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Sleeping with the Enemy, or Putting the Enemy to Sleep? A Theory of Insurgency-State Interaction

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SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY, OR PUTTING THE ENEMY TO SLEEP?

A THEORY OF INSURGENCY-STATE INTERACTION

by

ANDRÉS RANGEL

Under the Direction of Dr. John Duffield

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a theory of insurgency-state strategic interaction based on the insurgency's mode of survival. The theory postulates that, *ceteris paribus*, illegal resources discourage the insurgents from desiring to control the state and the state from regaining control of the insurgent territory, whereas legal lootable resources "force" the insurgency to embrace the suboptimal strategy of trying to topple the government, while causing the state to desire full control of the insurgent territory. Intensity, the number of combatant deaths over time, will be used to test the theory. Civil conflicts involving insurgencies that rely on illegal resources for most of their revenue should be of low intensity. The opposite should hold true for civil wars in which the insurgency's livelihood is a legal lootable resource.

INDEX WORDS: Insurgency, Strategic interaction, Natural resources, Illegal resources, Lootable resources, State

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ANDRÉS RANGEL

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INTRODUCTION

The eye can be very deceiving at times. The sun does not revolve around the world; the Earth's pull is not softer on a feather than a rock; the continents are not immovable masses of rock. Likewise, the eye may see that there is a guerrilla group and a government in a certain country, and the beholder may conclude that they are enemies whose behavior and interaction are determined by their antagonism. This paper seeks to go beyond the apparent enmity between insurgencies and states to explain their interaction not based on the apparent fact that they are enemies, but on the idea that each must be concerned first and foremost with its own survival. I contend that it is this, and not the pursuit of victory, which explains the interaction that we have come to know as civil war. At times, surviving will engender wars of higher intensity, while at others it will make for conflicts with relatively small numbers of combatant deaths due to an attitude of disengagement and aloofness by both parties, or what Philippe Le Billon (2004: 12) calls a "comfortable conflict stalemate" that is mutually beneficial and relatively non-threatening;" and Marilyn Silberfein (2004: 214) a "stand-off" that is neither peace nor war; while Nazih Richani (2005: 126) names it a comfortable military impasse. Herbst (2000: 284) echoes these authors when he says that "rebels who confront African states may not have combat as their primary objective because the state does not threaten their very survival."

The puzzle I intend to elucidate is why civil wars are fought with varying degrees of intensity. By intensity I mean the total number of combatant deaths over time. The table below shows the broad variation in intensity found among some civil wars:

TABLE 1: Randomly chosen civil wars^a.

Insurgent Group	Years	Country	Avg. deaths/ year
Chechen insurgents	1994-96	Russia	15,500
Tamil Tigers	2003, 2005-08	Sri Lanka	3,961
Kashmiri Insurgency	1989-2008	India	2,112
Sikh Insurgents	1983-1993	India	1,945
RUF (Main group)	1991-2000	Sierra Leone	1,421
Popular Revolutionary Movement	1946	Bolivia	1,000
ANC, PAC, AZAPO	1981-83; 1985-88	South Africa	584
Katanga	1960-62	DRC	203
MFDC	1990; 1992-93; 1995; 1997-98; 2000–01; 2003	Senegal	141
NDPVF	2004	Nigeria	72

a. The insurgency cases in Table 1 were chosen randomly with www.random.org's "True Random Number Generator". The universe of cases can be found in: Bethany Lacina and Nils Petter Gleditsch (2005), "Monitoring Trends in Global Combat: A New Dataset of Battle Deaths," *European Journal of Population* 21(2–3): 145–166. The dataset can be found at <http://www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Armed-Conflict/Battle-Deaths/>. The pages including civil wars go from p. 10 (lowest number fed into the True Random Number Generator) to p. 586 (highest number fed into the True Random Number Generator). The generator gave me the page number that had the insurgency listed. When the page landed was a coup d'état, I would run the Generator again, until I got a page that included a civil war with an insurgency. If the page listed more than two different civil wars, I chose the first one from the top of the page down. If the Generator produced an insurgency it had already produced, I ran it again.

In a nutshell, I argue that the strategic interaction that develops between the insurgency and the state is contingent upon the former's sources of revenue, which for the purposes of this paper will be two: illegal resources (drugs, armed patronage, extortion, kidnapping, etc.) and legal lootable resources (timber, alluvial diamonds, etc.). When necessary, I may also touch upon other resources like foreign assistance and taxes from the population. I hypothesize that civil wars involving insurgencies that derive most of their revenue from illegal resources will be of lower intensity than civil conflicts in which rebel groups make a living by exploiting legal lootable resources.

In real life, several of these sources of income are likely to be present simultaneously, pulling the group in different directions. Moreover, other actors besides the state and the

insurgency may have an independent effect on the war system in question.¹ It is still not farfetched to assume, however, that one will outweigh the others, and that its importance for survival will limit to a large extent what the group can do vis-à-vis its looming enemy. Le Billon (2004) develops a typology in the same vein based on the idea that “resources provide a context for political mobilization as well as the motivations, strategies, and capabilities of belligerents” (15). A more complete work—a dissertation, for example—would look at the interaction of both organizations (insurgency and state) based on how each of them earns revenue. The more limited scope of this thesis project is the reason why I focus solely on insurgent revenue as *the* key independent variable to understand interaction, which I measure in terms of intensity.

Implicit in my argument is the idea that the country as a whole, so paramount to external observers, is in many instances subordinate to the local priorities of insurgencies and states. In Colombia, for instance, the guerrillas, paramilitary, and security forces spend most of their energies trying to establish, maintain, or deepen their control over very specific areas in the country (PNUD 2003: 88). I believe it is important to move “beyond state-centric conceptualizations of security. [In the end], the state is just one actor which may or may not exercise dominion over the territorial space in which resource-related violence appears” (Dunning & Wirpsa 2004: 84).

