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**When Passion Dries Out, Reason Takes Control:**  
A Temporal Study of Rebels' Motivation in  
Fighting Civil Wars

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## Abstract

The literature on civil wars tends to understand people's decision to join a rebellion as the product of a *static* source of motivation – often greed or grievance. Most studies thereby assume that the reason behind starting a rebellion is the same as the reason behind continuing it. However, since civil wars are normally very dynamic entities, this assumption seems puzzling. The purpose of this study is thus to apply a temporal perspective on the study of rebels' motivation in order to examine how this is affected by the changing surroundings throughout a civil war.

By linking theory on greed and grievance with insights from motivational psychology, this paper argues that rebels are motivated by both reason and passion (the psychological equivalents to greed and grievance), but to different times. More precisely, it is argued that passion triggers civil war, while reason sustains it. A re-examination of two critical cases – the Liberian and Salvadoran civil wars – supports this argument. The findings contribute to the theorization of the field and provide one of few frameworks able to encompass both the outbreak and the continuation of civil war.

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# 1. Introduction

Since the end of the Second World War, intrastate wars – or civil wars – have been the dominant form of violence. 20 percent of all nations have experienced at least ten years of civil war during the last 50 years, and in the world's poorest region, Sub-Saharan Africa, almost a third of the countries entered the 90s with active civil wars (Blattman & Miguel, 2010: 4). These wars bring massive destruction to their countries, societies and citizens, and the social, psychological and economical costs last for many years (Collier et al., 2003: 15ff). Civil wars thus greatly affect the economy and thereby the livelihood of people, by destroying three of the most influential inputs to production (Chambers & Conway, 1992): human capital (see, UNCHR, 2007: 7, 23); physical infrastructure (e.g., Collier et al., 2003: 15); and social and political institutions. This has led one of the most influential scholars in the civil war literature, Paul Collier, to call civil wars “development in reverse” (ibid.: ix) and caused other scholars to argue that civil wars are one of the explanations of the income gap between rich and poor countries (Blattman & Miguel, 2010: 4). Citizens suffer tremendously from a civil war – people die and the economy dies with them – which makes one wonder: What makes people want to fight these wars?

In 1998 Collier and Hoeffler published what turned out to be the first article of several, arguing that rebels are motivated by economic opportunities when fighting civil wars. An explanation for the occurrence of civil wars which counterargued the narrative especially dominant within the Western media: that rebels are motivated by “raw *ethnic or religious hatred*” (Collier, 2000: 95). The debate between these two perspectives has been named the debate between greed and grievance. Through the last decade a large number of studies have been conducted, improving our understanding of the motivation of rebels to fight civil wars and the incentive structures surrounding them. Most of these studies have applied a static perspective to rebels' motivation, leaving potential changes in rebel motivation throughout a conflict unresearched. This is exactly the focus of this paper which attempts to answer the following research question: *How does rebels' motivation change throughout a civil war.*

Previous studies often distinguish between the onset and the continuation of a war without presenting either a sufficient theoretical explanation or empirical evidence. Among those is Stewart, who argues that economic opportunities might play a greater role later in the conflict (2000: 29), and Collier who argues that ethnic or religious cleavages could be used for mobilization purposes after the conflict has been started (2000: 95). Even though these studies soften their conclusions by opening up for other possible factors, they tend to stick to one explanation, thereby understanding rebels' actions as motivated by one static source. Based on previous literature, one would therefore not expect any change to happen in the motivation of rebels throughout a civil war. People are either rational or emotional, and either way they are that continuously.

This paper presents an alternative argument that moderates this understanding of one constant source of motivation. By introducing recent developments in the field of motivational psychology (e.g., Bracha & Brown, 2007; Kaufman, 1999) into the literature on greed and grievance, this paper will argue that the source of rebels' motivation can change fundamentally throughout a conflict. More precisely, it will be argued that (a) it is fruitful to broaden the concepts of greed and grievance to equal the psychological concepts of reason and passion. Based on this, it is argued that (b) people act in both passion (for instance due to grievances) and reason (for instance due to greed) depending on the environment facing them, and (c) since rebels are faced with very different situations in the onset of a conflict, where the mortality risk is extremely high, compared to in the midst of conflict, (d) it will take different motivational sources to make rebels choose to start a conflict and to continue it – namely, passion as the trigger and reason as the main sustainer. When asking if rebels are motivated by greed or grievance, one should therefore answer: Everything has its time.

This temporal approach has previously only been applied in few studies on civil wars. Regan & Norton argue that “grievance leads to collective behavior, but defection is always a problem, so rebel leaders resort to selective benefits that tap into self-interested behavior” (2005: 319), and Murshed & Tadjoeeddin argue that “grievances ... might be better at explaining why conflicts begin, but not necessarily why they persist” (2007: 1). However, both these studies leave a lot of questions unanswered. The contribution of this study is twofold. First, it develops a theoretical framework able to explain both civil war onset and continuation, thereby avoiding the theoretical shortcuts that Murshed & Tadjoeeddin (2007) and especially Regan & Norton's (2005) more inductive study, have to make. This is exactly what Blattman & Miguel call for in their review article on civil war, when emphasizing the need for consistent theoretical explanations (2010: 7). Second, the argument developed in this paper is tested against two in-depth reviews of critical case material. The empirical support for this theoretical framework is thereby a lot stronger than the single-case study methodology applied in several other studies. Even though this paper should mainly be seen as a modest effort to develop a theoretical framework able to explain rebels' motivation in a temporal perspective, the empirical part thus helps validating its potential findings.

The paper will be structured in six parts. Following this introduction, the theoretical framework will be developed by drawing on existing civil war literature and insights from motivational psychology. Hereafter, the strengths and weaknesses of the case study approach taken in this paper are discussed, and a case selection based on a most different systems design is presented. The fourth part of this paper reexamines two cases – Liberia and El Salvador – and assesses the explanatory power of the paper's argument. A critical discussion of the findings will be carried out in the fifth part, before a conclusion will sum up and point towards some policy implications.

## 2. A Theory of Rebels' Motivation

The literature on civil wars is extensive and has expanded dramatically the last half of a century. Studies have been conducted trying to explain the consequences of civil wars, its causes and even how to succeed strategically (for an overview, see Goodwin et al., 2001; Blattman & Miguel, 2010). The literature on consequences has shown how civil wars affect future investments and physical assets (e.g., Rodrik, 1999; see however, Cerra & Saxena, 2008); health and human capital (Bundervoet et al., 2009; Shemyakina, 2006); political and social institutions (e.g., Sambanis, 2007; Bellows & Miguel, 2006); and several other indicators. The overall conclusion has been clear: "Civil wars wreak mass destruction of infrastructure and livelihoods as well as lives" (Keen, 2010: 12).

