

NATURE OF POLITICAL REGIME AS A CIVIL WAR OUTBREAK RISK FACTOR

Abstract

This article aimed at reviewing the most notable academic debates over the correlation between the type of political regime and the possibility of civil wars outbreak. The main method which authors used was literature review.

The first part of article provided a review over the most used explanations of civil war. Also, some determinants of the type of political regime were described. In this context, authors indicated the Polity IV dataset for measuring the level of democracies. In order to imply the results of the most prominent academic empirical research, authors presented various comparative empirical studies with predominantly quantitative research design.

The authors provided the most common definitions of types of political regimes (democracies and autocracies), as well as anocracies as a combination of both democratic and autocratic regimes. Among the academic authors, there is a consensus over the issue of empirical evidence in the correlation between the type of political regime and the possibility of civil war outbreak. The causes of civil war are various, but the authors have agreed with claim that the one of the most important is the type of political regime.

Most of the studies indicate that the highest possibility of civil war outbreak occurs in an anocracy. The democratic regime is defined as the least convenient for civil war outbreak, since the system is equitable and not many people are affected by the bad political and economic outcomes. The empirical evidences provide anocracy as the most convenient for the civil war outbreak.

By applying the research strategy of case studies, as well as the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods and techniques in future research, it is possible to gain in-depth insights on the nature of the connection between the type of political regime and civil war. The choice of an adequate instrument for measuring both level of democracy and the internal conflicts, is very important. Researchers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the advantages and disadvantages of all analytical frameworks and that their individual choices should be based on a cautious assessment of their adequacy in each particular research study.

Key words: civil war, political regime, democracy, autocracy, anocracy, Polity IV

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Civil wars represent events that cause significant repercussions for the state on which territory is taking place. In addition to human casualties, the refugee and internally displaced persons, internal armed conflicts have long-term negative effects on the economic system, political stability and social order of country. A large number of researchers, to a certain extent, agree with the assumption that civil wars have mostly negative consequences, although they can vary in type and intensity. Therefore, a significant research effort is focused on identifying the driving forces in society, which can contribute to the escalation of violence in an open armed conflict inside the country.

Some of basic explanations of the cause of origin of civil wars focus on the inability of state (central authorities) to keep effectively control over internal structure [1. — P. 75–90]. As a result of the widespread civil war in the least developed parts of the world, researchers have identified various forms of poverty as the main factors of intra-state armed violence. There are also conceptions that emphasize individualistic economic rationality, where the key cause of war lies in a set of incentives that reduce potential conflict costs [2. — P. 563–595; 3. — P. 563–573]. Researchers also emphasize the importance of social inequalities, or the way they can contribute to the escalation of violence in society and ultimately lead to a civil war [4; 5].

A significant corpus of academic material is devoted to the problem of the connection between the political regimes and the risk of the outbreak of civil wars. The basic assumptions about which the debates have been developed can be presented in the following way:

- the nature of the political regime is associated with the risk of the outbreak of civil wars
- in democratic countries there is a lower risk of a civil war
- autocracy has an equally low level of risk from the outbreak of civil war as democracy

- anocracies¹ have the greatest conflict potential
- the transition types of political regimes is a factor in the outbreak of civil wars
- the nature of the electoral system can be the cause of civil wars.

Civil wars are one of the most extreme forms of social conflict. They are usually defined as “armed struggle within the boundaries of a recognized sovereign entity between the parties that are subject to common authority at the beginning of hostilities” [6. — P. 17]. The aim of the armed group, that are rebels, is the change of regime or secession, or the creation of a new state [7. — P. 619]. In addition to challenging official authority, rebels always try to fulfilled several requirement so that the conflict can be up to a certain intensity.

Usually one of this requirement is that a minimum of 1000 victims is fulfilled as a result of taken combat operations (but there are significant variations about number of victims depending on the database of armed conflicts used in the research)².