This work is squarely within the second generation of research on resources and conflict, which is characterized by a more nuanced approach to resources than the “highly aggregated categories (e.g., “primary commodity exports”) used in the ‘first generation’” (Snyder & Bhavnani 2005: 588; see also: Lujala et. al 2005; Ross 2006: 272). What sets this work apart from Snyder & Bhavnani (2005) is that, whereas they seek to determine what they call a

¹ A war system is a pattern of violent interaction among different actors sustained over a period of time (Richani 2005: 113).

country's resource profile and mode of production (whether the resource is exploited by few large entities that can easily be taxed or by many small artisans that are almost impossible to tax efficiently) in order to predict the advent of state weakness and subsequently of civil war, I will examine insurgents' resources to make predictions about their interaction with the state. My goal is not to understand why civil wars happen, but rather how they are fought. This paper builds on—and hopefully adds to—Philippe Le Billon's "The Geopolitical Economy of 'Resource Wars'" (2004), in which he posits that certain types of conflict—coup d'état/foreign intervention, secession, warlordism, peasant/mass rebellion—can be explained on the basis of the kind of resources available in the country. I will look at this work in more detail in the following section.

The theory assumes that insurgencies are organizations that seek to guarantee the survival of their cadres in very lethal and uncertain environments, a characteristic that causes them—in some cases more than others—to be more risk averse than commonly thought. I consider insurgencies to be vehicles for elite survival, power, and status, and as such their main objective is likely to be self-preservation rather than government overthrow, unless, of course, the two are tightly intertwined. Likewise, I interpret the state (the executive authority *and* the government) that has "allowed" the formation and maturation of an insurgency as a fragmented and cash-strapped organization whose main purpose is to provide for elite power, riches, and status in environments where these luxuries are in short supply, and where "access to political power [is] the key source of wealth, and violence [. . .] the foundation of power" (Weinstein 2007: 65).

The foregoing means that if fighting brings about economic advantages that outweigh those of peace, it will be very difficult for the parties involved not to perpetuate the conflict (Sherman 2000: 699). Possessing a better understanding of the preferences of insurgents and

statesmen is key to offering solutions that are better suited for the realities on the ground. This theory seeks to provide a framework for those solutions by rejecting the nation-state bias and emphasizing each group's *localized* interests to explain why civil wars are fought with varying levels of intensity. To put it more bluntly: in many cases, the country as a whole does not matter; the "indispensable prerequisite" (Scott et. al 1970: 93) of survival does. Some companies have taken note of this, as Marilyn Silberfein (2004) points out:

As the demand for a range of resources continues to climb, transnational companies, eager to expand their inventories, do not necessarily pay close attention to the circumstances under which resources are acquired. Transnational exchanges are also less likely to be based on states as trading partners are [sic] more likely to be linked to alternative political entities that overlap with or replace states (213).

To show that my theory is a plausible alternative explanation of civil war intensity, I will use the list of civil wars that appears in Ross (2004a) to see how well those conflicts conform to my basic premise that an insurgency's main revenue source will have an independent effect on civil war intensity.

This thesis consists of four sections: In the first one, I will look at alternative explanations for civil war intensity. Section two will be devoted to theory and hypothesis generation. I will try to determine the theory's plausibility in section three, where I will have some case-study discussion and will test the hypotheses against the list of insurgencies taken from the current literature. Section three will also present an analysis of the results. Finally, section four will offer conclusions with alternative explanations to my results, possible problems with my approach, and ideas for future research.

OTHER APPROACHES TO THE PUZZLE

Although some works try to explain how an insurgency's modus vivendi impacts the group's behavior, some still share an implicit understanding that insurgencies are always chasing a victorious horizon that involves taking over the state, and that they will either "fail" or "win" (Kay 1999: 97). This assumption results from underestimating the incredible leap required for an insurgency to become a national government. The leap is so great that it is possible to imagine that, if given the choice, some insurgencies would "prefer" to remain the masters of their limited territory, for "taking control of the entire country [. . .] invites many complications."² The insurgents must be able to defeat government forces and impose their own rule—a qualitative increase in capabilities from mere subversion" (Byman et al. 2001: 106).

James D. Fearon (2005) argues that civil wars can last very long because of "diminishing returns" to guerrilla warfare (3). Adding more fighters increases the risk of infiltration and discovery by the security forces, and therefore there is an equilibrium at which the conflict can remain "small, stable, and stalemated" (3).

My theory would refine Fearon's argument in two ways: a) by positing that there is considerable variation in the size or intensity of civil conflicts on the basis of the underlying resources and 2) by considering that because insurgencies flourish in environments of state weakness, it is more likely that the military, not the insurgency, will be the one with a tendency to shrink. This is in fact what happened from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s in Africa, where

² For a very funny, but extremely insightful, article on this, see *The Onion*, "Rebels Immediately Regret Seizing Power in Zambia," *The Onion*, 6 December 2006. 30 July 2009. <<http://www.theonion.com/content/node/56093>>.

armies went from having on average 3.10 soldiers per 1,000 citizens to just two per 1,000 citizens (Herbst 2004: 359).

In a later paper, James D. Fearon (2007) contends that the government makes offers to negotiate with the insurgents to screen the weaker ones and then changes the terms of the negotiation in order to defeat them militarily. The idea being that only weak insurgents will accept an offer right away, at which point the government can try their strength. The model ends up producing a situation in which the government chooses to make unacceptable offers and then fights. “The longer the rebels manage to survive, the more the government’s belief that it faces the strong type increases, rising eventually to the point that it is willing to make an offer that both types of rebel group [weak and strong] would accept (4). And thus by fighting, the government seeks to ‘screen’ between weak and tough types of opponent” (3). Fearon implies that intensity will be determined by the strength of the insurgency and the ability of the state to sustain a fight with a very narrow objective. A weak insurgency will be defeated quickly and with relative ease, whereas a strong insurgency will push the government to the negotiation table, but only after putting up an *intense* fight.

One of the shortcomings of this argument is that it grants too much unity of purpose to the state, when Knorr (1962: 60) tells us that “an internal war [that] has been precipitated and has progressed to the [insurgency] stage [. . .] could rarely happen without, at least apparently, serious deficiencies in the performance of the incumbent government.” Herbst (2004: 358) underscores this point when he says that African militaries have performed very poorly when dealing with internal threats that can best be described as pathetic. Moreover, one of the problems with Thailand’s counterinsurgency efforts in the 1960s and 1970s was “the lack of cooperation among agencies and failure to coordinate programs” (Heaton & MacLeod 1980:

102). In other words, if the state lacks the focus necessary for Fearon's model to hold, then perhaps there are other factors that explain why some wars are more intense than others.

