of the 1980s and Algeria's subsequent liberalization in context, it is necessary to briefly outline the evolution of the political system since independence. I will first discuss the war of independence and its immediate aftermath. I will then proceed to an analysis of the Houari Boumediénne regime and the consequences of Arab nationalism and socialism for Algeria's economic and political development. After Boumediénne's death, his successor Chadly Benjedid was faced with increasing economic and social problems, caused by statist policies of the past and a global decline in oil and gas prices in the 1980s. A popular uprising in 1988 convinced him to push forward political liberalization unprecedented in Algerian history. However, when the Islamist party scored election victories in municipal and parliamentary elections, the military stepped in and cancelled the results. The move was followed by violent resistance and gave way to a year-long civil war.

Algeria achieved independence from France in 1962 after a six-year war fought by the National Liberation Front (FLN), a coalition of a variety of groups with a predominantly secular orientation. The FLN, however, was "united only in their common struggle against the French," and violent competition over the future direction of the party emerged immediately after independence (Ciment, 1997: 40). Radical Ben Bella emerged as the FLN's leader and proposed Arab nationalism and socialism, but was ousted after a series of erratic policy shifts (Joffe, 1997).

The 1965 takeover by army commander Boumediénne did not produce major ideological changes, as both men favored statist economics, one-party politics, and an anti-imperialist foreign policy (Ciment 1997). Yet the coup d'état marked the beginning of the military's assertion of control and the decline of the FLN as an independent political force (Ciment, 1997: 41; Quandt, 1998: 28). From 1965 onwards, the military's preeminent position as a decision maker became increasingly apparent. The military became the chief arbiter of the FLN's internal conflicts and took a decisive role at critical moments such as Boumedienne's death in 1978. The Boumediénne regime, benefiting from high levels of economic growth due to oil and natural gas exports, pushed through a rapid industrialization program (Quandt, 1998). Centralized economic planning and the importation of sophisticated technology, however, failed to deliver full employment and economic equality. Throughout the 1970s, the regime maintained public support through the provision of social services and its claim to legitimacy based on the FLN's role in the revolutionary struggle (Ciment, 1997). Boumediénne's sudden death and increasing economic problems, however, eroded these sources of support (Vandewalle, 1992).

The military quickly installed Chadli Benjedid, a colonel with little role in the Algerian revolution, as his successor. Benjedid inherited the economic and social problems of his predecessor. Increases in population size coupled with economic stagnation and bureaucratic inertia led to severe housing shortages, a lack of consumer goods, and inadequate public services (Ciment, 1997: 45). The administration responded with economic liberalization and the privatization of economic enterprises, the nationalization of oil and gas corporation, and the agricultural sector. These reforms, however, were undertaken arbitrarily, created new monopolies, and did nothing to change Algeria's dependence on oil and gas exports. A series of crises turned into an increasingly explosive situation. First, a conflict over the role of the Arab

language arose at the University of Algiers (Ciment, 1997). The regime defused the crisis by speeding up the process of Arabization of the education system and the state. Second, a progressive family code was rejected by conservative elements within the regime in the mid-1980s and replaced with a code that "revived many of the traditional features of the patrilineal family and relegated women to the legal status of minors in society" (Knauss, 1987: 125). Third, and most importantly, global oil and natural gas prices collapsed in the mid-1980s. With oil and gas exports constituting approximately 60 percent of total revenue in the 1980s and 1990s, the effects of the price collapse were devastating for Algeria (Lowi, 2004: 224). The government restricted imports, limited capital investment to projects already underway, and cut social services such as free health care and subsidies on food. These actions led to an increase in unemployment, reaching 26 percent in 1986, created food shortages, and produced conditions ripe for social unrest (Ciment, 1997: 50).

Once the effects of the economic crisis affected large parts of the population, localized protests and strikes started to occur sporadically. In October 1988, a large popular uprising forced the government to react (Lowi, 2004: 226). The government declared a state of emergency, sent in the army, and dissolved the protests with force. Surprisingly, however, the crushing of popular opposition was followed by a political opening unprecedented in Algerian history. At the FLN congress in November, President Benjedid pushed through a new constitution that established a separation of powers, civil liberties, and freedom of expression, association, and assembly (Quandt, 1998: 47). In a national referendum in February 1989, the constitution was adopted by 73 percent of voters. In July 1989, a new law on political parties was

issued, and "by early 1991, over fifty had obtained official recognition" (Ciment, 1997: 51). The

Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) soon turned out to be the most popular of all opposition groups.[65]

The Benjedid administration proceeded by scheduling municipal elections for June 1990,

to be followed by parliamentary and presidential elections. The electoral law adopted by the

government "seemed designed to favor the largest party, presumably the FLN" (Quandt, 1998:

51). However, in a stunning defeat, the FIS scored a resounding victory in the local elections.[66]

The FIS received 34 percent of all votes cast, giving it a majority in local governments because

of the skewed electoral rules (Quandt, 1998). The election victory gave the FIS organization a

boost and threw the governing FLN into turmoil. Sensing its increasing power, the FIS pushed

for early parliamentary elections and Benjedid eventually agreed to hold elections in June of

1991. Yet when the FLN passed a new electoral law that again disadvantaged opposition parties,

the FIS took its grievances to the streets and called for a "general and unlimited strike" (Willis,

1996). Prime Minister Hamrouche stepped down under increasing pressure, and President

Benjedid rescheduled elections for December 1991. The results of the first round of

parliamentary elections, however, mirrored the outcome of municipal elections. The FIS received

47 percent of the vote, although a large number of spoiled and blank ballots showed that only 25

percent of all eligible voters had supported the FIS (Quandt, 1998: 60). Nevertheless, the victory

gave the FIS a clear majority in parliament. Faced with a government takeover by an Islamist

party, the military stepped in, forced Benjedid to step down, cancelled the election results, and

banned the FIS (Ciment, 1997: 55-58). The military's seizure of power was met with violent

resistance by the Islamists, and Algeria soon descended into an eight-year civil war.

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[65] Interestingly, the law explicitly prohibited parties based on religious, ethnic, or regional affiliation, and therefore should not have permitted the recognition of the FIS and other religious and ethnic parties. It is unclear why the administration failed to outlaw them, although Roberts (1994) and Quandt (1998) speculate that the FLN was hoping to "play the Islamist card."
[66] Voter turnout was relatively low with 63% of all eligible voters participating (Quandt, 1998).

*Opposition Cohesion and the Probability of Civil War in Algeria*

The following sections analyze how the institutional structure of opposition groups helps explain the conflictual outcome in the Algerian case. As argued in the theoretical chapter, the cohesiveness of opposition groups and their connections to other social institutions are expected to impact the opposition's ability to make credible commitments. Because of the religious nature of Algeria's main opposition party, the FIS, a brief discussion of Islam's role in Algeria's recent history follows. I then conduct a detailed analysis of the origins of the FIS, its organization and internal dynamics, and its ties to other organizations in Algerian society. A subsequent section focuses on other relevant opposition groups and investigates the level of cooperation between the FIS and other opposition parties.