This conclusion has throughout the last couple of decades fuelled the research on the causes of civil wars. Several approaches have been taken, among which the most dominant have been one of motivation (see however the feasibility perspective, Collier et al., 2006; and the international relations perspective, Vinci, 2006). Thus, studies have been collected on the motivation of different players, including the government and military (e.g., Theidon, 2009; Sanín, 2008), the rebel leaders (e.g., Sanín, 2003), and most importantly the ordinary rebels.

Why ordinary rebels *choose* to fight is the cornerstone in the understanding of civil wars. A rebellion needs the local people – the workers, the peasants and the craftsmen – to leave their peaceful lives and fight a war. Without ordinary people fighting, there is no civil war. A lot of studies have been carried out suggesting different sources of motivation behind rebels' decision to fight. Thus, ethnic and religious hatred (Lindberg, 2008); ideology (Faust, 1990); social networks (Theidon, 2009); fear (Vinci, 2006); economic prosperity (Le Billon, 2001); and power (Vinci, 2006) have all been found to affect rebels motivation for joining a civil war. That rebels' motivation is varied is underlined by Theidon, who finds that the rebels and paramilitary in Colombia were motivated by a lot of different sources counting fear and survival, the prospect of marriage and salaries (2009: 17).

### 2.1 Greed and grievance – competing perspectives on rebels' motivation

Several studies, such as those mentioned above, have shown how rebels are motivated by a range of factors. However, many of these have to some extent been either ignored or modified to fit into the dominating debate on rebels' motivation: Whether rebels are driven by "greed and loot-seeking [or by] grievance and justice-seeking" (Ballentine & Sherman, 2003: 4).

The greed thesis was developed based on econometric analysis showing that "the risk of civil wars has been systematically related to a few economic conditions" (Collier, 2006: 1), mainly the availability of lootable resources and low education among young men (Collier, 2000: 93-95; see also,

Ross, 2006). As Murshed & Tadjoeeddin describe it, “greed is about opportunities faced by the rebel group” (2009: 89). A rebel is said to be driven by greed, when he or she is motivated by economic opportunities, such as looting and military salaries. As Keen writes, this suggests that “war may dovetail into crime and we [therefore] need to rethink the relationship between the two” (Keen, 2000: 283). Collier’s approach thus fostered an understanding of rebels as mainly just criminals, which have led Duffield (2001) among others (e.g., Bøås & Dunn, 2007) to criticize this approach for unfairly delegitimizing all rebellions.

If we term a rebel’s “rational responses” as an act of greed (Bøås & Dunn, 2007: 4), Duffield’s critique seems relevant. For many ordinary rebels choosing the life as a rebel is not a choice of luxury but of bare necessities. This point together with the variety of studies showing different rational sources of motivation lead this paper to argue that a broader understanding of rebels’ rational decision making might be more appropriate. The rational choice perspective – cf. Hirshleifer’s (1995) game theoretical model – that has fostered the greed thesis will thus be improved by including other factors that has been shown to count in rational persons’ tradeoffs. Instead of a “greed” thesis, a *reason thesis* will therefore be developed, defined as the decision making process made by the rational man “Homo Economicus” (Archer, 2000: 36; Simon, 1993: 392).

A rebel motivated by reason will be driven by several factors to optimize his livelihoods. One of these is indeed economic incentives, as they are normally described by Collier and collaborators. In his study of the Russian civil war, Figes (1996) for instance shows that the number of desertions is ten times higher in summer, where peasants have crops as an income source, than in winter, where they have no economic alternative. That is, in the summer the opportunity costs of fighting is simply too high.

“Political power is an important instrument of economic power, setting the rules and determining allocation of employment, [and] of government economic and social investments” (Stewart, 2000: 10). This point suggests that the pursuit of political power and leadership should be thought into the rational calculus, since political and economic power can often be seen as somewhat equivalent. As Vinci shows in his study of the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda, “the notion of power includes, among other factors, economic wealth” (ibid.: 32). Furthermore, he argues that also survival is an important source of motivation for rebels when choosing whether to fight or not: The goal is “to survive first and foremost and obtain benefits secondarily” (ibid.: 33). This suggests the inclusion of the mortality risk in the rational calculus. Whether the survival prospects are best as a rebel or as a civilian is thus an important factor in a reason-based decision making.

Opposite to greed stands grievance, and opposite to reason stands passion. The literature supporting grievances as the main motivation behind rebels’ decision to fight argues that civil wars can be explained by “ethnic hatred” (Pugh et al., 2004: 1) or other cleavages between different groups of

people with different identities (Lindberg, 2008; Trejo, 2009). Initially this approach assumed that these grievances were based deep in the human psychology (for an overview see, Goodwin et al, 2001: 1-24). However, recent studies supporting the grievance thesis, explain grievances as a product of one's surroundings, such as the political and economical relationship between different groups often referred to as horizontal inequalities (Stewart, 2003; Østby, 2006).

When a rebel is motivated by grievances, he or she is driven by a feeling of injustice and a desire to punish the persons responsible for this. This source of motivation is not rational but emotional. It is an act of passion. However, passion includes more than just grievances (even though this by far is the biggest source). One could for instance imagine rebels being motivated by an ideology and thus a positive passionate pull. Suicide bombers stand as an extreme example of the irrationality of a passionate act that can be based on grievances as well as ideology. To include this ideological source of motivation, this paper will broaden the grievance thesis to be a *thesis on passion*.

As mentioned above the evidence on rebels' motivation is mixed. Rational sources of motivation have been found to drive rebels across both cultural, geographical and other background variables (see, Berdal & Malone, 2000; Nafziger et al., 2000). This has also been shown to be the case for passion-based motivation (see, Ballentine & Sherman, 2003; Goodwin et al., 2001). The question therefore still remains: Are ordinary rebels motivated by reason or passion when fighting civil wars?