Stathis N. Kalyvas (2006) tackles the issue at hand from a different angle. He looks at the level of control the state or the insurgency exercise on their turf to predict the level of violence suffered by the population. His is still a model that assumes a constant contest between the rebels and the government, this time over information. He argues that indiscriminate violence takes place because it is cheaper than selective violence (147) and is carried out by the actor with less access to information (148-9), and goes on to develop a theoretical model of selective violence. He models intensity as the level of violence experienced by the population.

As I will explain later, I believe the number of combatant deaths over time is a more direct indicator of the intensity of the fight between insurgencies and states. You can have high levels of civilian violence (one-sided violence) in situations in which the insurgents and the government are not really engaging one another. In addition, whereas Kalyvas assumes that insurgents and states are always actively seeking to encroach upon one another's territory (different zones of control with varying levels of civilian violence), I am more inclined to believe that the opposite is a common phenomenon (Herbst 2004: 363; Le Billon 2004: 12; Richani 2005: 126; Silberfein 2004: 214).

Andrej Tuscisny (2004) also chooses combatant deaths to test conflict intensity. He finds support for Samuel Huntington's thesis that clashes between groups of different civilizations (be it interstate or intrastate) are more violent than those between groups belonging to the same civilization. Tuscisny's finding is quite thought provoking, but it appears to be at odds with the civil wars used to test my theory. For instance, Colombia and Peru belong to the Latin American civilization, whereas Sierra Leone and Angola belong to the African one. Neither of these

conflicts seems to include warring factions that would belong to different civilizations, and yet their intensities are very different. Later I will show how resource type is, I believe, a better predictor of conflict intensity—at least for the civil conflicts chosen for this study.

While the foregoing approaches focus on the alleged confrontation between insurgents and states—or between civilizations—to explain interaction as the result of military calculation, others base their arguments on the idea that resources matter. Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler and Måns Söderbom (2004) find that structural conditions before the conflict and certain circumstances during the same correlate strongly with conflict duration. Namely, low per capita income, high inequality, and a moderate degree of ethnic division lengthen conflict, whereas a decline in prices of primary commodity exports and external military intervention on the side of the rebels shorten it. The article studies the *empirical* plausibility of three different models of rebellion: rebellion as investment (conflict caused by a post-conflict payoff), rebellion as business (conflict caused by a payoff during conflict), and rebellion as mistake (conflict caused by military optimism).

This article is not exempt from the shadow of misspecification and spuriousness that looms large over quantitative studies of civil war (Ross 2004a: 338). If, as Ross (2004a) argues, a country's manufacturing sector flees due to civil war (and even before full-blown hostilities), turning the resource sector into the major economic force in the country, then we should expect to see low per capita income and high inequality. High inequality would take place because the resource sector tends to be capital intensive, generating substantial incomes for a lucky few while being utterly unable to absorb the increasing numbers of unemployed people. The same dynamic would explain low per capita income. The resource sector is usually not sufficiently large to offset the collapse of the other sectors in the economy. As the economic pie shrinks, so

does per capita income. In other words, low per capita income and high inequality would correlate strongly with civil war only because they are also consequences of the cause or causes of civil strife.

Michael L. Ross (2004a) does a thorough review of the literature on resources and conflict only to find it somewhat inconclusive (337). This happens in part because of a tendency to treat all resources [legal (lootable and non-lootable), illegal] the same, and to consider them of importance whether they are being exploited by the insurgents or not. As long as those resources are in the country, the resource-conflict literature considers them a key variable. A very simple thought experiment might help us understand why this is a problem:

Suppose that A is a weak and cash-strapped state sharing a country with insurgency B. Now let us pretend that B derives most of its revenue from drug trafficking, a clearly illegal activity. B's territory is devoid of any other natural resource. Even though A would rather see B disappear, it does not have the resources to try to make this happen. In addition, A would not want to invest the little resources it has in dislodging B, for doing so would bring no economic benefit whatsoever—as a state in the international system cannot engage in drug trafficking and B's territory has no other endowments. In pecuniary terms, A would end up in the red, for it would have to invest money for an intangible gain of having no insurgents. On the contrary, if state C shares a country with an insurgency D, and the latter derives most of its revenue from the extraction of a coveted natural resource, then C will be motivated to somehow get a share of D's resources. In other words, there is a possibility that C will end up ahead, and not in the red as state A, if it invests in controlling D's turf. If a researcher were to consider both cases as instances of natural resources, she could reach the conclusion that in 50 per cent of cases they do

not matter, whereas in 50 per cent of cases they do. The results would suffer from systematic error, because both situations do not represent the same phenomenon.

The two regularities that Ross finds in the literature are that oil exports are associated with the onset of conflict, while lootable commodities correlate with the duration of conflict (338). The latter allow “the weaker party to raise money and hence continue fighting” (345-346). However, Ross points out that Humphreys (2003³) finds the opposite: that diamonds tend to shorten civil wars by facilitating military victories (346). Here again, the discrepancy arises from using conflict duration as the only dependent variable and piling up all kinds of lootable resources under the same rubric. Later I will show that in *comparison*, wars where legal lootable resources (like secondary diamonds) constitute the insurgency’s backbone should be more intense (more deadly) than those in which narcotics is the key resource.

On a later piece, Michael L. Ross (2005a) makes a controversial claim by arguing that civil conflicts in Africa are more violent than elsewhere due to the presence of what he calls a futures market for war booty. He contends that the ability of states or insurgencies to sell war booty futures is unique to that continent, and explains that it allows the weaker side to prolong the war and make it more violent, when it would otherwise succumb to the stronger side. As one of my committee members pointed out, one of the problems with Ross’ argument is that it portrays Africa as an exceptional place (Manning 2011) that is somehow beyond comparison. A different dynamic other than “Africa is Africa” is more likely to explain the continent’s proclivity to civil war in recent years. In terms of natural resources, it could be that the incentives and market structures of the diamond trade—controlled for the most part by De Beers—lend themselves more easily to violent activity.