Prior to independence, Algeria's Islam was largely separated into two distinct spheres: *Maraboutism*, the charismatic Islam of the saints, which was practiced mostly in the countryside by peasants and country dwellers, and the reformist Islam of the *ulemas*, which emphasized the fundamentals of doctrine as contained in scripture (Roberts, 1994a: 432-433; Ciment, 1997: 81). *Maraboutic* Islam was successfully co-opted by the French colonial regime and therefore became a natural target for a nationalist and religiously motivated movement of Islamic reform. Under the leadership of Shaykh Abdelhamid Ben Badis, many of the *ulemas* began to support a reformist program and "established the supremacy of a modernist, scripturalist, puritanical, and tacitly nationalist Islam at the expense of the old-time religion of the saints" (Roberts, 1994a: 433). Islamist reformers had a powerful influence on the emerging FLN, which pledged to pursue its goals within the framework of Islamic principles. After independence, reformist Islam became the official religion of the independent state. The regimes of Ben Bella and Boumediénne successfully co-opted the *ulemas* by providing Islam with state support, such as

government-sponsored building of mosques and religious education in schools (Ciment, 1997:

83). The FLN succeeded in making Algeria Islamic in its basic cultural orientation, but in

practice the country was governed much more like a secular socialist regime (Quandt, 1998: 27).

In this sense, the regime nationalized Islam, just as it had nationalized the oil industry and the

press (Roberts, 1994: 434). Unlike many other Middle Eastern countries, the compromise

between *ulemas* and the Algerian state avoided the opposition between Arab nationalism and

Islamic belief.

This subordination of Islam proved quite successful until the 1980s. In the early 1980s,

a small dissident group of *ulemas* became increasingly critical of the regime and received

support from fundamentalist groups in Egypt and Saudi Arabia (Roberts, 1994a). Although the

state had a monopoly on the organization of religion, the dissidents subverted it by establishing

"free mosques" outside the government's control. After independence, the state had built a large

number of mosques, yet lacked imams to properly staff them. Since many of these mosques

remained unfinished, the state did not claim authority over them, and dissident *ulemas* took over

more than 2,000 such mosques by the mid-1980s (Roberts, 1994a; Quandt, 1998; Entelis, 1994).

Islamic activism, however, engaged in little open opposition or extra-institutional protest

during this time, and religious activity was largely limited to preaching in the mosques (Hafez,

2004: 44). Prior to the protests of October 1988, fundamentalist Islam was a "variegated and

nebulous movement on the fringe of political life" (Roberts, 1994a: 439). Thus, the 1988 protests

were not the result of an Islamist movement that had long secretly planned a takeover of the

state. As Quandt (1998: 49) points out, "no one claimed that Islamists were behind these

demonstrations at the outset." Rather, the protests were spontaneous and popular and lacked a

clear leadership. Yet two Islamic fundamentalists, Hachemi Sahnouni and Ali Belhaj,

immediately recognized the opportunity to take advantage of popular discontent and further their message (Ciment, 1997: 92). They recruited a prominent academic, Abassi Madani, who, together with Belhaj, would soon emerge as one of the leaders of the Islamist movement. In February 1989, they formed the Islamic Salvation Front. While the Benjedid administration had initiated political liberalization in late 1988, parties were not yet allowed, and the FIS remained small and quasi-clandestine at first. Once the law on the freedom of parties was passed in September 1989, the FIS was officially recognized as a party.

Formally, the FIS was governed by a hierarchical organizational structure. At the national level was the *Maljis al-Shura* (Consultative Council). The *Maljis al-Shura* had five dependent national commissions, and this structure was replicated at the administrative and communal level (Roberts, 1994a: 448). Yet information on the institution's composition or functioning is nonexistent, suggesting that it was practically irrelevant. No statutes or regulations for its operation were published, and "meetings were held in private at irregular times" (Takeyh and Gvosdev, 2004: 45). The FIS never produced a list of official representatives in the *Maljis al-Shura*, nor did it lay out its decision-making procedures (Ciment, 1997: 93). In practice, supremacy was enjoyed by Madani and Belhaj, who officially were listed only as "spokesmen," The two leaders represented two very important albeit quite different constituencies of the FIS. Madani was a moderate, Western-educated university professor and represented the moderate and political wing of the FIS. Born in 1931 and part of an older generation of university graduates, he was "willing to compromise with modernism" (Ciment, 1997: 94). Originally a member of the FLN, he broke with the party later in his life and established a strong Islamist presence at the University of Algiers (Roberts, 1994b: 449). Belhaj, on the other hand, was first and foremost a man of religion. Born in 1956, he was a high school teacher of Arabic and a lay

preacher who represented impoverished, desperate, and mostly younger voters of the FIS. Known for his fiery and militant rhetoric, he offered a radical critique of the Western world and pursued a total overhaul of the Algerian state (Entelis, 1994: 67).

The dual nature of the FIS leadership succeeded in appealing to a large number of Algerians. Small merchants, civil servants, and college graduates were the predominantly moderate constituency of the party. These groups struggled with the consequences of the economic crisis and sought an accountable and representative government. The other wing of the FIS was composed of young men suffering from increased unemployment (Takeyh and Gvosdev, 2004: 46-47). This duality, however, created serious problems for the party in signaling its intentions to the FLN and other groups in society. The contradictions and fissures within the FIS can be underlined by evaluating public statements of both leaders. In his speeches, Madani repeatedly stressed his party's commitment to democracy and the willingness to cooperate with other parties:

> "Pluralism is guarantee of cultural wealth and diversity needed for development. Democracy, as we understand it means pluralism, freedom, and choice." (Takeyh and Gvosdev, 2004: 46)

> "We will leave the word to the people. Whether we are in power or not, democracy means diversity, choice, and freedom. We have promised this, God willing, and keep our promise." (Reuters, 16 June 1990)

> "We are not egoists. We feel no aggressiveness toward the FLN, since in those regions where we did not present lists of candidates, we called on people to vote for the FLN." (*Libération*, 14 June 1990)

Remarks made by Ali Belhaj starkly contrast with Madani's:

> "Yes to pluralism within an Islamic framework. But if today Berbers, communists and all others are going to express themselves our country is going to become a field of competing ideologies at odds with the belief of our people." (Reuters, 7 March 1989)

"We will not barter *shura* [consultation] for democracy. It is Islam which has been the victor, as always, not democracy. We did not go to the ballot boxes for democracy." (*Le Monde*, 17 June 1990)

"As for the secularists, pseudo-democrats, atheists, feminists, francophones, and other evil doers, the day we gain power, we'll put boats at their disposal which will take them home to their motherland, France." (Lloyd, 2006: 186)

"When we are in power, there will be no more elections because God will be ruling." (Takeyh and Gvosdev, 2004: 46)

The ability of the FIS to appeal to diverse constituencies was also reflected in the party's lenient membership criteria. The FIS distinguished between sympathizers, supporters, and activists. It did not require sympathizers or supporters to renounce their association with other religious or political groups, nor did they have to follow the leadership's commands (Labat, 1995: 187). The FIS, in consequence, represented a variety of Islamic tendencies. As Roudjia (1995: 74-75) points out, "the FIS must be considered a melting-pot for very diverse factions which have little more in common than Islam and the desire to put an end to a political situation in Algeria." Yet, as with the contradictions inherent in the party leadership, this inclusiveness came at a price. The unity of the FIS was precarious because it rested on an alliance of a diverse collection of forces (Taykeh, 2004: 47).