The political regime represents the relationship of the central government to the majority of the population of a particular state, or a set of rules and principles on which the mode of the rule of central government is based. It concerns the modalities in the exercise of power, the

¹ In the literature, for this type of political regime is used a synonymous definition such as semi-democracy, but the term anocracy is more frequent.

² One of the most frequently used databases is the Correlates of War, according to which a civil war must cause at least 1,000 casualties in the battlefield during the conflict (David Singer, Melvin Small, Correlates of War Project: International and Civil War Data, 1816- 1992, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1994, p. 19). The Conflict Research Institute of the Uppsala University (UCDP / PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset) has a limit of 25 victims a year after the incompatibility of the parties to the conflict (Nils Petter Gleditsch, Peter Wallensteen, Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Sollenberg, Havard Strand, “Armed conflict 1946–2001: A new dataset”, op.cit, p. 615). Firon and Laitin (Fearon & Laitin) propose a limit of 100 victims per year during the course of the conflict (James Fearon, David Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War”, p.76).

organization of working models and the division of power functions. The political regime is based on different answers to the questions: "how are elected and organized authorities", "what functions they perform"; "Are there a limits of authorities powers" ect. [8. — C. 50].

In literature, as the two most common types of political regime, are emphasized: democracy and autocracy. Democracy can be defined as "the kind of political regime in which the institutional rules of competition between candidates for authorized public political functions make those who rule the responsible and proper distribution of political preferences (choice) among all competent citizens" [9. — P. 82]. In democratic political regimes rulers / those who have a ruling powers/ are responsible to citizens for their actions [10. — P. 76].

Robert Dal (Robert Dahl) offered a list of what he called the «procedural minimum» conditions that must exist in order to designate a regime as a democracy:

- control of political decisions of the government is the constitutional right of elected officials
- elected officials are elected on occasional and fair elections where correction is a relatively rare phenomenon
- all adults have the right to vote in the elections
- all adults have the right to be elected
- citizens have the right of freedom of expression without fear of punishment
- citizens have the right to seek alternative sources of information
- citizens have the right to form relatively independent associations or organizations, including independent political parties and interest groups [11. — P. 11].

The concept of democracy consists of two key attributes: denials and participation, summarized by Munk and Verkuilen (Munck & Verkuilen). Disputes in the broadest sense are characterized by the right to freedom of speech and the right to form political parties. Participation is

characterized by the right to vote, the fair electoral process, the access of political parties to public finances and, ultimately, the scope of voting rights [12. — P. 24].

According to the largest number of databases that index the types of political regime, in addition to democratic ones, there are autocratic types of political regimes. Barbara Geddes (Barbara Geddes), makes a distinction between the three types of authoritarian regimes: personal (personal), military and party-authoritarian type of regime. This division is made depending on who dominates the state apparatus (individual, military top, or party) [13]. The academic community has not come to a consensus on defining the precise indicators of the "autocracy" of a particular state / entity. The largest number of research concerns the examination of the behavior of authoritarian regimes within the system of international relations, that is, between the states, and not within themselves.

The purpose of this article, taking into account all said above, is to present key academic debates on the correlation between the possibility of the outbreak of civil wars and the type of political regime. The nature of this relationship can vary significantly depending on whether we are talking about the outbreak, the duration, and the intensity of the civil war. However, this connection is not direct and is mediated by numerous factors. It is therefore the challenge to understand the way how different factors interact in different conditions and which effects they could produce at final level.

THEORY OF DEMOCRATIC PEACE AS A THEORETICAL BASE FOR ANALYSIS OF CIVIL WARES

Theoretical notions of democratic peace and democracy as political regimes that (almost) never interact with wars with one and another, has motivated armed conflict researchers to ask themselves about the role of the political regime in

generating a violence in intra-state conflict [14. — P. 1151–1161; 15. — P. 3–35; 16. P. — 309–341]. Academic discussion has been developed around the question of “whether democracies are generally less violent political regimes” and whether they also have a lower risk of civil war outbursts.