## **2.2 Reason and passion – a theory of motivational psychology**

Reason- and passion-based studies are fundamentally different in their understanding of human – and thereby rebel – motivation and behavior<sup>1</sup>. As Goodwin et al. describe it, it is a difference between understanding rebels as “computers mechanically processing” tradeoffs or as “primitive group minds” (2001: 1-2). The two approaches thus assume that rebels are motivated purely by either reason or passion and as a consequence of this explain civil war as the presence of either atypical rational incentives or atypical grievances (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004: 564).

Many years of research in motivational psychology suggest differently. In his study of emotional arousal, Kaufman (1999) shows that people can be motivated by both reason and passion depending on the situation facing them. People normally try to apply a rational calculus to their decisions, but do often become affected by passions – like sympathy or antipathy – which makes them act somewhat irrational. Depending on the type and strength of this passionate arousal, people can end up acting exactly opposite what they would have chosen else wise as a rational actor (ibid.: 136). This interaction between reason and passion has been shown to apply to a broad range of people, including both men and women, young and old people and different nationalities (see, Goodwin et al.,

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<sup>1</sup> For a critical discussion of the distinction between reason and passion, see Goodwin et al. (2001).



2001: 9) as well as it has been proven to be the case across different decision situations, including voting behavior (Glenn, 2004), consumer choice (Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999); and of course private decisions such as who to marry and which job to take (Goodwin et al., 2001: 10-16). It is *human* psychology. People try to be rational but emotional influence limits one's cognitive skills and can lead to irrational actions (Kaufman, 1999: 137).

In 1922 Weber published one of the first studies exploring these emotional influences, when he showed how nervousness as well as anxiety led to somewhat irrational decisions (Weber, 1922). Several studies have elaborated on this and found that strong emotions, such as anger and disappointment, can lead to passionate acts completely offsetting any sense of reason. Recent game-theoretical experiments have thus shown how a feeling of unfair treatment can trigger passionate and irrational decisions. Koenings and Tranell (2007) for instance carry out an experiment based on the ultimatum game, showing that if people feel exposed to unfair treatment, they are ready to *punish* the guilty person even though this action puts costs upon themselves (ibid.: 951). Similar results have been found by studies using other game theoretical models, such as the prisoners' dilemma (e.g., Nikiforakis & Normann, 2008). A feeling of injustice can thus lead a person to act against his own rational interests, driven by passion.

Kemper (1978) describes such passionate emotions as "short-term", suggesting that the point of departure for a human decision making is always an attempt of rationality. Other scholars, however presents the possibility that passions can be long-term as well as short-term. Thus, Jasper (1998) presents a distinction between emotions such as shock and anger, which he describes as shorter term, and emotions such as loyalty and moral outrage, which he describes as longer term. The latter group of feelings can hypothetically drive a person – or a rebel – to act in passion for a longer period of time.

In sum, human decision making is in general driven by reason, but emotional arousal can lead to irrational acts of passion to varying degree and for varying periods of time. Whether reason or passion is the source of motivation is a product of the surrounding conditions. These insights from motivational psychology have – to the knowledge of the author – been absent in the literature until now.

### **2.3 Reason and passion in rebels' motivation – the introduction of a temporal dimension**

A civil war is a very dynamic entity. A rebel is exposed to changing power relations, loss of family members and assets, identity crises, huge possible benefits, and depressing costs. Thus, emotional affections and rational incentives "appears and disappears in response to what is happening in one's surroundings" throughout most civil wars (Goodwin et al., 2001: 4). As it was described above, the source of human motivation is a product of surrounding conditions and since these are very variable, a more dynamic view on rebels' motivation will be appropriate. This paper therefore introduces a

temporal dimension distinguishing between the situation facing rebels before the outbreak of a civil war and under the course of one.

### 2.3.1 The outbreak of civil war: Passion as the trigger

As Collier pointed out, every beginning of a civil war is characterized by a “collective action problem”: a group of people have a shared interest in starting a rebellion to bring about justice, but no one has the incentive to fight for this shared interest (2000: 98). The individual is faced with an incentive to free-ride and let other bear the risk of fighting, which leads to collective inactivity. This insight made Collier argue that grievances would not be able to explain the outbreak of a civil war (ibid.: 99). The only possible explanation why civil wars broke out despite the collective action problem was the presence of individual economic in-process benefits (ibid.).

That reason should be the driving force behind the outbreak of civil wars, as it is argued by Collier and collaborators, seems unrealistic for two major reasons. First, the mortality risk in the beginning of a conflict is severe. “Every rebellion has to start small before it can become large” (ibid.), and in the period where the rebellion is still small the mortality risk facing its participants will be extensive due to the little number of people sharing the costs and the unequal power balance between the rebellion and the governments’ forces (ibid.; Lindberg, 2008: 14). As Mason describes it, young rebellions are often “crushed with great brutality” by the military (1999: 181). A benefit outweighing a potential cost of this size would have to be enormous. Even taken into consideration the fact that rebels often initially have little to lose, it is still hard to imagine that people would be willing to risk their own and their families lives for a lottery ticket unless the jackpot is unrealistically high.

This point is furthermore underlined by a second outbreak characteristic: time inconsistency. Several studies have emphasized the fact that most economic benefits do not arrive until late in the rebellion (Lindberg, 2008: 15; Collier, 2000: 99). This means that even if the private benefits facing the individual can outweigh the costs associated with high mortality risk, the rebel still faces a situation where he or she carries the costs now and have to wait for a possible benefit until later. Not only are poor people in the economics literature often associated with high discount rates, meaning that they value an immediate cost or benefit much higher than a future one (Grimble et al., 2002: 23), the future benefits do also have to be shared among a much larger group of people, including people who did not share the same initial risk.

For rebels to start a rebellion they therefore need to be motivated by things other than reason. This brings passion into the discussion. As mentioned above people driven by passion do not think in rational calculuses and can therefore overcome the disincentive to fight. A feeling of injustice, disappointment and unfair treatment can thus cause these passionate acts to happen and thereby be the trigger of a civil war. This explains why heavy rainfall and transient poor have been seen to correlate

with the outbreak of civil war, while chronic poverty has not (Miguel et al., 2004; Goodhand, 2003). People's decision to start a civil war is a response to the disappointment and perceived injustice of declining welfare; a response of frustration and anger towards the people they find responsible (Nafziger & Auvinen, 2000: 96).

In sum, the outbreak of a civil war would be expected to be characterized by rebels motivated by passion, not by reason. The beginning of a conflict is thus triggered by events that will cause ordinary people to get a strong feeling of injustice and bring them to act against what a rational calculus would suggest.