Apart from tensions apparent in the party organization and leadership, the party also failed to produce a coherent agenda. The party never published a detailed program and publicly only made bland assurances of restoring prosperity and order. The closest the party came to an official program was the presentation of a 15-point platform in April of 1990. The points were rather vague and mostly political in content. Only three points were Islamist in nature, including a call for *sharia*, a moderate proposal regarding the role of women, and a demand for educational

reform in line with Islamist thought. Traditional values of Islamist movements were "veiled in the blandest possible language and introduced very low down on the list" (Roberts, 1994a: 455). Lacking a coherent program and cohesive party organization, contradictions soon appeared in the FIS' policy positions. First, the FIS abandoned its initial opposition against "godless Baathism" and embraced a pro-Iraqi position during the First Gulf War. While this decision was supported by the moderate wing of the party, it weakened Madani's position relative to the strictly Islamist element on other issues. Second, influenced by its moderate wing, the FIS had endorsed liberal economic policy, which was essentially the position of the FLN since Benjedid. This position, however, meant that the FIS had little different to offer to the urban poor it claimed to represent. In need of a radical political project to divert attention from this issue, the FIS repeatedly stated its intent to establish an Islamic republic once elected to power (Roberts, 1994a: 456).

In addition, the FIS did not develop ties to established social institutions such as unions or religious organizations. This failure, however, is most likely the result of circumstances outside the FIS' control. First, the FLN under Boumediénne had successfully co-opted all independent social institutions, including unions and student organizations (Ciment, 1997: 40-41). Tight control by the authoritarian regime made it impossible for the FIS to establish such linkages. Second, the absence of ties to religious organizations stems from the nature of Islam rather than the FIS' intent. Sunni Islam lacks a religious hierarchy and is egalitarian in nature (Ciment, 1997: 74; Quandt, 1998: 102). The FIS, therefore, could not improve its credibility by establishing linkages with existing institutions.

After the FIS won a majority of seats in municipal elections in June 1990, the tensions between radical and moderate elements in the party became increasingly eminent. Councils now controlled by the FIS suspended mixed education in schools, prohibited the sale of alcohol,

limited the ability of women to work and instructed them to wear the veil, and banned popular music festivals. Yet at the same time, the moderate wing restated its commitment to democracy and good relations with the West. Madani declared: "Algeria is not Iran, or Saudi Arabia. All we want is a return to our traditional values." (*The Economist*, August 4, 1990: 31).

Strengthened by the election results, the FIS demanded early parliamentary elections (originally not scheduled until 1992). Benjedid eventually gave in and scheduled the election for June 1991. However, the passing of a new electoral law, designed to disadvantage opposition parties, mobilized radical elements in the FIS. The FIS responded by calling a general strike and engaged in violent confrontations with security forces (Ciment, 1997: 56). The Benjedid administration postponed the elections to December and eventually quelled protests by establishing a new prime minister. The December election, however, resulted in another FIS victory. Algeria was now faced with a government takeover by a group that had failed to clearly establish its commitment to democracy. The military intervened, cancelled election results, and used force against the Islamists.

Taken together, the above discussion of the FIS' organizational structure highlights how internal divisions contributed to the occurrence of violence in the Algerian case. The party's leadership and public support was divided into a moderate and a radical wing and lacked an organizational entity that could resolve conflicts between the two. As Kalyvas (2000) notes, this outcome is in part an unfortunate consequence of Islam's egalitarian nature. Quandt (1998: 102) similarly argues that "there is no single interpretation of what Islam requires of its followers. As has been frequently noted, there is no formal hierarchy in Sunni Islam, nothing comparable to the papacy as a source of infallible interpretation." Absent a strong, hierarchical religious authority, the FIS represented a mix of divergent interpretations of Islam. Some of its currents were

moderate, some radical, but the party lacked an organization that could force it to speak with one voice. Finally, the absence of ties to existing institutions further put the FIS' credentials into question, which may have influenced the military's decision to intervene and cancel election results.

Of over fifty parties that registered after the passage of Algeria's law on parties in July 1989, the FIS clearly dominated the opposition during Algeria's period of political liberalization. I will now briefly discuss other relevant opposition parties and then investigate the level of cooperation between these parties and the FIS. Among opposition parties, one important distinction is between religious and secular parties. There were two religious opposition parties of national importance. First, the Hamas party under Mafhoud Nahnah was an Islamist group close to the Egyptian-based Muslim brotherhood (Quandt, 1998: 50; Tahi, 1995: 209). Second, Abdallah Djaballah, who had organized Islamist student protests in Constantine, founded his own party An-Nahda. Both parties were relatively moderate, but with a clearly Islamist message and goals similar to those of the FIS. Why did these parties fail to cooperate with the FIS and unite against the regime? Roberts (1994a: 450) suggests that the FIS itself brushed such competitors aside out of fear of inhibiting "its confrontational posture vis-à-vis the FLN." Incorporating these parties would have weakened Madani's and Belhaj's leadership position within the FIS and threatened the outlook and posture of the party towards the regime. Another explanation is suggested by Tahi (1995: 209), who argues that Hamas and An-Nahda "were created by the regime in order to split the Islamist movement." Similarly, Ciment (1997: 95) suggests that the praise Hamas received for its moderate message "led many to assert that Hamas is, in fact, a creation of the FLN." Both parties failed to garner a significant number of seats in municipal and parliamentary elections and had little influence thereafter.

Two secular parties, the Socialist Forces Front (FFS) and the Rally for Culture and Democracy (RCD), played a role nationally. While both parties had clear regional strongholds in the Berber-dominated part of Algeria, they competed nationwide in municipal and parliamentary elections (Ciment, 1997: 118-122). The FFS was a social democratic party founded under Ben Bella's dictatorial regime, and is probably the only Algerian party that consistently upheld its commitment to democracy (Tahi, 1995: 211). This commitment, however, made the FFS an unlikely coalition partner for the radical elements in the FIS. The RCD was a strongly nationalist party that promoted cultural nationalism in the Berber region with little appeal for Arab Algerians (Ciment, 1997: 122). Tahi (1995: 206) argues that the RCD was in fact a construct of the FLN regime, designed to play a clientelist role in the Berber region and to destabilize the FFS.[67]

Non-fundamentalist voters that did not want to support the FLN thus had few options to consider during Algeria's short experiment with democracy. The FFS represented democratic values, but appealed mainly to ethnic Berbers. All other relevant opposition groups were suspected of collaborating with the FLN regime, thus leaving people with few electoral choices. It is a subject of debate whether these suspicions originated in the FIS in an attempt to weaken its competitors, or whether they truly were satellites of the incumbent regime (Roberts, 1994a; Tahi, 1995). What is evident, however, is that the lack of cooperation between opposition groups was clearly detrimental for the opposition's position relative to the government. The internal divisions of the FIS and the lack of cooperation between the FIS and other opposition parties seriously weakened the opposition's credibility as a viable alternative to the FLN regime.

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[67] The RCD's support for the regime's decision to cancel election results lends credibility to this argument (Volpi, 2003: 52).