Although known at the time of classic liberal theorists, the theory of democratic peace within the contemporary theory of international relations was established in the scientific discourse of the early 1980s. Michael Doyle, in an article in 1983, identified the so-called “Separat peace” that occurs in relations between democratic states [17. — P. 205–235]. Democracy is seen as a system of peaceful conflict resolution, since the problem of opposing interests of different groups is resolved by voting and consensus. It is assumed that democracies will behave in outside world, which is a peaceful attitude towards other countries that are similar to them, so that democrats themselves as a such are less at risk of the outbreak of civil strife than non-democratic regimes [18. — P. 111].

In examining the civil wars, or the causes of their emergence, it would be more appropriate to deal with monadic settings of the theory of democratic peace. The founder of the monadic variant of the theory of democratic peace is Rudolf Rummel. According to his view, “democratic states will be less likely to be the subject of conflicts, whether internal or external” [19. — P. 28]. Monadic democratic peace implies the inherent peacefulness of a state with a democratic type of political regime.

With a way of functioning of democratic institutions they also explain the thesis on democratic peace. Acemoglu and Robinson (Acemoglu & Robinson) notice that citizens in undemocratic regimes almost do not have any legal authority. However, some groups can enjoy some real power that sometimes allows them to enjoy political privileges from the elite, but in the

short term. Citizens can ask that what is now real power grows into legal powers to secure their position in the long run. These demands may be accompanied by a threat of the revolution and the change of government — that is, by the civil war. Elite can not commit to such concessions in the long run, precisely because of the actual exercise of power whose bearers often change [20. — P. 24–25]. Democratic institutions can serve as a mechanism for overcoming this problem, that is, affecting the lower probability of outbreaks [21. — P. 379–414].

If individuals or groups perceive that they are deprived of political or economic rights which they think that belongs to them, they can claim their rights by organized violence against the state. Non-violent mechanisms of dissatisfaction, which exist in democratically-established states, will reduce the risk of a civil conflict outburst [22. — P. 163]. It is also considered that there is less political dissatisfaction in democratically-established states [1. — P. 79], as these regimes are less repressive, more open and tolerant.

These considerations speak in favor of the fact that democratic regimes possess low conflict potential. Both democracies and non-democratic regimes use the armed forces to counter the illegitimate armed opposition, but autocracy has a significantly greater scope of repressive powers without the danger of losing legitimacy [22. — P. 164].

Autocratic regimes can randomly apply violence to the wider population to silence influential individuals. [23. — P. 538–554]. Such regimes can implement a strategy of collecting the opposition by offering ministerial posts or sources of funding [24. — P. 5–25]. Repression is also carried out when the organized opposition itself is formed so that it does not even reach the stage of the armed rebellions [22. — P. 163]. So in both, democratic or autocratic regimes, the use of repressive measures is limited, as the organization of the opposition and the manifestation

of dissatisfaction are allowed to a certain extent.

While in democratic states, institutions allow candidates to participate in political life in a non-violent way, and in autocracy they are exposed to strong repression, the common view is that the anocracy fails both, making them (anocracy) the regimes of the greatest conflict potential. What is crucial for these "hybrid regimes" [25. — P. 2] is their inconsistency: the combination of repression (insufficiently effective to suppress the opposition) and certain political openness (insufficient to satisfy the opposition) and that two factors create an opportunity for the outbreak of a civil war.

CORRELATION BETWEEN THE TYPE OF POLITICAL REGIME AND THE RISK OF OUTBREAK OF CIVIL WAR

When we are talking about the links between the political regime and the likelihood of outbreaking of civil war, the results of a large number of studies indicate that there is a pattern called the 'inverse U curve' (inverted U curve). Anocracies in these analyzes are the type of political regime with the most conflicting potential, while complete democracies and complete autocracy are the political regimes in which the risk of a civil war is at a minimum [1; 26. — P. 540–559; 27. — P. 33–48].