### 2.3.2 The continuation of civil war: Reason as the sustainer

After a civil war has broken out, what makes it continue? As Lindberg writes, "some conflicts are terminated after only a few days while others last several decades" (2008: 1). Understanding this difference is a central element in understanding the cause of conflicts. Since the situation facing the rebels in the middle of a war is very different from those facing them before the outbreak, we cannot automatically assume that the source of motivation found in the first instance applies to the second.

At some point after the onset, a civil war will end up in some kind of equilibrium, where the rebellion will be well established and the warfare going on. This changes the incentive structures and emotions affecting the (potential) rebels. First and foremost, the mortality risk can be expected to change dramatically. Several studies have shown that being a civilian in a war zone is extremely dangerous and in some instances even can incentivize people to join one of the fighting sides out of pure survival (Laband, 2007: 2; Kilcullen, 2009: 39). In his analysis of the war in Afghanistan, Kilcullen for instance shows how 90% of Taliban is just ordinary people joining, because "they're afraid that if they reconcile, the crazies will kill them" (ibid.). Secondly, the time difference between paying the costs and receiving the benefits of fighting, which characterized the outbreak, is not present in the midst of the conflict, where the economic inflow from resource rents, systematic looting, diasporas' support etc. allows benefits to be paid immediately. These two changes in the incentives structures facing rebels result in a situation where rebels might choose to fight if the job and income opportunities are better inside the rebellion than outside. The civil war can thereby fulfill the function of providing physical and economical safety, and reason can much likely motivate people to keep fighting (Keen, 2000: 283, 290). A range of quantitative studies support this argument. While Collier et al. (2004) and Humphreys (2005) do not find any correlation between the presence of resources and the duration of conflict, Fearon (2004) and Ross (2006) both find significant effects when only including those resources that are lootable, such as drugs and germs.

The situation might incentivize a rational person to fight, however this does not mean that people actually act based on reason. This is dependent on the level of emotional arousal. Jasper (1998)

suggests that certain emotions can last for long periods, which makes it possible that the same passion that triggered the rebellion can sustain it. However, Kaufmann (1999) argues that this is less likely. He shows that after responding to one's passion by reacting in outrage, this passion slowly stops exerting "motivational pull" (ibid: 140). Passion – for instance based on grievances – will therefore often dry out, and leave reason in charge as the source of motivation. A range of studies on the duration of civil wars support this argument. Balch-Lindsay & Enterline (2000) for instance find that political grievances do not have a significant effect on the duration of conflict. A conclusion supported by a range of other studies (e.g., Gleditsch et al., 2009; see however, Lindberg, 2008).

In sum, a conflict can be sustained both by passion and reason. However, there is a strong tendency – both in game theoretical experiments and econometric analysis – that passion dries out as the war proceeds causing reason to take over as the main source of motivation.

### 3. Case Study Methodology

To assess the explanatory power of the argument presented above, this paper carries out a qualitative, explanatory two-case study design. The cases presented are selected based on a critical selection method maximizing the variation of case material and thereby the strength of the test. The re-examination will be based on existing secondary literature and the range of sources these draw upon from interviews over documents to biographical accounts (David & Sutton, 2004: 111).

Whether qualitative or quantitative research is best at understanding the causes of civil wars has been much contested in the literature (for an overview see, Fearon & Laitin, 2008). Proponents of the case study method have criticized quantitative research for not being able to state causality and not being careful enough in the use of proxy variables (e.g., Sambanis, 2004: 259; Ballentine & Sherman, 2003: 4), and proponents of econometric analysis have criticized qualitative research for not being able to draw inferences to a broader range of cases and for being too reliant on rebels' own statements (e.g., Collier, 2000: 92).

To answer the question posed in this paper the case study approach is superior. This is due to two main reasons. First, the purpose of this paper is to understand the causal relationship between the source of rebel motivation and the choice to fight in-depth. The high internal validity and focus on causal mechanism characterizing a case study is therefore necessary (Gerring, 2007: 43). Secondly, this paper takes a longitudinal micro-level approach focusing on the changes on individual level. Such quantitative data do simply not exist at the moment.

#### 3.1 Case selection

A crucial part of case study research is the case selection (Eisenhardt, 1995: 71). Most studies on civil wars choose their case(s) after convenience making them more of an example of their theory than an actual test (e.g., Korf, 2005; Vinci, 2006; see, Geddes, 1990). This paper bases the case selection on two criteria: the cases should be least-likely to confirm the theory in this paper – that is, they should be “critical cases” (Ruddin, 2006: 797) – and should apply to a most different systems design (Gerring, 2007: 90).

Since this paper argues that neither greed nor grievance stands alone in the motivation of rebels, choosing one strong case from each of these literatures will present a critical test. Ballentine & Sherman emphasize four cases as “paradigmatic examples of greed-driven rebellion” (2003, 10): Angola, DRC, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Since the former three have been subject to in-depth re-examination (see, Cater, 2003), this paper will concentrate on the dynamics in the first Liberian civil war. In Wood's study on El Salvador she concludes that “emphases on material interests ... do not adequately

explain political mobilization" (Wood, 2001: 267). The Salvadoran civil war thereby makes a critical case for the argument, that wars are primarily sustained by reason.

By revisiting these two cases, this paper exposes its theoretical framework to a critical test. If these two widely different cases show the same tendency – that passion triggers war and reason sustains it – it is most likely that similar tendencies will be present in other conflicts. This increases the extent to which this paper's findings can be generalized to a broader range of cases (Ruddin, 2006: 797).

### **3.2 Conceptualization and operationalization**

As Ballentine & Sherman emphasize, one of the biggest problems in contemporary research on civil wars is the lack of solid conceptualizations and operationalizations (2003: 7). "Theories seldom specify the empirical predictions that can test between competing accounts" (Blattman & Miguel, 2010: 7), which often leads to different interpretations of the same phenomenon. Both Collier (2000) and Stewart (2000) for instance interpret low levels of education as support for their argument – that is, as a proxy for greed and grievance respectively. This has also been shown to be a problem in case study research (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004: 565; Adcock & Collier, 2001: 529). Before proceeding to the analysis of the cases, an explicit presentation of the observation criteria will thus be appropriate.

The purpose of this study is to identify what motivates rebels to fight (or don't fight) in the beginning and in the middle of a conflict. The focus is on the individual rebel and how his or her perceptions lead to action. Whether the perception objectively can be said to be mistaken is not an issue in this paper (see, Collier & Hoeffler, 2004: 565).