***Chile's Transition to Democracy***

When studying Chile's transition to democracy in 1989, it is necessary to understand

what led to its breakdown in the early 1970s. I will first discuss events leading to the election of

Allende as President in 1970 and the military coup in 1973. A subsequent section summarizes

key developments during Pinochet's military rule. It is followed by a description of the

reemergence of democracy.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Chilean party system witnessed increasing polarization.

Electoral reforms adopted in 1958 greatly limited cross-party bargaining and thereby contributed

to system polarization (Valenzuela, 1989). The reforms coincided with a decrease of electoral

support for the right and the emergence of Christian Democrats as an alternative center party

(Valenzuela, 1999). A decline in peasant living standards combined with increasing Church

intervention greatly expanded Christian Democrats' support base. From 1957 to 1965, electoral

support for the Christian Democratic Party increased from 9.4 to 42.3 percent (Scully, 1995). In

consequence, party leaders increasingly questioned the logic of coalition governments that had

dominated Chilean politics and, as Scully (1995: 121) describes, adopted a "*camino proprio* (go-

it-alone) formula," The behavior of Christian Democrats alienated the parties on the left and

right and thus undermined the possibility of electoral coalitions.

As a result of this polarization, the three major party blocs were unable to strike pre-

electoral coalitions in the run-up to the 1970 presidential election. Socialist candidate Allende,

supported by a coalition of leftist parties called Popular Unity, won the election by a plurality of

36.2 percent. His victory only provided him with a narrow margin over the votes received by the

rightist and the Christian Democratic candidates (Valenzuela, 1999: 218). In need of majority

support for the accession to the presidency, Christian Democrats supported the left in confirming

Allende. However, the lack of majority electoral support and the absence of a majority coalition supporting him in Congress seriously weakened Allende's position (Scully, 1995). In addition, his own electoral coalition was divided over the future institutional framework of Chile. As Valenzuela (1999: 219) describes, "important elements in the coalition were openly committed to a revolutionary transformation of Chilean politics."

Fearing the establishment of a Communist system in Chile, sectors on the right organized against the leftist coalition, and mobilization quickly spiraled out of the control of party elites (Scully, 1995). Allende, believing that his coalition could prevail by using state power, passed a series of redistributive economic measures that increased inflation and led to economic problems. By 1973, competition had become so intense that conflicts increasingly spilled on the streets. When congressional elections held in the same year yet again failed to produce a decisive victory for either of the competing blocs, the armed forces stepped in and a military junta took power.[68]

The military declared a state of emergency and held mass raids. An estimated 1,500 people died in the months after the coup.[69] The military junta prohibited public meetings, restricted personal movement, put Congress into recess, and suspended all political and party activities (Caviedes, 1991). In 1974, General Augusto Pinochet was selected as president of the Junta and named President of the Republic the same year. He quickly consolidated his position within the army by retiring officers that were suspicious of him and promoting others loyal to his rule (Valenzuela, 1999: 223). A free enterprise economy was the cornerstone of his rule, and the privatization of national industries rendered powerful unions ineffective. By 1977, Pinochet had

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[68] In addition, U.S. efforts to undermine the Allende government contributed to an atmosphere of confrontation (Valenzuela, 1999: 220).
[69] The estimates are from the Organization of American States, Commission of Human Rights "*Informe Sobre la Situacion de los Derechos Humanos en Chile,*" Washington, D.C.: 1985.

created a tabula rasa in the institutional, economic, and political spheres of the country, and wanted to complement it with a new constitution (Scully, 1995). The Constitution included provisions for an eight-year transitional period until the return of free elections, prohibited parties on the left, and abolished local and provincial governments. As Valenzuela (1999: 226) points out, the result was "a hyper-presidential regime with sharply reduced prerogatives for Congress." The military, nevertheless, felt the need to create a semblance of legality and subjected the Constitution to a national referendum. The document, however, was negotiated behind closed doors, lacked any input from political opposition groups, and was not made public until a few weeks before the plebiscite (Caviedes, 1991).

The referendum revealed almost 70 percent of popular support for accepting the Constitution, providing a boost to the military regime. Opposition groups – forced to operate clandestinely - had failed to offer workable alternatives and remained beset by the divisions that had led to the breakdown of democracy. The collapse of Chile's economy in the mid-1980s, however, triggered a protest movement that led to the reassertion of political parties (Valenzuela, 1999: 227). In the months prior to the 1988 referendum outlined in the Constitution, thirteen opposition parties formed an alliance named Concertación. To the surprise of many, particularly within the government, voters rejected Pinochet with a margin of 54.7 percent to 43.0 percent (Scully, 1995: 124). This outcome, however, put opposition leaders in a difficult situation. They had won the vote by emphasizing the illegitimate and undemocratic nature of the regime. Yet the military still controlled the armed forces, and as Valenzuela (1999: 231) describes, the opposition "feared that they might renege on the promise of holding free and open presidential elections if they felt overly threatened." To encourage compromise, the opposition accepted the

1980 constitution, but negotiated a set of amendments to remove some of its undemocratic features.

In response to this defeat, the Pinochet regime adopted an electoral formula tailored to favor its supporters in the upcoming elections. Yet the same coalition of parties united behind a single slate of candidates for congressional elections and nominated a single candidate for president. The Concertación's candidate, Patricio Aylwin, won the presidency. In addition, the coalition won a majority in the House.[70] General Pinochet accepted the outcome of the plebiscite and elections, at least in part because he did not have to fear for his immediate survival. The 1980 Constitution guaranteed him continued powerful influence, as it allowed him to remain commandant of the armed forces and head of the army (Oppenheim and Borzutzky, 2006). Chile's first democratic government maintained solid economic growth, confronted human rights violations, and undertook further democratic reforms. The Aylwin administration successfully reestablished Chile's democratic traditions, and in 1998, Pinochet finally stepped down as head of the army.

### Opposition Cohesion and the Probability of Civil War in Chile

The following sections analyze how the cohesiveness of opposition parties in Chile influenced the country's peaceful transition to democracy. A first section focuses on the internal dynamics of Chile's main opposition parties. It is followed by an analysis of the cooperation between these parties during the Pinochet administration. A final section discusses the influence of opposition groups' ties to other social institutions, such as the Catholic Church and trade unions.

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[70] The alliance did not gain control of the Senate because of the presence of designated senators appointed by the military regime (Valenzuela, 1999: 232).

Prior to the military coup in 1973, the Chilean party system was characterized by a three-way division among parties on the left, the center, and a conservative but democratic right (Navia, 2006). Christian Democrats represented the political center, and Communists and the Socialist party were the most important groups among leftist parties. Parties on the right identified closely with the coup and reacted favorably to the establishment of military rule. As a result, rightist parties ceased to exist as organizations once the military took over power (Valenzuela and Valenzuela, 1986: 207). The imposition of a political recess on parties had major consequences for the parties on the left and Christian Democrats.