³ Same as Humphreys (2005) in this paper.

Philippe Le Billon's "The Geopolitical Economy of 'Resource Wars'" (2004) sets itself apart from the foregoing by positing that "specific resources are more likely to be associated with specific types of conflict" (15). Namely, diffuse (spread out through large areas) resources that are distant from the center of power will tend to be associated with warlordism; diffuse and proximate (close to the centers of power, like agricultural lands near the main cities) resources will be more fertile ground for rioting and mass rebellions; while point (concentrated over a relatively small area) resources close to the center of power (like offshore oil for instance) will correlate more strongly with coup attempts; and point resources in areas with historic claims for political autonomy should tend to engender secessionist movements (16-17).

I build upon Le Billon's framework by considering the motivations of the state when it deals with an insurgency that has access to certain kinds of resources. Like him, I believe that the resources available—or unavailable—will tend to facilitate a limited universe of behaviors that will be narrowed even more by the strategic interaction between our main actors.

A THEORY OF INSURGENCY-STATE INTERACTION

This section develops a theory of the interaction between the insurgency and the state that is contingent upon the former's mode of survival, and centers in on intensity (number of combatant deaths over time) as the dependent variable that best captures such interaction. More specifically, I posit that civil war intensity will be determined to a large extent by the insurgency's resource profile. If the insurgents derive most of their revenue from illegal resources such as drugs, then conflict intensity should be low; if, on the other hand, their main source of income is legal

lootable resources, then intensity should be high. Resources matter because they elicit certain motivations on the part of the insurgents and the state: attack to destroy, try to transform, or ignore the other, to name a few. As a conceptual tool, this section constitutes a simplification of reality. For instance, I assume that the insurgents derive most of their revenue from either illegal resources or legal lootable resources, when in real life these and other sources of income are likely to be present simultaneously, pulling the group in different directions. It is still not farfetched to assume, however, that one will outweigh the others, and that its importance for survival will influence to a large extent what the group can do vis-à-vis its looming enemy. The insurgency's core objective is not political change or state control, but the "indispensable prerequisite" (Scott et. al 1970: 93) of survival. The state is not much different in this regard.

Illegal resources as the insurgency's main source of revenue

By illegal resources I mean goods that a state proper would not be able to exploit openly without bringing considerable isolation upon itself in the international community; drugs being the most common illegal resource. Some "services" such as armed patronage, kidnappings, and extortion of large corporations also fall in this category. Civil wars whose insurgencies derive most of their revenue from illegal resources should be of low intensity. In this context, intensity is the number of combat deaths over time. I choose combat deaths because it is a very direct indicator of the actual level of fighting (interaction or lack thereof) between the parties to the conflict. This is precisely what I want to measure.

For an insurgency that derives most of its income from illegal resources, peace would have to involve relinquishing its livelihood, for one of the conditions of being allowed to live in

peace would be to forego its illegal trade. Providing incentives to the insurgents may thus prove financially infeasible “for a state that rejects future trade in these commodities” (Humphreys 2005: 516-517). Moreover, “as the drug trade is inherently illicit in the present international system, it is infeasible to offer rebels a negotiated solution whereby they would be allowed to retain control over the drug trade” (Cornell 2005: 755). Besides, the insurgency would have a very hard time letting go of the one certain stream of income—let alone the infrastructure that has been created around it—that has allowed it to thrive in an uncertain and potentially lethal environment. The uncertainty of a peaceful future in which the insurgency’s current mode of survival will become a morally and legally repugnant practice is too high a cost to bear, especially in a weak and cash-strapped country that appears less viable than the insurgents themselves. This type of insurgency will thus be uninterested in taking over the state or in seceding to form its own. The absence of a strategy to overtake the state partly explains why these conflicts should tend to be of low intensity. Many authors assume that the state is a prize, when in the real world it sometimes comes closer to being a liability.

The prospects for negotiation between a viable insurgency whose livelihood is illegal and a semi-failed state are not very encouraging, if nothing else because “[. . .] when the day-to-day benefits of fighting are relatively good, more stalemate-prone technologies improve the rebel group’s payoff for fighting versus being ‘shut out’. This implies that the government must give up more in a peaceful settlement, which in turn makes the government’s commitment problem harder to solve” (Fearon 2004: 297). Part of the uncertainty of a peaceful future involves Fearon’s commitment problem, but this is not what deters the insurgency from dropping its weapons voluntarily. Rather, the current benefits of illegal resources outweigh the future

(uncertain) benefits of peace by such a large margin that it makes little sense for the insurgency to change its ways.

The uncertainty that spoils negotiations also affects the military strategic calculus of the insurgents. The need to survive in a hostile environment will force the insurgency to focus on securing its grip on localized power to maintain its lifeline flowing, lest it finds itself crowded out by other powerful local actors. Any plans to take over the state will be postponed indefinitely, since the priority will always be to consolidate territorial control to further develop and establish the illegal trade that has proven so lucrative. Tamara Makarenko (2002) underscores this when she says:

The activities of the [Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan] suggest that the driving motivation of their insurgent incursions in 1999 and 2000 was not to establish an Islamic state in Uzbekistan, but to destabilize border areas in order to maintain and secure narcotics transportation routes.

Launching an all out civil war to topple the government would, by design, have to involve rebel forces storming the capital. But boots in the capital are boots absent from the areas of illegal-resource exploitation, which constitute the insurgency's priority. In addition, how would the international community react to a dictatorship by a former insurgency that acted as a quasi state in the regulation of the drug trade (PUND 2003: 308)? After lustrums or decades of developing its illegal business, the insurgency would be forced to start anew, if allowed to start at all as a new government.

A type of illegal resource that is often neglected is armed patronage, or rents derived from a legal resource the government or private entities are tapping into. The strategic interaction that develops is the same: the insurgents become more concerned with maintaining their illegal livelihood through local control than with taking over the state. Territorial control is key because

we are dealing with a point or fixed (highly concentrated) resource (Dunning and Wirpsa 2004; Le Billon 2004).