To state passion as the source of motivation two criteria needs to be fulfilled. First of all, one needs to identify a strong group feeling and an antipathy towards outsiders. Second, a feeling of injustice and hatred towards an enemy (or alternatively love and sympathy towards a goal) needs to be made probable. Statements in interviews, objective events (especially ones creating sudden changes in people's life) or horizontal inequalities can all be used to assess whether this is the case or not. If these two criteria are fulfilled, it is most likely that rebels are driven by passion.

Since passion offsets reason – as explained above – first criteria to state reason, is to make it unlikely that passion access sufficient motivational pull. Is this the case, rebels will most likely be acting in reason. To confirm this, one furthermore needs to make sure that the expected behavior based on the incentive structures facing the individual rebel (the mere existence of resources is not sufficient, we need to make sure that these are actually available for the individual rebel) equals the observed behavior. To do this, observations of rebel strategy and behavior (e.g., are they looting or not) is a strong source, however, also interviews can bring insights into this question (e.g., Theidon, 2009). The focus is on the "private calculus of costs and benefits" (Stewart, 2000: 13).

## 4. Empirical Evidence: Two Critical Cases

In this part, the first Liberian (1989-1996) and the Salvadoran (1980-1992) civil wars will be examined. The focus in these case studies will be to understand the motivation behind rebels' decision to either fight or not in the outbreak and in the midst of a civil war respectively. The purpose of these case studies is not to present a detailed account of the history and course of the two conflicts (for the first Liberian war see, Ellis, 2007; Moran, 2006; Atkinson, n.d.; for the Salvadoran war see, Montgomery, 1995; Wood, 2003), but to build a picture of the incentives and emotions affecting rebels at different times in these conflicts.

### 4.1 Liberia 1989-1996: A classic case for the greed thesis

The literature on Liberia describes a highly heterogeneous population divided into 16 different ethnic groups dominating different parts of its territory, where the Gio, Mano, Krahn and Mandigo are the most dominant (Hegre et al., 2009: 605). Of natural resources the country produces and exports timber, rubber and diamonds – the latter especially during the civil war (CIA, 2011) – however, without the people benefitting from it due to a neopatrimonial regime. This has been a constant source of instability and violence throughout the history of Liberia (Bøås & Hatløy, 2008: 36).

The first Liberian civil war broke out in 1989 and ended in 1996. It has been portrayed as a war on resources and an example of Kaldor's "new wars" (2007). The study on rebels' motivation has thus been highly guided by the search for economic motives (Reno, 1999; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Bøås, 2005; Ellis, 2007). An analysis of the rebels in Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) will try to broaden the perspective.

#### 4.1.1 The outbreak: Indiscriminate violence and the emergence of grievances

In 1980, Samuel Doe, an ethnic Krahn, took power in Liberia through a coup d'état. He did not only put people from his own ethnic group in most of the leading official positions, but also succeeded in keeping most of the Gios and Manos, which supported Doe's opponent, out of offices (Hegre et al., 2009: 607). In 1985, Taylor made the first attempt to overthrow Doe's government but failed and sought refuge in neighboring Cote d'Ivoire. This made Doe intensify the repression of Gios and Manos through indiscriminate violence targeting this group of people "by reason of their ethnic identity alone" (Ellis, 1995: 166). In 1989, Taylor tried again but this time his small group of rebels counting around a hundred men was joined by tens of thousands of Gios and Manos when entering the border to Liberia (Johnston, 2008: 121). They quickly established some degree of control in the Gio and Mano dominated areas from which most rebels were recruited. The civil war had begun: Doe ordered his ar-

my to attack Gios and Manos, and Taylor unleashed his forces on Krahns and Mandingos, which made up most of Doe's supporters (Bøås, 2005: 80).

The key to understanding the outbreak of the Liberian civil war lies in understanding the motivation behind those tens of thousands ordinary Liberians who left their homes and chose to start a civil war. They were not fighters or extremist; they lived "quite ordinary Liberian lives", 60% went to school and 25% were working (Bøås & Hatløy, 2008: 33, 41). The only thing they had in common, except to a large extent the ethnic background, was "a strong aversion to the incumbent president, Samuel Doe", rooted in the unfair and ethnic-based allocation of resources and political positions (Johnston, 2008: 121; Ellis, 1995: 166). This together with the indiscriminate violence which Doe initiated after the failed coup attempt in 1985 created so strong grievances towards the regime and the Krahns that when the opportunity came to act against Doe they mobilized to fight. Thus, it was a passionate act based on grievances and an urge to end the injustice.

Despite Doe's indiscriminate violence against civilians in Gio and Mano communities, people would not have chosen to fight if they had been motivated by reason. As mentioned above most people lived normal lives with family and occupation making the opportunity costs of fighting very high, especially taken into consideration that the army was very small when it entered Liberia and four years earlier had failed in its mission. Since the establishment of the rebel group was moved outside the country, one could argue that the critical point when a small rebellion turns large was somewhat neutralized due to the decrease in mortality risk due to starting in a safe haven. However, the rebel group did not actually expand before it entered Liberia, suggesting that people were disincentivized by their rational calculus. This disincentive was not overcome before the opportunity to react on the anger and physically punish the responsible arose.

#### 4.1.2: The continuation: "The income trap"

After the outbreak of the war the violence escalated. Doe targeted civilians in the Gio and Mano dominated areas with great brutality in an attempt to pacify potential NPFL recruits. However, this had the opposite effect and led a great number of Gios and Manos to join the rebellion in search for safety (Hegre et al., 2009: 608; see also, Keen, 2000: 290). By April 1990 NPFL dominated 90% of Liberian territory. As the rebellion had grown bigger Taylor had lost control over his forces, which had become more interested in the economic opportunities facing them than military targets. In an attempt to keep their loyalty Taylor introduced operations such as "Operation Pay Yourself", in which he granted subordinates formal permission to engage in the looting and plunder in which many were already engaged" (Johnston, 2008: 122). However, this did nothing but enabled these rather autonomous units to accumulate resources and thereby detach from Taylors's control (ibid.). This made NPFL splinter: "At one stage the countryside was contested by no less than eight armed factions", which



survived “by engaging in battles against each other and accessing valuable natural commodities as well as looting consumer goods” (Hegre et al., 2009: 608). During 1995 foreign involvement increased, including military presence from The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In 1996, six years after the death of Doe, Taylor signed a peace agreement – after refusing to attend any negotiations since the outbreak of the war – and in 1997 he was elected as Liberia’s president (Bøås, 2005: 83). The bloodshed did slow considerably, but did not end and in 1999 Liberia relapsed into conflict as the second Liberian civil war broke out.