Leftist parties, which had constituted Allende's government coalition, were the ones most heavily repressed by Pinochet's regime. Many leaders of the Communist and Socialist parties had fled into exile, and many of its remaining members were jailed, tortured, or killed. Among the parties on the left, the Communists were best prepared to deal with the consequences of authoritarian rule. Established in 1922, the party was banned for most of the 1950s and thus had considerable experience with clandestine operations (Constable and Valenzuela, 1991: 272). The party was able to prevent infiltration and maintain their organizational unity despite the threat of arrest. Moreover, exiled party leaders in Moscow communicated with the rank and file through radio broadcasts (Valenzuela and Valenzuela, 1986). Yet a crisis resulted when party leaders (probably influenced by Moscow) adopted an insurrectionist strategy aimed at the violent overthrow of the Pinochet regime. Some local leaders objected to this strategy, and the violent message contributed to the isolation of the party from the anti-regime efforts by more moderate groups (Valenzuela and Valenzuela, 1986).

The Socialist party experienced the most significant leadership and programmatic struggles after the coup. The party had suffered from internal divisions since its foundation in

1933. As Constable and Valenzuela (1991: 277) write, they "had been rent by disputes between members who favored reformist policies and an electoral route to power and those who advocated a violent overthrow of the 'bourgeois' state." During Allende's three-year reign, competition between these two forces contributed to his government's difficulties. The militant sector was represented in the appointment of Carlos Altamirano as secretary general of the party, whereas party leader Clodomiro Almeyda stood as moderating force. After the coup, this division contributed to the emergence of several factions and consumed much of the energy of party leaders and followers. Combined with the harsh repression and fear of persecution by the Pinochet regime, the void created by dead and exiled leaders lasted for years. However, after a Communist assassination attempt against Pinochet failed in 1985, moderates within the Socialist party eventually gained the upper hand. Ricardo Núñez, leader of the moderate wing, called for the "construction of one great Socialist party" and pressed for a return to democracy (Constable and Valenzuela, 1991: 294). This shift within the Socialist party was crucial for the reestablishment of the party's internal cohesion and its participation in the coalition of parties that eventually succeeded in ousting the military regime.

The political center in Chile's political system was represented by the Christian Democratic Party. Generally, Christian Democrats enjoyed greater autonomy in their activities under authoritarianism than parties on the left. Their unique position was a function of the party's opposition against the Allende government, which they shared with the military regime. Valenzuela and Valenzuela (1986: 208) write that the Christian Democratic Party's leadership initially supported the coup "as the inevitable outcome of what it saw as the Popular Unity government's errors, ambiguities, and creeping totalitarianism." Christian Democrats, however, never supported the regime's claim that the Chilean crisis was one of regime and society. By the

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mid-1970s, it became clear that the military was not willing to transfer authority to a civilian government in the foreseeable future, and the party leadership broke with the regime (Constable and Valenzuela, 1991: 282). The government responded with increased repression against the party, and several of its leaders were killed or forced into exile. Nevertheless, oppression against the Christian Democrats never rose to the levels experienced by parties on the left. Strong ties with the Catholic Church and democratic parties in Europe provided it with a certain level of immunity and also contributed positively to the maintenance of the party structure (Constable and Valenzuela, 1991). This allowed the party to renew its leadership, hold frequent meetings, and engage in consultation with party members, thus preserving its internal cohesion (Valenzuela and Valenzuela, 1986).

While the preceding section emphasizes the internal structure of Chile's key opposition parties, relations between them were decisive for the opposition's ability to present itself as a unified, viable, and credible alternative to the Pinochet regime. In the years immediately after the coup, opposition parties were marred by the polarization and discord that had led to the breakdown of democracy. The first sign of cooperation that crossed party lines was the so-called Group of 24, which was founded in 1978 and included members of all parties, including Communists and Conservatives (Valenzuela and Valenzuela, 1986: 220). The group's goal was to develop a counterproposal to the Constitution developed by the military regime. The group lost its purpose, however, when the Constitution drafted by the government was adopted in the 1980 referendum. In 1983, a sharp economic downturn triggered a spontaneous protest movement that resulted in a rapprochement of opposition parties. A shared history of oppression by the military regime combined with the economic downturn reduced the historic divide between Socialists and Christian Democrats (Scully, 1995: 123). The two parties formed the

Democratic Alliance, which called for an immediate return to democracy. In 1985, the same parties joined forces in the National Accord for the Transition to Democracy. While both attempts failed to materialize, they nevertheless underlined parties' newfound capacity to cooperate.

The upcoming plebiscite on Pinochet's continued stay in office (as mandated by the 1980 Constitution) put opposition parties in a difficult situation. In particular, Socialists were divided on whether the plebiscite presented a valuable tool for popular mobilization, or whether participation would simply further legitimize the regime (Valenzuela, 1999: 228). Yet after the failed assassination attempt against Pinochet, radical forces calling for a violent overthrow were increasingly sidelined. Eventually, all opposition groups except the Communists decided to participate in the referendum.[71] Some smaller parties registered first, followed by Christian Democrats and Socialists. Constable and Valenzuela (1991: 301) write that "by 1988, Socialist groups were actively committed to the No campaign – and working together for the first time in ten years."

In the run-up to the referendum, the key problem for opposition groups was to unify their disparate forces and reassure voters of their ability to bring about peaceful, democratic change. In early 1988, a coalition of thirteen parties formed the Concertación for the No. Participation in the alliance ranged from conservative rightist groups to Christian Democrats in the middle to Marxist parties on the far left (Caviedes, 1991: 44). This broad spectrum of parties gave the coalition increased coherence and credibility. The coalition for the No vote emerged victorious in the plebiscite. Yet its success in the referendum meant that the coalition needed to transform

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[71] The decision on whether to participate was hotly debated within the Communist Party. When party officials reiterated the need to pursue a violent overthrow of the regime in a meeting, Constable and Valenzuela (1991: 302) quote a rank and file member's objection as follows: "An election is a form of a struggle too, and we feel we must do everything possible to defeat the dictatorship."

itself into a coalition that could actually govern. The Concertación had to unite behind a

consensual candidate for president and agree on single slates for congressional seats (Garreton,

1990: 69; Caviedes, 1991: 56). After lengthy negotiation, parties on the left agreed to nominate

Patricio Aylwin, president of the Christian Democratic Party, as the Concertación's presidential

candidate. In exchange, leftist parties were promised ample representation on Senate and

Chamber tickets. The Communist Party presented an additional obstacle for opposition forces. Its

refusal to participate in the coalition had the potential to undermine the opposition's united

electoral front. Yet in the end, Communists and the Concertación agreed to run a single master

slate. Communists would compete separately in a number of races in return for supporting the

coalition's candidates elsewhere. In his final appearance before the presidential election,

presidential hopeful Aylwin asserted the Concertación's message: "Never again will our

differences convert us into enemies."[72] Aylwin won the election with 55% of the vote, and the

Concertación dominated Chilean politics over the next 20 years.

In addition to the internal organization of parties and the cooperation between them, ties

with existing social institutions also contributed to the credibility of Chile's opposition coalition.

