

COUSINS IN ARMS: SOCIAL STRUCTURE
AND CIVIL WAR MOBILIZATION IN MONTENEGRO

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Abstract

Many contemporary civil wars occur in segmentary societies, in which social structure rests on cohesive social groups. These wars tend to produce fast, extensive mobilizations of civilians, yet this reoccurring connection has mostly evaded a systematic analysis. This thesis explains why and how such social structure affects the dynamics of civil war mobilization. Unlike most existing civil war mobilization literature, the theory identifies both prewar and wartime factors, as well as both social groups and armed actors, as the determinants of mobilization.

The theory proposes that civil war mobilization is determined primarily by the pre-war social structure and the wartime armed actors' effects on social structure. The more pre-war social structure rests on cohesive social groups, the more it enables individuals to mobilize in insurgencies effectively. However, the pre-war structure is necessary but not a sufficient explanation for civil war mobilization. When a war starts, armed actors gain a crucial role. Mobilization dynamics during wartime depends on armed actors' behavior, especially military and political decisions that affect social group cohesion. The horizontal ties of solidarity between group members enable fast and extensive collective action. However, if the armed actors disturb the vertical group status relations, this can change the extent and direction of civilian participation in the war.

To test these propositions, the empirical part of the thesis conducts a micro-comparative historical analysis of the civil war in Montenegro during the Second World War. Empirical analysis shows that the cohesive kinship-based social groups effectively mobilized against the Italian occupation in the early phase of the war. In the second phase, the insurgents' military and political decisions had disrupted group cohesion, and led to the civil war mobilization that pitted local armed actors against one another.

The mechanisms of participation and recruitment are further explored on a micro-level, in a single county. This analysis presents qualitative and quantitative evidence collected from historical and ethnographic sources, used for the first time in a systematic comparative analysis. It shows that during the 1941 insurgency, tribal groups in Montenegro could mobilize fast and extensively against the outside military force, relying on strong ties between individuals, which existed before the war. The mobilization in the civil war between the local armed actors is attributed to the conflict generated by insurgents reversing the status of cohesive social groups.

The alternative explanations of civil war mobilization are evaluated using several statistical tests, including multivariate regression and survival analysis. The analysis of municipal-level data collected from primary and secondary sources gives additional support to the social structure explanation of civil war mobilization, when pre-war economic, political, and wartime military factors are accounted for.

The evidence presented in the thesis indicates that social structure has a high explanatory potential for what appears as endless civil wars. It offers insights for the study of behavior of insurgent groups during the war, and their relations with civilians. It also invites further research and more comprehensive testing of the theory, in different contexts and with novel data.

Contents	
Abstract	2
Acknowledgments	3
CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION	9
1.1 Empirical puzzle and research question	9
1.2 The literature gap	13
1.3 Theories of civil war mobilization	18
1.4 Elements and forms of mobilization	23
Conclusion.....	26
<i>Plan of the thesis</i>	27
CHAPTER TWO. THEORY OF CIVIL WAR MOBILIZATION	28
Introduction.....	28
2.1 Social group cohesion.....	29
<i>Cohesion in segmentary societies</i>	29
Sources of cohesion.....	31
<i>Conclusion</i>	36
2.2 Civil-military interactions	38
Military control	39
Governing civilians	44
<i>Conclusion</i>	47
2.3 Mechanisms of mobilization	49
<i>Participation</i>	49
<i>Recruitment</i>	51
<i>Conclusion</i>	53
2.4 Social theory of civil war mobilization	54
Conclusion.....	57
CHAPTER THREE. RESEARCH DESIGN	58
Introduction.....	58
3.1 Methodology.....	58
<i>Empirical puzzle and CRQ</i>	58
<i>General methodological approach</i>	59
<i>Micro comparative historical analysis</i>	60
<i>The strategy of disaggregation: Spatial variation</i>	60
<i>Temporal variation: before and after the onset</i>	62
<i>External validity</i>	63
3.2 Variables, concepts, measurements	64
<i>Dependent variable: Mobilization</i>	64
<i>Independent variable: Social structure</i>	66
3.3 Alternative explanations	68
Conclusion.....	70
CHAPTER FOUR. CIVIL WAR IN 1941-1942 MONTENEGRO	71
Introduction.....	72
4.1 Montenegro before the war	72
Tribal organization: <i>“like federal units”</i>	72
Economic and political conditions: <i>“kin is always closer”</i>	75
Armed actors: <i>dramatis personae</i>	76
4.2 The 1941 insurgency.....	78
Participation: <i>“fast as lightning”</i>	78
Recruitment: <i>“in keeping with the old”</i>	79