As it is clear from the above, the rebellion quickly came to function as an industry. Thus, Taylor’s territory had its own “currency and banking system, telecommunication network, airfields [and] export trade (in diamonds, timber, gold, and farm products) to support arms imports” (Nafziger & Auvinen, 2000: 115). Since the formal Liberian economy experienced a fall on 77% from 1989 to 1992, the economic opportunities within the rebellion came to be very attractive (Stewart, 1993). Rebels had to keep to fighting, since this was the only way to make a living.

The high number of rebel fractions splitting from Taylor – and the fact that they fought each other – highly supports the argument that rebels were no longer motivated by a passion to fight the Krahn regime but rather a desire to keep the civil war alive to benefit from its economy. This is supported in two surveys on ex-combatants (Pugel, 2007: 36; Bøås & Hatley, 2008: 43) and by the fact that plenty of people changed rebel group throughout the conflict depending on who was the dominant in their area (ibid.). The latter is probably the clearest sign for rebels motivated by pragmatism and reason and not ideology and passion.

#### **4.2 El Salvador 1980-1992: A classic case for the grievance thesis**

The political economy of El Salvador has for several centuries been characterized by a small elite of landholders and a large group of peasants. The country is not rich on resources, and agriculture – especially coffee-production – has therefore been the main income source for the country (Kincaid, 1987: 469). The wealth created by this agricultural activity has mainly been accumulated by the small group of people owing land resulting in great inequality and a history of conflicts between the rich landowners and the poor peasants (Paige, 1993: 9).

The civil war in El Salvador officially began in 1980, but already at that point intense violence and conflict had characterized the country for several years (Binford, 2004: 106). The conflict ended in 1992 and the peace and reconciliation process became subject to much attention in the literature on peace building (for an early review see, Brockett, 1994; Hume, 2008). When it comes to the causes of the conflict, Wood’s research (2001, 2003) has been one of few taking a motivational approach. By emphasizing that the goal of the rebellion was land reforms, i.e. a public good, she concludes that

reason-based motivation would not have been able to drive the rebellion (ibid.: 267). As will be argued below, this reasoning is mistaken, and rational incentives did indeed affect the course of the war.

#### 4.2.1 The outbreak: Peasants into rebels – reaching the breaking point

In 1962, the National Reconciliation Party (NRP), dominated by the army and landowners, rigged an election and took power (Dutta, 1982: 7). This was the first of a range of fraud elections throughout the 1960s and 1970s. A small group of left-wing guerillas, the Popular Front of Liberation (FPL), which had fought the government for many years before NRP took power, intensified its operations in this period. The guerilla group grew and in 1974 they succeeded in mobilizing the peasant organizations – especially the Christian Federation of Salvadoran Campesinos (FECCAS) – to participate in a range of large demonstrations against the unfair living costs and standards (Wood, 2003: 91). As a response to these events (and scared by the revolution just started in neighboring Nicaragua), “General Romero, the new dictator [unleashed] organized right-wing terrorism and state repression” (Dutta, 1982: 7). This made the church take action. Through what started as Biblical studies, it mobilized and connected a large part of the peasants in the country and succeeded in unblocking what Wood calls the peasant “fatalism” (2003: 91). Large peasant demonstrations continued: In 1976, as response to a reform which did nothing for the peasants; in 1977, against another fraudulent election; and later same year as a reaction to the murder of priest and religious organizer, Rutilio Grande (ibid.: 484). In 1979, the military, backed by U.S., brought down the NRP government and installed the Revolutionary Government Junta (JRG), which included several representatives from the peasant and church organizations and promised elections and reforms. However, by January 1980 all the left-wing politicians had left the government claiming that it was still under right-wing control and after a strategic meeting including most of the left-wing groups, the rebels stroke with all their strength and officially initiated the civil war (Dutta, 1982: 7-8).

“Campesinos [peasants] provided the foundation of the rural insurgency at great risk to their lives, as well as the lives of family and friends” (Allison, 2004: 145), but what drew them to this action that initiated 12 years of civil war? As is evident from the description above, the Salvadoran civil war was not triggered overnight. Many years of economical and political suppression escalated throughout the 1960s and especially 1970s, where several peasants were expelled from their land due to the introduction of cotton and sugar and the mechanization of agricultural production (Kincaid, 1987: 481). This together with a range of unkept promises of reforms resulted in strong grievances towards the government and the landowners, which was eventually what brought the peasants to face the mortality risk and join the rebellion (Prosterman et al., 1981: 61). It was a passionate act motivated by a desire to act in “moral outrage” against the perpetrators (Wood, 2001: 280; Pastor & Boyce, 2000: 368). The outbreak was a fluid process lasting half of the 1970s, escalating every year and ending in

1980 where the breaking point was reached and the civil war was declared. This argument is supported by the fact that “one of the most reliable predictors of a person's support for the insurgency was whether that individual had a family member or close relative who had been killed by the military” (Allison, 2004: 148).

Reason would not have driven the individual peasant into the rebellion. Living as a civilian was thoroughly consuming (Mason, 1999: 192), but still the difference in mortality risk between the inside and the outside of the rebellion was huge causing a lot of people not to join, since “they were still terrified” (Wood, 2001: 273). Some scholars argue that the church acted as the same safe haven in the crucial period of expansion as was argued Cote d’Ivoire to some extent did in the Liberian case (Vilas, 1995: 33). However, also church people were attacked and killed, suggesting that the role of the church was more emotional, especially through strengthening the collective identity and solidarity among the poor (Peterson, 1997: 72; Wood, 2001: 278). Besides, the peasants rebelled knowing that the chances of winning – and thereby receiving any kind of future benefit – were very slim, which furthermore underlines the economic irrationality behind the choice to fight (Allison, 2004: 148).