Many have emphasized the important role played by the Catholic Church in Chile's transition to

democracy (Garreton, 1986; Valenzuela and Valenzuela, 1986; Smith, 1986; Constable and

Valenzuela, 1991; Lies, 2006). Initially, historic ties between the Catholic Church and the

military resulted in an ambivalent position regarding the military coup. Nevertheless, the Church

refused to publicly legitimize the regime. Over the years, the Church became increasingly critical

of Pinochet's rule, in particular regarding its human rights violations and its economic policies

(Valenzuela and Valenzuela, 1986). Past proximity, furthermore, allowed the Church to continue

its operations relatively free from government interference. The Catholic Church thus took over

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[72] Cited in *La Epoca*, December 11, 1989, p.12.

important functions previously provided by collapsed social institutions (Smith, 1986: 277). It also created a host of institutions to support its activities. One such institution was the Vicariate for Solidarity, which provided legal defense against human rights violations. Others were soup kitchens, neighborhood organizations, mothers' clubs, and the like (Valenzuela and Valenzuela, 1986: 215).

Among political parties, Christian Democrats had the closest ties to the Church hierarchy and thus benefited the most from the institutional networks provided by the Church. "Help from Catholic foundations," Constable and Valenzuela (1991: 283) describe how the Church allowed "party leaders to behave as if they were respected professionals, maintaining a solid party structure and creating institutes to keep research and debate alive." Christian Democratic party leaders and the Church's Cardinal Fresno also became key facilitators of the emerging compromise between political parties. In early 1985, Cardinal Fresno arranged a series of private meetings with politicians from various parties, which eventually led to the acceptance of the National Accord (Constable and Valenzuela, 1991). However, Christian Democrats were not the only party that developed close relations with the Church. Its involvement in human rights and social issues led to closer identification of the working class with the Church. Members of leftist parties were the main victims of persecution by the regime, and the Church's role in the prosecution of human rights violations created important ties with supporters of Communist and Socialist parties (Smith, 1986: 285). This collaboration of Christian Democrats and sympathizers of leftist parties in Church-sponsored programs made important contributions to reconciliation between both groups. As Smith (1986: 293) points out, "such a process of practical cooperation is paving the way to greater mutual respect across party lines, respect that was sadly lacking in the last months of the Allende regime."

While less influential than the Catholic Church, party ties to labor unions also played an important role for Chile's peaceful transition. The adoption of a free market economy and subsequent privatization of state industries weakened the role of unions. In addition, the military passed a series of decrees that limited the representation of the rank and file's interests (Barrera and Valenzuela, 1986). Nevertheless, unions provided valuable organizational space for political parties restricted by an authoritarian regime. Prior to the military coup of 1973, labor unions very strongly reflected the tripartite division of the party system in Chile. Yet after the military takeover, developments toward an organized opposition to the regime occurred in unions before they did in political parties. In December of 1975, the ten most prominent leaders in the Chilean labor movements (thereafter known as the Group of Ten) formed an ongoing group to discuss, develop, and coordinate their position towards the junta (Barrera and Valenzuela, 1986: 243). The group sent open letters to the military junta, criticizing the government. Over time, a greater number of union organizations joined the group, and its importance increased.

Ties with the Catholic Church and labor unions, therefore, contributed to the peaceful outcome of the Chilean transition. The hierarchical structure of these organizations contributed to the development of a unified, cohesive, yet moderate opposition against the Pinochet regime.

### *Conclusions about Algeria and Chile*

Analysis of opposition groups during Algeria's and Chile's transition processes reveals the influence of group cohesion on the probability of civil war. The theoretical chapter argued that cohesive and hierarchical groups are better at making credible commitments. Analyzing this concept in narrative detail shows support for the argument and also provides a more nuanced picture of the causal nexus.

During Algeria's experiment with democracy, the main opposition party suffered from internal divisions, organizational deficiencies, and the lack of a clear program. The FIS was unable to define itself as a unified and credible alternative to the authoritarian regime. Internal contradictions, in addition, made it difficult for the party to achieve cooperation with other opposition parties, which would have increased its potential to form a coherent and credible coalition against the government. Finally, the party did not develop ties to existing social institutions. This failure was partly a result of successful cooptation of social organizations by the military regime and partly a function of the decentralized nature of Sunni Islam. When the FIS scored surprise victories in municipal and parliamentary elections, the government feared that radical elements would soon take over and establish an Islamist state. The military thus canceled election results and attempted to reestablish control by using force.

In the Chilean transition to democracy, parties were able to overcome divisions and polarization that had brought the country to the brink of civil war in the early 1970s. Socialist groups, long beset by internal tensions, united behind a moderate message after a failed coup attempt on Pinochet's life. This development opened up the door for negotiations with Christian Democrats. Parties in the center and on the left eventually formed a united, cohesive coalition against the military regime.[73] Moreover, party ties to the Catholic Church and unions also facilitated the emergence of a unified opposition. The Church, while traditionally closer to the Christian Democrats, attracted Socialists because of its engagement in human rights issues. The hierarchical structure of the church organization also helped moderate the Socialist position. Both Christian Democrats and Socialists cooperated with unions, which provided important organizational space in an otherwise repressive regime.

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[73] Communists did not participate in the Coalition for the No, which opposed the Pinochet regime in the referendum. Yet members of the coalition were able to negotiate an agreement with the Communists for the subsequent presidential and congressional elections.

The case studies also provide a more nuanced understanding of the theoretical concept. In particular, the cases show the consequences of internal divisions within parties on the probability of cooperation between them. Evidence from both countries suggests that intra-party frictions reduce the ability of inter-party cooperation. In Algeria, competition between a moderate and a radical wing within the FIS limited the party's ability to collaborate with other groups. Similarly, cross-party bargaining in Chile was difficult until tensions within the Socialist camp were resolved. A more comprehensive data collection effort on opposition groups, in particular with respect to the number of parties, their key organizational features, and the consequences of these features on the interactions between them would be valuable.

Are there alternative explanations that account for the divergent outcomes in the cases as well as or better than the argument put forward here?[74] The review chapter outlined two political explanations for the relationship between political instability and civil war. First, arguments claim that instability provides an opportunity for violent mobilization. Yet this approach cannot explain why political instability resulted in violent mobilization in one case but peaceful bargaining in the other. A second line of arguments expects that diversionary motives drive the use of violence by political leaders. In the Algerian case, little evidence for such strategizing exists – why would leaders initiate liberalization and hold elections twice before attempting to divert attention from threats to their leadership? In addition, the argument fails to explain why the Chilean military regime decided to hand over power without engaging in the use of diversionary force.

More generally, arguments have emphasized the role of economic factors and ethnicity on the probability of civil war. One economic explanation sees civil war as the result of utility

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[74] Two explanations brought forward in this study (the institutional structure of regimes and ethnic polarization) were held constant for the analysis and thus cannot account for the variation in the dependent variable.

calculations. In poor countries, the opportunity cost of civil war is low, increasing the probability of rebellion. Yet Algeria's GDP per capita in the late 1980s was almost as high as Chile's.[75] A second argument expects that grievances caused by economic inequality raise the risk of violence. However, Algeria's level of inequality in the late 1980s was actually lower than Chile's.[76] Finally, arguments on ethnicity expect that ethnic fractionalization and/or polarization increase the potential for inter-ethnic tensions and thus result in greater probabilities of civil war. Yet neither Chile nor Algeria exhibit significant ethnic divisions, and Algeria's civil war lacked an ethnic dimension (Lowi, 2004: 222).