Not all authors interpret the univocal trend of the inverse curve. Thus, for example, Firon and Laitin do not interpret this form through the institutional characteristics of a regime, but through the conflicts over the establishment of the system. They point out that the anocracy are weak regimes with a lack of resources to become "efficient autocratic regimes or constitute unstable political structures with which they can not effectively suppress the insurrection" [1. — P. 85].

The assumption of the anocratic regimes as the most repressing, has come to many criticisms [25; 28. — P. 401–425]. It

seems, however, that only a small number of researchers claim that the influence of the political regime is immediate when we talk about the causes of civil wars. When analyzing variables such as GDP per capita or other indicators of socio-economic development, democratic countries do not have a lower risk of civil war than autocratic regimes [22. — P. 160]. Findings of empirical studies indicate that the connection between political regimes and civil wars is extremely complex and well-balanced, and, depending on the observed indicators, which may have different implications.

The influence of the political regime may vary, depending on the motives which are behind the Civil War. The analysis of Cederman & co.. «On the correlation between the changing of the political regime and the civil war» has shown that conflicts over territories do not have a significant connection either with the type of political regime, neither with its change [29. — P. 386]. Such links exists only if it is a conflict about changing of the government. These findings are in line with the study of the power struggle and wars for the territory. Weak central power allows rebels, or those who organizes of a state of coup, to oppose the entire state government before deciding on separatism and asking for a part of the territory [30. — P. 691–708].

The researchers had also focused on the specific elements of the political system of one country, and the way they are correlated with the risk of civil wars. Elections in this regard can be an important indicator. In the newly established democracies, there are some uncertainty about whether the main political actors will respect the results of the election [29. — P. 379]. If they losseelection they could attempted to forcefully take over the government instead to recognizing defeat [22. — P. 165]. Also, the elections are a significant institutional mechanism for potential candidates to demonstrate their political or socio-economic dissatisfaction.

The more restrictive this mechanism is, the candidates are more likely to seek alternative options, including political violence.

Openness of the regime, is also emphasized as a significant factor in the analysis of civil wars. As much as a certain political system becomes more open so less is the risk of the outbreak of civil wars is [31. — P. 465 — 483; 32. — P. 445–465]. Reynal-Querol under the openness of political system understands the ability of the system not to encourage political exclusion. The author notes that some democratic countries also have periods of violence, and the very fact that there are civil rights and freedoms, which can not be a factor of conflict prevention. It therefore concludes that the level of openness and inclusion of all in political participations of the regime is more important than the level of democracy. Democratic regimes that involve in a process of decision making several parties, are more open than the regime headed by only one party [32. — P. 446].

The transition of power from democratic to autocratic regimes, as well as in the reverse direction, is a significant factor of internal instability and, as a result, can lead to open violence and conflict. The country's efforts to democratize often do not mean a fast transition of power, and therefore the state is at the stage of semi-democracy. Mansfield and Snyder suggested that the process of democratization can be a trigger for political violence [33. — P. 5–38; 34]. Democratization involves mass mobilization and can subsequently cause violence if political institutions are not stable enough to adapt to this level of participation. In the process of democratization, political elites have the need to mobilize a growing number of citizens who have gained the right to vote.

In order to achieve this, they can create a picture of an external or internal enemy, which may be a source of conflict [29. — P. 378]. In contrast to that, the process of autocratization of one regime assumes a relatively rapid demobilization of popular

support. During this process, political violence can be triggered if politically mobilized citizens oppose the narrowing of political space [29. — P. 379]. In such conditions, the national perception felt by members of ethnic groups who experienced a sudden reduction of power due to undemocratic exclusion, what can be an important source for political violence. Therefore, both the process of democratization and the process of autocratization can create violence, but the mechanisms in which one and the other can lead to conflict are different. Democratization of the country implies a certain amount of time for citizens to mobilize politically and involve themselves in the conflict, while autocratization means a collapse of democratic rules that is linked to rapid changes and a rapid escalation of political violence, especially in military conflicts [29. — P. 387].