#### 4.2.2 The continuation: Economic equivalents as rational incentives

The guerilla forces – united under the name Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) – were already a few months into the civil war in control of large parts of the rural areas especially in the north-east of El Salvador (Wood, 2003: 96; Wood, 2001: 272). The government – economically and strategically influenced by the U.S. (Kincaid, 1987: 490) – responded with brutal repression especially of “potential rebels”, i.e. civilians (Vilas, 1995: 34). Thus, more than twelve thousands “extralegal killings of civilians not engaged in combat” were carried out in 1981 alone (Mason, 1999: 191), which “stimulated rather than deterred popular support for the FMLN” (ibid.: 194; see also, Kraft, 2006: 153). The war between the guerilla and the government’s forces continued throughout 1980s bringing with it a complete destruction of the Salvadoran civil economy (Nichols, 1996: 201). In 1989, the FMLN captured parts of San Salvador, however, without being able to keep control. The war had reached a deadlock and in 1992 a peace agreement was signed including an amnesty law and the transition of FMLN into a political party (ibid.: 203).

As mentioned earlier, a lot of peasants driven by reason chose not to join the initial rebellion due to fear of the government’s forces. This disincentive was quickly neutralized (Vilas, 1995: 34) or even reversed (Mason, 1999: 194) due to the extensive indiscriminate violence. As Mason coins it: “noninvolvement was not a choice” (ibid.: 190). As the civil war progressed, Stanley (1996: 35, 118) argues, economic incentives arose. Not only for the military, which benefited economically from U.S. aid and from support from the landowners (Mason, 1999: 180), but also for parts of the rebel movement who were found to have “a vested interest in maintaining and manipulating external threats” to

sustain the war (Johnson, 1997: 786). Stanley does stand somewhat alone with these findings and a broader view of the literature on the Salvadoran war does not give much credit to economic incentives, suggesting that these do not explain the entire twelve years of continuous warfare. However, this does not mean that rebels cannot have been motivated by reason. The application of a broader concept of reason instead of a narrow one of greed does in this situation do justice to itself. The literature emphasizes how participants in the rebellion “developed skills that enabled them to assume leadership positions in a variety of secular organizations, including peasant associations, labor unions, and neighborhood associations” (Mason, 1999: 185; see also, Peterson, 1997: 92ff). This is what Wood refers to as the “pleasure of agency” (2001: 272). She interprets it as an emotional benefit, however, the character of this individual benefit was concrete political power and thereby an equivalent to economic prosperity. This suggests that the opportunity for political positions was a driving force behind the continuation of the rebellion. As Wood writes herself: “moral outrage provided initial motivation early in the war for those who participated then, [while] pleasure of agency later supplemented or replaced outrage” as the source of motivation (*ibid.*: 273).

Wood’s argument – that rebels can only have been motivated by passion, since the purpose of the war was to achieve a public good, namely land reforms – suggests that rebels were continuously motivated by passion throughout the entire war. While it seems likely that passion still made some motivational pull during the war – at least sporadically caused by the killings of civilians – the argument is mistaken because the first does not follow the latter in logic. The official goal in most civil wars is “public goods”, such as “justice, revenge, and relief from grievances” (Collier, 2000: 98), and the focus on potential in-process benefits should therefore be kept completely independent from the official goal of the conflict.

Even though the peace process and dynamics characterizing the termination of civil war are beyond the scope of this paper, the transition from war to peace in El Salvador deserves some attention. As it was described above the warring parties had reached a deadlock in the years up till 1992, suggesting that the goal was to win and when that was impossible both parties had interest in ending it. This produces a counterargument to reason as the sustainer. However, several other factors contributed to the decision of signing a peace agreement, including the withdrawal of American support to the military (Ballentine & Sherman, 2003: 1) and internal difficulties in FMLN (Mason, 1999: 192). These changes in the circumstances made the rebels give up their plans on revolution for the ability to access their land and increase its value through the rebuilding of infrastructure (see, Montgomery, 1995). The decision to stop fighting thereby correlates with the rational incentives provided by the situation, which suggests that the theoretical framework presented in this paper might be able to encompass the termination of conflict as well as the outbreak and continuation.

## 5. Discussion of Evidence and Findings

The conclusions arriving from the Liberian and Salvadoran cases tend to support the main argument of this paper: that passion triggers civil war, while reason sustains it. Thus, ordinary people became rebels in Liberia mainly motivated by grievances towards the regime that had carried out indiscriminate violence among certain ethnic groups; and they continued to fight to sustain a civil war that had turned into an industry actually improving the life of the people inside the rebellion. The same tendencies were present in the otherwise very different case of El Salvador. The outbreak was caused by ordinary peasants' grievances towards a regime that for several years had worsened their lives through unfair policies and later indiscriminate violence. They kept fighting partly due to continued dissatisfaction with the system – passion-based motivation – but mostly due to the opportunity to achieve political powerful positions in organizations outside the rebellion. The purpose of this chapter is to zoom out and valuate the strengths and weaknesses of this evidence and the conclusions derived from it in the light of other case material and alternative explanations.

The tendencies in the Liberian and Salvadoran civil wars are not unique. Cater (2003) for instance did a “rethinking” of three cases normally associated with greed – Angola, Sierra Leone and DRC – and found that economic benefits did not arrive until late in the conflict. Another Latin American case, Columbia, might stand as one of the most paradigmatic cases for this paper's argument. It started as a fight on ideology between the government and the left-wing rebels, but has turned into a war mainly stimulated by resources (Guáqueta, 2003). Even in countries without resources, it has been documented how ordinary looting still has been a driving force for rebels to fight. Bray et al. for instance show how the civil war in Nepal was triggered by ethnic- and caste-based grievances, and how plunder and extortion took over the agenda (2003: 111ff). Finally, Ballentine & Sherman supports the argument in their conclusions based on the reexamination of six widely different case studies (2003: 278). This evidence increases indeed the external validity and strengthens the explanatory power of the argument presented.

The case material has been shown mainly to confirm the theoretical expectations. However, also a few deviations were observed. First, the main temporal distinction drawn in this paper has been the one between the outbreak and the continuation of conflict. This distinction was partly based on a difference in mortality risk. The two case studies challenged this distinction and showed how the mortality risk can actually be offset already before the civil war is started. In both cases the government initiated brutal indiscriminate violence before the war was broken out, and even though this mostly appeared to be a source of grievances and a trigger of passion, it is most likely that it to some extent can have offset the mortality disincentive to join a young rebellion. At a minimum it calls attention to

the fact that the distinction between pre-war, outbreak and continuation should be thought fluidly. Second, loyalty within certain groups of people, including those in a rebellion, also turned out to be a factor that could motivate people. This feeling of community could both be a source of a passionate act, as it is the case when you feel deeply attached to a group (e.g., Wood, 2001: 271), but could also be a factor carrying value in a rational calculus in the form of the inherent value of one's social connections (e.g., Theidon, 2009: 17).