It could be argued that the foregoing is an idyllic portrayal of life in illegality. After all, the insurgents are condemned to constant vigilance because of the looming presence of the state, which could potentially destroy them. In addition, the insurgents and the state do fight one another at times. The problem with this argument is that it does not go beyond the surface of the observable. To see what this means, we must first understand the incentives the state has when facing an insurgency that derives most of its revenues from illegal resources.

The state has no genuine incentive to go after the insurgents when their incomes are derived from illegal resources. The state was absent from the regions in which the insurgency matured because it was fragmented, incompetent and weak, but also because the little power it had was concentrated in the biggest cities and in those other areas of the country where it might be exploiting resources. From the state's vantage point, gaining control over the drug-producing territory does not represent an immediate tangible gain other than not having insurgents in that territory. The problem is that to accomplish this, said territory has to be cleared of insurgents and then guarded to prevent their recurrence, something that absorbs valuable resources that could continue to be used in the largest cities. The prospect of weakening its grip on the territories (cities or areas of resource extraction) it already controls in order to dominate an area that was not under its de facto jurisdiction is a gamble the state is not willing to take. The state may simply be unable to take on the insurgents as Thom (1995) explains about African armies:

Most African state armies are in decline, beset by a combination of shrinking budgets, international pressures to downsize and demobilize, and the lack of the freely accessible military assistance that characterized the cold war period (3).

The state's unwillingness to commit resources to destroy the insurgents and the latter's lack of interest in state control or secession explain the low intensity of this type of conflict. The lack of genuine interest in toppling the government, plus the need to fight the latter, sometimes push the insurgency to rely on one-sided attacks in the biggest cities and centers of control without engaging the state directly. This will induce a "static defense posture" (Scott et al. 1970: 107) on the part of the security forces of the state.

The state does not want to launch a true war against the guerrillas when these are extracting rents from a legal resource such as a multinational corporation because that would most likely bring the economic activity (rentierism) that benefits both actors to a halt, as multinational corporations might find it difficult to operate in a truly bellicose context.

When the insurgency exploits illegal resources, the most the state will tend to do is send rogue counterinsurgency forces to do whatever it takes. The state does not have the resources or the know-how to offset the tradeoff between continued control of urban centers and areas of resource extraction and, therefore, defaults to indiscriminate violence in areas where the insurgencies operate. Like the Thai military in the 1960s, the state embroiled in civil wars involving illegal resources will "continue to place more faith in bombs and napalm than it does in civic action" (Heaton & MacLeod 1980: 103).

The insurgency's need to maintain territorial control for illegal-resource exploitation combines with the fact that the state is risk averse, and thus is unwilling to dedicate scarce resources to launch a real offensive against the insurgents, to create a situation of coexistence that is characterized by very low-intensity warfare that can last for many years.

Hypothesis 1: Civil wars in which the insurgency's main source of revenue is illegal (drugs, extortion, armed patronage, etc.) will tend to be of very low intensity (measured in combatant deaths over time).

The foregoing does not imply that the insurgents will never storm the capital. In fact, many unexpected things could take place that would push the insurgents to go after the state. My contention, however, is that this is very unlikely when the insurgency's main source of revenue comes from illegal resources.

In sum, when an insurgency derives most of its income from illegal resources (drugs, armed patronage), the state has no genuine interest in destroying it and the rebels should not seek to take over the state. This dynamic takes place because both organizations are more concerned with maintaining their grip on the territory they control, and thus will find it difficult to engage in direct attacks against one another. This makes for longer wars that do not claim as many combatant lives (intensity) when compared to other types of insurgency-state interaction. Because the insurgency's livelihood is illegal, the group would only be able to continue existing in a peaceful context if it abandoned its illicit trade. The uncertain benefits of joining a fragmented, weak, and cash-strapped state are not worth giving up the certain payoffs of their current revenue.

Lootable resources as the insurgency's main source of revenue

The behavior of both the insurgency and the state could not be more different than the foregoing when lootable resources are the insurgency's main source of income. In this case, intensity will be higher than that of the previous type.

“*Lootable* resources have low economic barriers to entry and can be profitably exploited by small-scale artisans. Alluvial diamonds and other precious gemstones are good examples of lootable resources” (Snyder & Bhavnani 2005: 568) (emphasis in the original). Goods like oil, uranium, or kimberlite diamonds require considerable infrastructure to be exploited, which is why states, not insurgencies, control them. “The large amount of capital and technology required to mine nonlootable resources profitably forms a natural barrier that excludes small-scale artisanal miners” (Snyder & Bhavnani 2005: 568). This is why characterizing the conflict in Congo-Brazzaville, for instance, as one of resources (oil) is a mistake. The conflict is better understood as one of foreign support for an insurgent movement; namely, Angola's support for the Cobras (Englebert & Ron 2004: 66). We should only catalogue a conflict as a resource conflict if at least one of its insurgencies is actively exploiting the resource, or if they can eventually exploit the resource without having to take over the state. This was clearly not the case in Congo-Brazzaville, because the resource was offshore.

It is likely that insurgencies operating in areas where nonlootable resources are present rely on extortion and kidnapping of people working in those industries as their means of survival. Or they will target public officials to force them to redirect royalties and the like for specific purposes or people. This is called “armed patronage” (PNUD 2003: 87), an illegal resource as per the discussion in the previous type. Or, perhaps they are receiving help from foreign

governments (or companies) hoping to access those resources if the insurgents get a hold of the apparatus of the state (Ross 2005a), in which case their interaction with the state might be better understood by the fact that their main source of income is a foreign entity.