In some more complex analyzes, the authors attempted to extract several types and subtypes of political regimes (apart from democracy, semi-democracy and autocracy) on the basis of different criteria and bring them to the likelihood of the outbreak of a civil war. Thus, Goldston & Co. points out that the regimes of the greatest conflict potential are 'partial democracy' in which fractionalism is expressed [35. — P. 190–208], while Fjelde has recognized the autocracies as the most violent in which there are multi-party systems and military dictatorships [36. — P. 195–218].

The link between the political regime and civil wars can be mediated by numerous factors. Summarizing the findings of democracies and the nature of their relationship with armed conflicts in general, Hegre (Hegre) raises the widely accepted assumption of democracy as a precondition for intra-state peace and points out that the preconditions of peace are stable socio-economic conditions. When we talk about the connection between the political regime, the economic development and the civil war, the authors

argue that democracies reduce the risk of internal conflict most effective in high income countries [37. — P. 531–540; 38. — P. 155–192].

In order to maintain civic democratic peace, governments must be able not only to actively influence the distribution of resources in society, but also to prevent the abuse of one social group at the expense of others [22. — P. 167].

Economic development does not have the same effect in non-democratic countries. Hegre points out that violent conflicts become more frequent as the authoritarian state is modernizing [39]. Overall economic development has an impact on improving education, urbanization and a better standard of living, and citizens can demand greater political rights, and therefore can oppose a rebellion in the desire to change the current situation. The demands for democratization are increasing as the level of education increases and dispersion of economic influence in the modern economy [22. — P. 168].

This is especially the case if the country abounds with valuable natural resources such as oil, gas or minerals. The quantity, or richness of natural resources, can determine the direction of changing the autocratic regime. In accordance with empirical results, the resource of wealth is an indicator of civil war, while high income due to productivity (in non-resource-rich countries) is an indicator of democracy [40. — P. 584].

BASIC DILEMMA OF MEASURING TYPES OF POLITICAL REGIMES

As can be deduced from the previous analysis, the results of the research on the connection between the type of political regime and civil conflicts are often contradictory, so it is difficult to extract a particular pattern. One of the reasons for this disagreement is the method of operating theoretical concepts, that is, the method of empirical check of basic indicators. The measures used to express the democratic or autocratic nature of

political regimes are often imprecise. The fact that a state has a score of 4 or 5 on a scale that measures the overall level of democracy is little to tell us about the qualitative differences between these two type of countries.

One of the most commonly used databases in research about correlation between civil conflict and type of political regime is Polity IV database. Vrieland (Vreeland) points out that it is precisely one of the major shortcomings of the research, the use of this database as a source of data on the degree of democracy of the states. The problem is that one of the criteria on the basis of which the type of political regime is determined, is the fact whether a civil war is taking place in the country or not [28. — P. 402].

When this indicator is eliminated from the analysis, the results point out to the conclusion that semi-democracy has no greater risk of civil war than other regimes [25. — P. 6.]. Munk and Verkilen also criticize Polity IV, arguing that the base is actually the result of a combination of indicators of autocracy and democracy and, as such, does not ensure the adequate credibility of the indexing indexes [12. — P. 26]. In a scientific review of these criticisms, Monti Marshall and associates (Marshall Monty et al.) Respond that the verifiability of the indicators is provided in previous versions of the Polity project (I, II, and III), and that the indicators and variables used in previous versions are included in Polity IV version of this base [41. — P. 40–45]. Also, Polity IV makes up an index that consists of a combination of variables so that different combinations can ultimately produce the same score.

The authors had try to overcome the shortcomings of the Polity IV base, attempting to apply in their studies another existing, in their opinion, an unfairly neglected database about the type of political regime. Therefore, Bratusevicius and Skaning (Bartusevicius & Skaaning), using the Index of Electoral Democracy (LIED), used the basis of the hypothesis on civil democratic peace.

This database classifies regimes in seven main categories based on the characteristics of the electoral system, where each level represents a certain combination of the regime's features. If there is no choice, the rating is 0, and grade 6 is awarded when there are competitive multiparty elections and universal voting rights. The time range of the base covers the period from 1800 to 2013 and includes 221 units of political regimes [25. — P. 3.].