By presenting a theoretical framework encompassing both the outbreak and continuation of civil war, this paper succeeds in distinguishing its argument from previous ones. As it has already been pointed out, neither the greed nor the grievance theses are appropriate when it comes to explaining changes in rebels' motivation. The clear tendencies towards a change from passion-based to reason-based motivation will be hard to explain by these theories. Other theoretical frameworks simply avoid theorizing on parts of the causation. Among those frameworks is Collier and collaborators' feasibility theory, which moves beyond the motivational approach in explaining civil wars, and simply states that "where civil war is feasible it will occur" (2006: 2). They argue, that lootable resources might not play a role as motivation for rebels, but simply enable them to fight. However, as it has been shown in this paper, rebels do take the opportunities they are facing into serious consideration when choosing their level of obedience to their leaders and their level of activity in the rebellion at all. The feasibility theory thereby seems weak theoretically as well as empirically based on this paper's insights. Besides Collier's argument, Vinci's survival argument (2006); Murshed & Tadjoeeddin's social contract argument (2009); and a range of other arguments (e.g., Korf, 2005) provide explanations about rebels' motivation. These theoretical accounts are not falsified by the evidence presented in this paper, but are neither able to explain it. These accounts either focuses on explaining the outbreak or the duration, and they often explicitly admit not being able to explain the other side of the coin. This is exemplified by Korf: "Once a civil war is onset (*for whatever reason*), the political economy of war produces a self-sustaining logic [*emphasize added*]" (2005: 201).

In sum, this paper's findings seem applicable to a broader set of cases, which strengthens the external validity of the argument. The universal character of its findings derives from the very core of this paper's argument: human psychology. The psychology behind the decisions made by Gios and Manos in Liberia is thus not any different from the one directing peasants in El Salvador. None of the alternative explanations succeeded in encompassing both the outbreak and the continuation and this paper thereby distinguishes itself from previous studies and increases our knowledge on rebels' motivation in fighting civil wars.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this paper was to expand our knowledge on rebels' motivation. More precisely, how the motivation behind starting a war might be different from the motivation behind sustaining it.

By introducing recent insights from motivational psychology, this paper developed a theoretical framework distinguishing between two sources of motivation: reason and passion, as equivalents to greed and grievance. Based on this framework, it was argued that rebels are motivated by passion – such as grievances and a desire to punish the opponent due to a feeling of moral outrage – in the beginning of a conflict, whereas reason – understood as the outcome of a rational calculus' trying to optimize welfare through for instance economic opportunities and survival prospects – takes over later on. Thus, passion offsets reason, which takes back control when the source of passion dries out.

This temporal argument was tested against two critical cases, Liberia and El Salvador, which have earlier been presented as cases based on pure greed and grievance respectively. These cases did both – with a few deviations – show the expected tendencies of passion triggering and reason sustaining the wars and thereby supported the argument of this paper. Based on a discussion of the strength of the findings, it was concluded that a broader range of cases revealed similar tendencies and that these tendencies were hard to explain by alternative approaches.

Thus, the argument of this paper both seems valid and as a fruitful contribution to the literature on rebels' motivation. Especially, two theoretical contributions should be emphasized. First, this paper writes itself directly into the middle of the debate between greed and grievance. Rebels' motivation does change during a conflict, and the debate between whether rebels are motivated by greed or grievance is thus nothing but a debate between “when” the eyes look. Second, by arguing that greed and grievance – or reason and passion – both affect the course of conflict but in different roles and to different times, this paper stands against a range of scholars arguing that the analytical distinction between greed and grievance is useless and “unhelpful” (Berdal, 2005: 693; Ballentine & Sherman, 2003). However, by broadening the greed and grievance concepts to equal the psychological concepts of reason and passion, the distinction has indeed proved helpful. Thus, even though this paper does not claim to be able to explain every dimension of every conflict nor to predict when a civil war will happen, it does claim that by relying on human psychology it contributes to our understanding of rebels' decision to fight or not.

How are these insights relevant for policy makers? The military historian Liddell Hart once wrote “if you want peace, understand war”. That ordinary people are motivated by different things before the outbreak of a civil war and in the middle of one, suggests that no solution is applicable to all times. Every conflict is unique when it comes to political, economic and cultural structures, however,

some general insights can be made about how to intervene in a (pre)conflict situation. When the rebellion is driven by passion, political solutions are called for to try to manage the discourses and the injustice. However, when the rebellion is driven by reason, “a political solution may not end the violence” (Stewart, 2000: 23). Policy makers should then think in manipulating and changing the rational tradeoffs facing rebels, both by changing the economic incentives and the mortality risks. Thus, one needs first to remove the incentives for people to fight and then afterwards address the background for the passions that triggered the war in the first place (Keen, 2010: 25; McCoy, 2008: 105). Liberia’s relapse into war in 1999 might be this case in point (see, Call, 2010). There is no doubt that a holistic approach is necessary for all intervention, however, the focus should be much different whether the purpose is to avoid a civil war or to end one. The conclusion of this paper – that passion triggers and reason sustains civil wars – might therefore help making more appropriate interventions and decrease the number of civil wars in the future.

The theoretical framework presented in this paper is still in its infancy, and our understanding of the changing character of rebels’ motivation is thus still characterized by a range of unanswered questions. First, one of the weaknesses in this paper’s empirical part is the inaccuracy in the interpretation of rebels’ motivation. Because of this lack of accuracy, the dynamics characterizing the termination of a conflict have not been the focus of this paper. Some initial thoughts have been made, but to understand it thoroughly, better and temporal micro-level data are called for (cf., Blattman & Miguel, 2010: 8-9). Second, this paper has focused on ordinary rebels arguing that they are what constitute the rebellion. However, a temporal understanding of the motivation for other actors of a civil war – such as the rebel elite and the internal dynamics between different parties within the rebel organization – should be an issue concerning future research. Finally, the literature of rebels motivations have largely been driven by case studies and econometric analysis. More focus on comparative studies (e.g., Vilas, 1995), including non-cases, where civil wars did not happen (e.g., Lund, 2005), might create a better understanding of critical variables and increase our knowledge of the motivation of rebels to fight civil wars.



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