In addition to the theoretical approaches discussed above, objections might be raised with regard to the Islamist nature of Algeria's opposition. The compatibility of Islam with democracy is still the subject of debate. However, there are examples of Islamist parties that have participated in elections and even taken on mandates peacefully. One recent case is the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey, which won a majority in the 2002 elections. Related to this point, one might argue that Chile's long experience with democracy and the absence thereof in Algeria drive the outcomes in both cases. Yet contradicting this argument is the fact that Chile experienced a violent takeover by a military regime not long before its return to democracy. The coup resulted in more than 1,000 deaths over a few months in late 1973. While prior experience with democracy has long been established as an important variable for democratic success (Huntington, 1991), democracy alone seems insufficient to avoid the onset of violence. In particular, the absence of precisely the conditions contributing to Chile's peaceful transition in the late 1980s had led to democracy's violent breakdown 17 years earlier. Polarization between

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[75] Algeria's per capita GDP in 1988 is $4,345 compared to Chile's $4,684. Data come from the Penn World Tables, version 6.1. Data are available at http://pwt.econ.upenn.edu/php_site/pwt61_form.php.
[76] Chile's GINI index for 1988 is 54.5, compared to Algeria's at 39. Higher numbers indicate greater inequality. Data come from Deininger and Squire (1996).

parties on the left, center, and right had resulted in democracy's collapse. Yet when party leaders put past divisions aside and formed a unified and cohesive opposition to the regime, a peaceful return to democracy became possible.

The goal of this chapter was to demonstrate the importance of the organizational structure of opposition groups on the onset of violence. The analysis of Algeria and Chile lends support to the theoretical argument, showing that organized, cohesive groups are better able to make credible commitments. Future studies of civil war, therefore, could benefit from greater emphasis on the role of opposition groups.

**Chapter 6: Conclusion**

This dissertation has argued that the onset of violence during times of political instability is the result of commitment problems incurred by government and opposition groups. Following a critical event, incumbents would like to offer concessions to other groups competing for authority, yet suffer from credibility problems. The government may expect to regain its strength in the future, which renders its offers to opposition groups incredible. Similarly, opposition groups may hope to become stronger in the future, making incumbents reluctant to transfer power. Incentives to renege in the future, therefore, limit the prospect for cooperation in the present. Unable to make credible commitments, actors may choose to use force to establish their preferred outcomes.

The dissertation also developed solutions to the commitment problem. The institutional structure of the government, the cohesiveness of opposition groups, and the distance between actors were expected to influence actors' ability to make credible commitments. First, leaders in authoritarian regimes that rely on a small group of supporters were argued to face greater difficulty in making credible commitments than other authoritarian leaders. Compared to this, leaders in single-party regimes or democracies should be more successful at securing a role in future governments as they can make use of their party organizations and integrate newly mobilized groups. Second, opposition movements with cohesive organizational structures and links to existing social organizations were expected to better avoid the onset of violence. Cohesive, hierarchical organizations are better at in-group policing and can therefore coerce more radical opposition members and enforce compromises. Third, groups with divergent preferences were expected have greater difficulty at making credible commitments. Ethnic

divisions can result in competing preferences over possible agreements, reducing the possibility of credible and peaceful negotiation.

Four tasks remain. A first section revisits key findings presented in the quantitative and qualitative analysis. The subsequent section addresses implications of the findings for the literature on civil wars. Implications for policymakers engaged in democracy promotion and conflict prevention are the subject of the fourth section. The final section of this chapter offers recommendations for future research.

Several key findings emerge from this dissertation. Empirical evidence strongly supports the expectation regarding the conflict-exacerbating effects of critical events. The theoretical chapter outlined how critical events weaken the government's power and provide incentives for incumbents to make concessions to the opposition. However, both government and opposition have incentives to renege on such agreements in the future, which can lead to bargaining failure and war. Using data on all countries in the state-system for the 1960-2004 period, findings indicate that critical events influence the probability of civil war as hypothesized. Economic crisis, defeat in international war, and changes in the international balance of power significantly increase the probability of civil war. Commitment problems incurred by both government and the opposition, therefore, contribute to violent conflict at the domestic level.

Expectations on the proposed solutions to the commitment problem are also supported. First, empirical findings confirm the theoretical argument with regard to leadership type. It was argued here that personalist regimes lack credibility because they are based on the exclusion of the vast majority of the population. Furthermore, personalist dictators must continually put checks on their most capable supporters to ensure their own survival, making it difficult for them to extend their support circle. Similarly, military regimes limit leadership position to members of

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the armed forces and are therefore unable to provide access to other groups in society. Single-party regimes and democracies, on the other hand, have mechanisms that allow for the credible inclusion of newly mobilized groups. Results in the statistical analysis demonstrate that military and personalist regimes are significantly more likely to experience civil war than other types of regimes.

Second, the theoretical section expected that cohesive, organized opposition groups are better able to make credible commitments. Groups with developed organizational structures can punish extremists, reducing fears of reneging among government actors. In addition, ties to existing institutions in society were argued to have a moderating influence on opposition groups. Both expectations are confirmed in a statistical and a small-N analysis. Using a simple indicator on the presence of opposition parties, the statistical analysis shows that groups organized as political parties are less likely to experience civil war. The existence of a party organization contributes to group cohesion and provides members with a hierarchical organization. In addition, political parties often have ties to other institutions in society, such as the Church or unions. To improve on the rough operationalization of the theoretical concept used in the statistical chapter, a detailed analysis of historical cases was conducted as a second empirical test. Algeria and Chile were selected as cases since the two countries exhibit significant variation in the institutional structure of opposition groups. Findings again confirm the theoretical argument. In Algeria, the dominant opposition party was marred by internal divisions, which undercut the group's credibility and contributed to the country's descent into violence. Chile's key opposition parties, however, formed a unified, cohesive, and clearly identifiable alternative to the Pinochet regime, which was crucial for the country's peaceful transition to democracy.

Finally, results confirm the anticipated effect of preference divergence. Groups with competing preferences were expected to suffer from greater credibility problems. Ethnic diversity is a possible cause for such preference divergence, as mechanisms for trust and cooperation are absent between different ethnic groups. Statistical results demonstrate that greater ethnic diversity significantly increases the probability of civil war, thus providing empirical support for the argument.

The findings emerging from this dissertation suggest four important contributions to the literature on civil wars. First, empirical findings constitute an important improvement over existing research on the relationship between political instability and civil war. The operationalization of political instability used here avoids the endogeneity problems present in other research. For example, Fearon and Laitin (2003) and Hegre et al. (2001) measure instability as fluctuation in polity scores, yet these scores may already include the occurrence of violence. Critical events occur prior to actual regime changes, thus steering clear of the inclusion of potentially violent events.

Second, the findings of this dissertation highlight the dynamic element of civil war. Currently, much research on civil wars emphasizes factors that exhibit little or no variation over time. Evidence on the relationship between poverty, income, or ethnic fractionalization and civil war are undoubtedly useful in helping us understand why some countries are more likely to experience civil war than others. Yet such arguments have difficulty explaining what triggers a shift from a stable political system to war. In demonstrating the conflict-exacerbating effects of critical events, this dissertation specifically addresses the dynamic element of civil war. The empirical section shows how economic crisis, defeat in international war, and changes in the international balance of power can produce such shifts from peace to war.

