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

By

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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.
CHAPTER THREE. RESEARCH DESIGN

CHAPTER FOUR. CIVIL WAR IN 1941-1942 MONTENEGRO