Warfare: “just read Lenin”	81
Unit organization: “your brigades are not here”	83
Civilian institutions: “all previous organs of government are abolished”	84
Selective violence: “start with the liquidations”	86
4.3 The 1942 civil war	89
Wavering participation: “discontent through the tribal prism”	89
Nationalist recruitment: “appeal to prominent individuals”	91
Civil war mobilization: “each tribe runs their own affairs”	92
Conclusion.....	95
CHAPTER FIVE. SOCIAL STRUCTURE IN THE INTERWAR DANILOVGRAD	96
Introduction.....	96
5.1 Danilovgrad county in the interwar period.....	98
<i>Administrative division</i>	99
<i>Tribal division</i>	100
5.2 Elements of social structure	104
<i>Tribal forms of ownership and production</i>	104
<i>Security in the tribal area</i>	107
<i>Status: the tribal hierarchy</i>	111
5.3 Cohesion before the war: the voting patterns	115
Elections in prewar Montenegro	115
1905 – 1914 National assembly elections	117
1926 and 1936 Municipal elections.....	119
1935 and 1938 Assembly elections	123
Conclusion.....	127
CHAPTER SIX. INSURGENCY AND CIVIL WAR IN DANILOVGRAD COUNTY	128
Introduction.....	128
6.1 Danilovgrad between the occupation and the insurgency	129
<i>After the capitulation</i>	129
<i>The benevolent occupation</i>	129
<i>Socio-economic conditions</i>	130
<i>Communist organization</i>	131
<i>Stockpiling weapons</i>	132
<i>Training guerilla groups</i>	133
<i>Situation preceding the insurgency</i>	134
6.2 The July insurgency	137
<i>The first actions</i>	137
<i>The unexpected mass participation</i>	137
<i>The peak of insurgency: the capture of Danilovgrad</i>	138
<i>Communist leadership and the anti-communists</i>	139
6.3 Counterinsurgency and beyond	141
<i>The failure of the Velje Brdo front</i>	141
<i>The Italian repression</i>	142
<i>The reorganizations of guerilla units and the Communist comeback</i>	143
6.4 Insurgent rule between the insurgency and the civil war	146
<i>New revolutionary government</i>	146
<i>Dealing with property</i>	148
<i>Dealing with enemies</i>	149
6.5 Quantitative analysis of the insurgency	153
<i>The extent of insurgency and civil war mobilization</i>	153

<i>Insurgency and status reversal</i>	154
<i>Coercion by incumbents and insurgents</i>	157
6.6 Path to civil war: anti-communist organization	161
<i>Early attempts to create an anti-communist organization</i>	161
<i>Pljevlja defeat and fear of repression</i>	161
<i>Colonel Stanišić and anti-communism in Pavkovići sub-tribe</i>	162
<i>The formation of Bajo Stanišić organization</i>	162
6.7 Civil war in Danilovgrad county	165
<i>First clashes</i>	165
<i>Spread and growth of Bajo Stanišić organization</i>	165
<i>Nationalists overtaking Danilovgrad county and final defeat of Partisans</i>	166
<i>Politics of the nationalist organization</i>	167
<i>Cooperation with the Italian military</i>	168
6.8 Quantitative analysis of the civil war	170
<i>Extent and intensity of civil war mobilization</i>	170
<i>Status and civil war mobilization</i>	172
Conclusion	176
CHAPTER SEVEN. ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS	177
Introduction	177
7.1 Scope and units of analysis	178
<i>Scope: the territory of Montenegro</i>	178
<i>Units: administrative organization</i>	180
7.2 Variables	181
7.2.1 Social variables	182
7.2.2 Political variables	185
7.2.3 Economic variables	186
7.2.4 Wartime variables	188
7.3 Analysis	192
<i>Descriptive statistics</i>	192
<i>Difference of means</i>	196
<i>Multivariate regression</i>	201
<i>Survival analysis</i>	205
Conclusion	208
CHAPTER EIGHT. CONCLUSION	210
Appendix 1. Maps	214
Appendix 2. Robustness checks	220
Bibliography	222