When illegal resources are the main source of income of the insurgents, peace means starting from scratch by giving up a lucrative livelihood. This causes the insurgents to become further entrenched in the territory they control. When legal lootable resources are at stake, on the other hand, the insurgents' obvious desire to control their territory will be mitigated by an openness to negotiate with the state. This is due to the critical importance of territorial control for survival: The insurgents that rely on lootable resources cannot launch a total war against the state, storming the biggest cities and eventually the capital, for that would weaken their grip in the areas they rule. The ideal arrangement for the insurgents is thus some sort of "legalization" or recognition of their organization as the legal authority in their territory. Auty (2004) refers to this preference as establishing a local monopoly of power that would allow the insurgency a desired level of looting of the resource in question (43). And Le Billon (2004) alludes to this when he says that "local commanders or movements eager to protect their commercial interests may strike a peace agreement with the government" (12). Enjoying *de jure* control of a strategic territory would remove the uncertainty implicit in the lethal environment of civil war without undermining the certainty provided by the continued exploitation of the resources that have constituted the insurgency's livelihood. The insurgency, or a portion thereof, is thus willing to mutate into a peaceful form of local "master" because such a change improves its chances of survival within the confines of the country it shares with the state. Unfortunately, the insurgency's preference is made moot by the motivations of the state. This only applies where the state holds at least a modicum of strength to keep the insurgents off the capital. If the state is

too weak, the insurgents may move on to take it over. Because the resource in question is a legal resource, insurgencies can take over states or join states and still exploit it without bringing isolation upon themselves. This is a fundamental difference from their counterparts whose main source of revenue is an illegal resource.

The lure of legal lootable resources makes it very difficult for the state to remain aloof—as in the first type. Instead, it prefers to launch a total war against the insurgents to control as much of their resource pool as possible. If Snyder & Bhavnani's (2005) dictum, "*the ability of states to earn revenue from lootable resources will depend on how much of the total value of the sector is generated by artisanal miners, or, alternatively, by industrial firms*" (569) (emphasis in the original) is right, it follows that the state will be prone to doing whatever it can to ensure it will earn revenue from lootable resources. Besides, a fragmented and cash-strapped organization should consider it a great opportunity to be able to exploit more resources.

The aggressiveness of one will induce the aggressiveness of the other, even when the insurgents prefer a peaceful settlement in which they are allowed some level of autonomy in their territory. In the face of the state's continued aggression, one would expect the insurgents to try to secede, but they do not. Instead, they are forced to fight for their life, which in this context means attempting to topple the government and taking over the state as a means to ensure their continued access to the areas of resource exploitation in the country.

In an experimental vacuum where the state has no foreign support and the insurgents rely on the lootable resources they exploit, the latter should come out victorious. The *individual* rebel leaders will find it more difficult to escape their environment than the *individual* government elites. The former will continue fighting because their survival depends on it; the latter will eventually disband and seek refuge elsewhere, for their survival will become increasingly

compromised with the guerrilla's attacks and the temptation to "retire" with the money they have already embezzled will outweigh the uncertain payoff of future corruption. Government elites should flee once they doubt their ability to continue banking on the state. But experimental vacuums are not to be found in the social sciences. It is likely that the state will be more successful in its attempt to control the resources that constitute the enemy's main source of income. A corrupt and incompetent cash-strapped state should covet—and hoard—lootable resources, and because it does not exist in an experimental vacuum, it should also seek partners (foreign governments or corporations) that may be interested in the resources under insurgent control. This might spell doom for the guerrillas, as the state will possess the willingness and support necessary to root them from their territory. The state is so willing because the gain is double: destruction of the threat posed by the insurgents and control of a territory that will fill the coffers (pockets?) of the state and provide further for corruption and continued control of the important areas of the country. This is not to say that guerrillas lack foreign partners. In fact, they also vie for foreign patronage and enjoy a considerable level thereof in some cases. But, because the government represents a state that is already recognized in the international community, it might have an easier time securing a stronger commitment from foreign partners. Let us say that the government has a considerable handicap over the insurgents for being closely tied to a recognized state.

By getting foreign partners that are willing to pay for future access to resources, the state is able to launch a total war against the insurgents *without* fearing that it will loosen its grip on the cities and areas it already controls. In addition, by doing this, the state ties future territorial control to continued survival. The state's aggression will elicit a like response from the insurgents, who find themselves embroiled in a total war to overthrow the state. In this type,

controlling the state appears as the best way for the rebels to maintain access to the source of their revenue. Unfortunately, as I just mentioned, the guerrillas may bring their own foreign partners to the table, thereby increasing the intensity of war exponentially and raising the stakes for all the parties involved.

Hypothesis 2: Civil wars in which the insurgency's main source of revenue is legal lootable resources (secondary diamonds, timber, etc) will tend to be of very high intensity (measured in combatant deaths over time).

Civil wars in which the insurgency derives most of its income from legal lootable resources tend to be of higher intensity. Although the insurgents would settle for semi autonomy in the area that is the source of their lootable resource, they are forced to fight a total war against the state. The latter wants to take over the area controlled by the insurgents as a means to increase the resources it has available to itself, and thus may seek foreign partners (governments and/or corporations) to finance its anti-insurgency campaign. The insurgents will do the same, but it should be easier for the state to get harder commitments from foreign partners. It is important to reiterate that a conflict whose insurgency does not actively exploit natural resources, or will not be able to exploit them without taking over the state, falls under a different category not covered in this paper.

PLAUSIBILITY PROBE

It is now time to see how the theory holds up against a set of empirical observations. I will analyze how well it is able to explain a few case studies and some statistics.

A Few Cases

The cases discussed here appear in Ross 2004's table for "Gemstone and Drug Producers that had Civil Wars in the 1990s" (345). The countries covered by Ross and their respective resources are: Angola (diamonds), Democratic Republic of Congo (diamonds), Liberia (diamonds), Russia (diamonds), Sierra Leone (diamonds), Afghanistan (opium, cannabis, gems), Burma (opium, gems), Cambodia (cannabis, gems), Colombia (opium, coca), and Peru (coca).

One of the advantages of taking the case studies from a list put together by a different author is that it minimizes the possibility for bias. I do not develop a case study for each of the civil conflicts that Ross mentions because of space constraints. I look at two cases of illegal resources (Colombia and Peru), two cases of legal lootable resources (Angola and Sierra Leone), and what I think is a hybrid (Burma). I went with these five countries as a matter of chance (not to be confused with randomness): as I was doing the research for my thesis, these were the countries for which I kept coming across the most case-study literature. I do use all of them (except for Russia and Afghanistan as previously explained) in the statistical section that follows this part.

These cases appear as the most likely scenarios for the theory to hold, in no small part because most people know or think to know the importance of narcotics in the conflict in

Colombia, and that of precious gems in Sierra Leone, for example. Consequently, they are a good start to test the theory's plausibility.