Third, the evidence presented in the dissertation provides empirical referents for the power shifts highlighted in the literature on commitment problems (Fearon, 1995; Powell, 2004, 2006). The dissertation shows that economic decline, war defeat, and changes in the international balance of power constitute such power shifts, thus supplying the micro-foundations for the causes of commitment problems in the domestic arena.

Finally, the dissertation provides empirical evidence for solutions to the commitment problem incurred in times of political instability. While power shifts can contribute to the onset of violence, it is shown here that actors vary in their ability to make credible commitments. The dissertation shows empirically how different types of regimes, the cohesiveness of opposition groups, and preference divergence between actors affect their credibility and thus the probability of civil war.

In addition to the dissertation's contributions to the academic literature on civil war, the findings have important implications for policymakers and international organizations active in the areas of democracy promotion, failed states, and/or conflict prevention. First, results suggest the need for greater collaboration between groups engaged in the aforementioned areas. Specifically, efforts on democracy promotion should be connected to work in conflict prevention. While the dissertation does not focus on democratization per se, democratic transitions are often triggered by the critical events emphasized here, thus making this study important for the field of democracy promotion. The findings of this research confirm earlier evidence suggesting a link between democratization and violent domestic conflict (Hegre et al., 2001; Snyder, 2000). The adoption of democracy is a key foreign policy goal of many Western policymakers and international organizations alike, yet the conflict-exacerbating effects of democratization are often neglected. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

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(OSCE), for example, is a large regional organization with a prominent role in democracy-related activities. In 2005, hostilities led to 300-500 deaths in Uzbekistan despite the OSCE's presence and activism in the country. The organization's inability to react to the violence has divided its members on the OSCE's future, particularly in the area of democracy promotion (Boonstra, 2007). It would be wrong to conclude, however, that the international community should limit or end its efforts in democracy promotion.[77] Rather, actors should be prepared for the potentially conflictual outcomes. Collaboration with groups active in early warning analysis for conflict prevention could be particularly useful.

Second, the findings presented here also imply that the international community should put greater focus on the period preceding actual regime change. Many organizations active in democracy promotion are most attentive to the monitoring of elections and the development of democratic intuitions for the post-transition period. However, the dissertation shows that the period preceding a handover of power is the most conflict prone. Violence can break out without an actual transfer of power or transition to democracy, as illustrated in the Algerian case. The critical events identified as causes of conflict could be useful additions to the list of proximate causes assembled by conflict prevention specialists (Clarke, 2005). Moreover, since most regimes today – even authoritarian ones - hold some form of elections, greater emphasis on the pre-election period would be useful. The pre-election violence recently experienced in Pakistan seemingly supports this notion.

Finally, the findings on possible solutions to the commitment problems can help identify the cases with greatest potential for violence. Results show that leadership type matters, and this

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[77] Mansfield and Snyder (2005), for example, imply that democracy in weakly institutionalized regimes would better be held off until more favorable conditions allow for peaceful democratization. Yet it is questionable how this could be achieved in practice, as long as the quest for democracy emerges endogenously. In addition, as Carothers (2007) points out, such recommendations can be used by authoritarian leaders as a convenient justification for staying in power.

knowledge should be helpful for the international community. In addition, the findings provide strong evidence for the positive effect of foreign governments' and international organizations' support for civil society and opposition parties in authoritarian regimes. Results show that the presence of organized, cohesive opposition parties makes a difference and can reduce the potential for violence.

This research, however, is not without limitations. Three aspects could particularly gain from additional research. First, a more unified approach with regard to the types of actors most likely to commit violence would be desirable. The dissertation focuses on leadership type for the government and the organizational strength for opposition groups. Yet it may be possible to combine these arguments into a single expectation on institutional strength or breadth, respectively. It is likely that moderates will gain the upper hand in groups governed by cohesive leadership and supported by broad social coalitions, regardless of whether they represent the government or the opposition. However, under what circumstances do groups decide to pursue broad coalitions and hierarchical leadership? Second, a more detailed understanding of shock events would be valuable. Different events may impact the probability of violence in diverse ways. For example, shocks such as the death of a leader or defeat in war will likely have immediate consequences for all actors, whereas the consequences of economic shocks may take longer to materialize. The 1982-1983 economic crisis in Chile, for example, undermined the legitimacy of the Pinochet regime and was crucial for the reemergence of opposition parties and thus the transition to democracy, yet its importance did not manifest itself until the plebiscite in 1989. Finally, the dissertation neglects the role of international actors. Governments may have friendly or belligerent relations with other actors, and the state of external affairs may have important consequences on the effect of political instability. For example, one may expect that

embattled leaders of states in rivalry are more likely to experience foreign intervention by opponents. Rival states may see domestic leadership weakness as an opportunity to support opposition groups more sympathetic to their own goals, and therefore intervene on the side of opposition groups.

Over the course of the past several months, competition over government authority has led to significant violence in the Philippines, Pakistan, Nigeria, Kenya, Nepal and, most recently, Zimbabwe. In all instances, government and opposition groups bargained over the future distribution of power, and violent fighting occurred despite its humanitarian, economic, and political costs. It was the goal of this dissertation to develop a general explanation of the relationship between political instability and civil war and help identify the cases most likely to experience violent conflict. It is my hope that this research will be informative for policymakers analyzing the violent turn of events in these recent cases.

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## Appendix

Table 7: Probit Model of Critical Events and Civil War (1,000 battle-deaths)

| Variable Name | Model 5 Estimate (Robust S.E.) | Model 6 Estimate (Robust S.E.) | Δ Probability Model 5 | Δ Probability Model 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Recession | 0.545*** (0.102) | — | +0.016 | — |
| War Defeat | 0.91*** (0.3) | — | +0.042 | — |
| Death in Office | -0.033 (0.156) | — | — | — |
| End of Cold War | -0.001 (0.131) | — | — | — |
| Critical Event | — | 0.311*** (0.068) | — | -0.007 |
| Democracy Level | -0.015 (0.009) | -0.02** (0.01) | —ᵃ | —ᵃ |
| Democracy Squared | -0.005*** (0.002) | -0.005*** (0.002) | —ᵃ | —ᵃ |
| Economic Development | -0.378*** (0.126) | -0.368*** (0.124) | -0.007 | -0.007 |
| N | 5,217 | 5,217 | | |

Note: Coefficients for cubic splines are not presented to preserve space. Columns 3 and 4 show the marginal effect of the significant variables on the probability of civil war. Variables are varied from one standard deviation below their mean to one standard deviation above for continuous variables, and from 0 to 1 for dichotomous variables. All other variables were held at their mean or modal values. Probabilities were calculated using the mfx command in Stata 9.2.
ᵃ Since the effect of democracy squared is non-linear, a linear change in probability cannot be calculated.
*** $p<0.01$ ** $p<0.05$

**Vita**

Ursula E. Daxecker was born in Innsbruck, Austria. She received her B.A. Equivalent from Leopold-Franzens Universität Innsbruck in 2001 and her M.A. from the University of New Orleans in 2003.