Another option available to researchers is Freedom House's Freedom Index [1. — P. 75–90]. According to the methodology used by this organization, countries have ranked on a seven-level scale since 1972. The total score of a state is determined on the basis of a list of respected civil rights and the rule of law, including freedom of the media, religious freedom and freedom of association, independence of the judiciary, equal treatment before the law, civilian control of the police, protection from political terror, security of property rights and equal chances. However, as the previous analysis showed, the mere existence of civil rights and freedoms, it is not an absolute guarantee that the conflict will not come.

Criticizing the largest number of civil warfare databases available, Vrieland points out that Vanhanen's political participation measure is one of the most adequate databases for examining hypotheses relation between anocracy's and civil wars. Vanhanen's index contains two variables: a measure of political competitiveness and a measure of political participation [28. — P. 16.]. The findings to which Vrieland came indicate that the 'choice of variables' in the statistical examination of civil wars is one of the most important choices.

The choice of an adequate instrument for measuring the level of democracy / autocracy of a regime is a significant research challenge. At this level of research practice, it is impossible to point out the best database or scale for measurement. Different bases can link different

elements of the political system with the risk of civil war outburst, and we can talk about the level of civil and political rights and freedoms, the nature of the electoral system, the openness and inclusiveness of the political system.

Despite significant criticism, the Polity IV base should not be dismissed as being inappropriate for civil conflict surveys, but rather to point out the scope of the range. Data from this base, or the ranking of political regimes according to methodological rules recommended by its creators, should not be used to draw conclusions about the "violent nature" of democracy, autocracy or semi-democracy (anocracy).

One of the most important incentives for examining the connection between the type of political regime and civil war can be found in the theory of democratic peace, that is, research that implies that democracies, after not fighting each other, have primarily a peaceful character, and therefore are less subject to internal forms of political violence. Democracies are political regimes in which one of the main principles is a political game, and clashes between groups are resolved by voting and consensus. On the other hand, in autocratic regimes, the use of violence against political opponents is much more pronounced that the opposition does not leave the possibility of organizing and launching an armed insurrection. Therefore, a significant number of authors concluded that anocracy, an authority that is insufficiently effective to suppress the opposition, but exhibits a certain degree of opacity, is a political regime with the highest possible conflict potential.

Although there is generally a consensus that the type of political regime, whether autocracy, democracy or transitional forms, can lead to political violence and internal conflict, the nature of this relationship can be mediated by numerous factors. Different elements of the political regime, openness, elections, the nature of political institutions, and increasingly the transition of government can be impor-

tant factors in analyzing the risk of a civil conflict outbreak. It is necessary to examine the way in which these factors interact with each other and in different situations can produce different consequences.

Almost all researchers suggest particular caution when talking about the operationalization of a type of political regime, and a significant number of works have been dedicated to this problem. Disputes over an adequate database on the level of democracy or autocracy are largely the reason for the great momentum of the question of the connection between the type of political regime and the risk of the outbreak of a civil war. It is interesting that such disputes are rare or almost no, when it comes to choosing a database of civil wars, which can also significantly influence the results of the research. Namely, the UCDP / PRIO database encodes conflicts that cause at least 25 deaths, while the

CoW encrypts only conflicts that cause 1000 deaths, which ultimately affects the total number of cases to be analyzed.

Analyzed studies are primarily part of comparative research, in which applied techniques mostly belong to the quantitative research tradition methods. This means that civil wars in them are viewed as events determined by the number of victims and the parties to the conflict. In most cases, there is no distinction between ethnic, religious or racial conflicts; secessionist clashes or conflicts over power. All this leads to the conclusion that we need more sophisticated analysis of different types of civil wars. In a future, by applying research case study strategy, as well as combining, quantitative and qualitative methods and techniques, it could be possible to gain deep insights about the nature and the relationship between the type of political regime and civil war.

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