I am interested in finding out if there are noticeable differences in the behavior of both actors depending on the type of resource the insurgency is exploiting for most of its revenue. More importantly, I want to test how much intensity differs among these cases.

Colombia

Perhaps nowhere else than in Colombia has the unwillingness of insurgencies that rely on illegal resources for their livelihood to negotiate been more obvious. Even after receiving a lofty concession from the Colombian government in the form of a demilitarized piece of territory the size of Switzerland in 1999, the country's largest guerrilla group, the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), were unwilling to negotiate seriously and instead increased their operations.⁴ The organization's Eastern Block (where the demilitarized zone was located) had been regulating the coca trade and excising taxes from growers and buyers since the early 1980s (PUND 2003: 51). In spite of the government's lofty concessions, the insurgency was unwilling to engage in bona fide negotiations. This, as the theory would have it, happened because the insurgency would have to give up its profitable illegal livelihood centered on narcotics to be able to lay down its arms.

The importance of protecting localized interests as opposed to national ones is supported by some evidence pertaining to the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), Colombia's second largest guerrilla movement. This group was moribund up until the mid-1980s, when it was able

⁴ From 1990 to 1998, the average number of attacks by the FARC was 505/year, the highest number being 706 in 1997. After the government offered the FARC a demilitarized territory from 1999 to 2001, the average number of attacks mushroomed to 868, the highest number being 1032 in 2001. If we include 2002, then the numbers are a whopping average of 1119 and a highest number of 1873 (PUND 2003: 53).

to extract rents from one of the contractors working on the construction of the Caño Limón-Coveñas pipeline. The rebels went from 40 members at that time to between 3 and 4 thousand in 2004 (Dunning and Wirpsa 2004: 87; Richani 2005: 126), or from 56 acts in 1985 to 420 in 2002 (PNUD 2003: 53). The group's reliance on extortion and kidnapping (illegal "resources") for most of its revenue in the 1990s has allowed it to be reluctant to participating in the drug trade (PNUD 2003: 285). Furthermore, "despite the anti-foreign capital stance of the FARC and the ELN and their call to renegotiate contracts and concessions granted by the Colombian state to these multinationals over the years, both guerrilla groups have managed to extract significant protection rents from these companies and to obtain oil royalty payments from local government officials by gaining contracts with them" (Richani 2005: 125). In spite of what the rebels might say about multinational corporations, they become tightly dependent on them for their continued—and ever-improving—survival. If, as Richani (2005: 126) says, it is true that between 1995 and 2000 guerrillas in Colombia received \$632 million in ransom for kidnapped foreigners that most of the time worked for multinational corporations, then it is easy to understand why the guerrilla's localized interests have nothing to do with overthrowing the state, and instead are set on consolidating territorial control around the source of their rents.

For example, Occidental Oil Company (OXY) pays the Colombian state and its armed forces more than US\$20 million per year for *security* (Newton 1997; El Tiempo 1997a; qtd. in Richani 2005: 127) (emphasis added).

Here the key word is "security." Oxy is not hiring the Colombian army to destroy the insurgents, but rather to provide a modicum of security that will allow it to continue operating. Hence, the state and the insurgency come to tolerate one another on behalf of a third party. Neither one is truly committed to the extermination of the other. As the theory predicts, when illegal resources are involved (armed patronage, extortion, kidnapping in this case), intensity is

low. Both actors are coexisting around the source of their rents; they are definitely not engaged in full-blown hostilities, for that would bring the economic activity that benefits both to a halt.

In Colombia, the state has been so uninterested in the far reaches of the country where the insurgencies budded that the ruling elites have failed to develop a proper strategy to deal with a conflict that is now more than 40 years old (PNUD 2003: 21).

Peru

Like in Colombia, the Peruvian state lacked for a long time the unity necessary to take on the insurgents of Sendero Luminoso. The rivalries between police and military were so pervasive, that when Sendero attacked the police station in Uchiza in March 1989, no military support arrived, even though “the Uchiza police commander pleaded desperately for reinforcements and Minister of the Interior Armando Villanueva specifically requested aid from military units located only minutes away by helicopter” (Palmer 1992: 71). Moreover, the state seemed uninterested in committing forces in the areas of the country where Sendero was strongest. During the 1980s and early 1990s, Peru kept “most military forces on the borders with Ecuador and Chile [rather] than in the areas of greatest conflict with” Sendero (Palmer 1992: 78).

Peru seems to fit two of the arguments of the theory: that the state that has allowed the formation of an insurgency should be understood more as a fragmented organization and less as a unitary actor; and that the state involved in a civil war in which an insurgency derives most of its revenue from an illegal resource will be genuinely uninterested in the insurgent territory, and instead will keep its military and security resources concentrated in other areas of the country.

Sendero developed a working relationship with coca growers, traffickers, and producers that proved quite profitable and was used to strengthen the insurgency (Palmer 1992: 77) and

fund its national presence (Kay 1999: 97). Even though the Upper Huallaga Valley was of strategic importance for Sendero—where it taxed Colombian traffickers to use the approximately 120 landing strips that it controlled (Kay 1999: 103; Palmer 1992: 70)—, the military did not develop a solid plan to rein in that territory. The lack of a coherent strategy and a commitment to regain insurgent territory is the reason why Peru did something that is anathema to basic counterinsurgency doctrine: the military sent troops with no Quechua speakers into Ayacucho in 1989 (Onís 2005), even though it is accepted that incumbents cannot defeat insurgents without an intelligence organization (R. Thompson 1966: 84; qtd. in Kalyvas 2006: 174). As predicted by the theory, the state chose the easiest course of action for its counterinsurgency campaign: sending rogue counterinsurgency forces into insurgent territory so that they could do “whatever it took.”

Angola

By 1980, the state in Angola was fragmented, lacking the “coordination of political, administrative, military policy and intelligence efforts” to deal with the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) (Alberts 1980: 259). In fact, by 1992-93 UNITA controlled over 70 per cent of the country. The government remained somewhat aloof for more than a decade because the war was not about resources, or at least that is how this theory would explain the government’s position. The war intensified once diamonds became central to the conflict by becoming the main source of funding for the rebels (Sherman 2000: 707). Access to diamonds allowed UNITA to purchase weapons and other war supplies, thereby transforming themselves into “a powerful conventional army” (Malaquias 2001: 532) with “an estimated minimum revenue of \$3.72 billion from diamond sales between 1992 and 1998” (Alert 2009).

The insurgency moved away from a strategy to topple the regime and instead focused on enhancing its territorial control to engage in diamond mining (Malaquias 2001: 530; Sherman 2000: 705). As my theory would have it, the insurgency's main concern became local territorial control. This notwithstanding, the state's behavior was significantly different from that of the states in Colombia and Peru. Angola's civil war turned considerably more intense in its post-Cold War phase (after 1992), precisely when it moved from being a war of foreign support to one of lootable resources. About two-thirds of the 500 thousand victims have died in this phase (Le Billon 2001: 59). Once resources became a central factor in the war, the state could no longer remain uninterested in the insurgent territory, even if the insurgents' focus was localized control. It now had a strong incentive to escalate the fight. And this is precisely one of the theory's main propositions: that civil wars in which the insurgencies derive most of their revenue from legal lootable resources will be more intense.

To intensify the fight, the government of Angola had to enter into agreements with International Defence and Security (IDAS), DeBeers, and others to get financial and military support in exchange for future mining rights (Ross 2005a: 18). This proved successful for the government, as by 1994 UNITA was in a position of weakness that forced it back to the negotiating table (Ross 2005a: 18).

Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) "pushed ever closer to Freetown" (Silberfein 2004: 223), even though it might have been content with controlling only the resource-rich areas of the country as exemplified by the following passage:

One Freetown correspondent identified the RUF approach as follows: 'Escapees from the rebel stronghold report that the intention of the invading force is to cut Sierra

Leone, like Liberia, into two, taking the economically viable part which produces the nation's cash crops and minerals – they don't want any other part of the country' (Silberfein 2004: 221).

This is precisely what the theory predicts: an outcome that is suboptimal from the insurgents' vantage point. The insurgents end up fighting to take over the state when their preference is to remain "the masters of their limited territory" (see p. 6 in this paper). Diamonds were, after all, the insurgents' main source of sustenance (Davies 2000: 357) and their main "currency" to purchase weapons from Liberia (Alert 2009).

Like the government in Angola, that in Sierra Leone escalated the conflict with aid from foreign partners. In March 1995, when the RUF was very close to the capital, the government sold some mining rights to Branch Energy, a South African company, in exchange for support from Executive Outcomes, a private South African security firm. The strategy allowed the government to recover the mines it had promised to Branch Energy and staved off defeat (Ross 2005a: 15). Moreover, in 2000, while Sierra Leone was still a "fragmented country – more than half of which was a no-go zone dominated by the RUF and inaccessible to most NGOs and all government agencies," a "contingent of British troops that had arrived to defend Freetown provided a strong deterrent to any RUF expansionary plans" (Silberfein 2004: 226-227), and, together with the international community's boycott on non-certifiable diamonds from Sierra Leone and the heavy losses suffered by the RUF in Guinea in the first half of 2000, was a key element in pushing the insurgent organization to sign a peace treaty in April 2001.

In Angola and Sierra Leone, the state was able to avoid defeat not because it was competent or learnt to fight, but because it received foreign support in exchange for access to resources. Both cases show the escalation the theory predicts takes place when legal lootable

resources are involved, and they stand in sharp contrast to the lengthy and less intense conflicts in Colombia and Peru.

Burma

I like to see Burma as the exception that proves the rule, to use a common expression. For instance, even though the Mong Tai Army (MTA) of Burma was 20,000-strong and united with the Shan State Army to form a force that was capable of expelling the last remnants of the Chinese Kuo Min Tang, there did not appear to be intentions to take over the state, and instead they declared the independence of the Shan State (McCoy 1999: 312-313). This defies my theory, which predicts that an insurgency deriving its livelihood from the drug trade (heroin in the Shan State Army's case) would not choose to become a state, and instead would prefer to continue operating within a recognized state without attempting to take it over, or secede from it. It is possible, nonetheless, to consider Khun Sa's (the leader of the Shan State) miscalculations as an irrational deviation of the way he "should" have acted according to rational choice. The following passage underscores my point:

It was these miscalculations about the *global system of states* and its diplomacy that led to Khun Sa's downfall only three years later. By investing all his resources in the Shan national cause, he sacrificed the outlaw's flexibility of maneuver among states that had served him so well. Moreover, by building a capital city as a symbol of Shan independence, he created a fixed target for the inevitable Burmese attacks. Rangoon's military *was tolerant of drug dealing*, but secession of the Shan State, with nearly 20 percent of the nation's population, threatened the nation's territorial integrity. Moreover, his attempt at diplomatic blackmail, by flooding the world with heroin until its leaders gave the Shan their independence, aroused scorn, even outrage in Washington (McCoy 1999: 313) (emphasis added).

While the theory predicts that the state will remain aloof and that negotiations will be extremely difficult due to the fact that the rebels are exploiting an illegal resource they are unwilling to give up, "the rebels of the United Wa State Army broke off secret talks with Khun

Sa and sided with the Burmese [army], sending troops to fight his army in August [1995] and thereby assuring continued state protection for their heroin shipments” (McCoy 1999: 319). This was just one of the agreements between the state and most of its purported enemies. In fact, the government, the State Law and Order Council (SLORC), had by 1995 signed peace agreements with 15 insurgent groups and launched a massive assault to defeat the Shan State (McCoy 1999: 317-18). The following passage sheds some light on the reasons behind this cooperation:

[. . .] the SLORC itself harnessed the heroin traffic to create a rising synergy between frontier control and state capacity. Looking back, the regime pursued a two-part campaign from 1989 to 1996. First, it shifted the heroin trade away from the Thai frontier, where Khun Sa was king, to areas controlled by its new drug-lord allies. Then, using these same opium armies, their hard-currency profits and their troops, Rangoon launched a massive assault on Khun Sa’s secessionist state (McCoy 1999: 317).

The SLORC started benefiting directly from the opium trade, thereby creating a hybrid situation between both types of insurgencies discussed in this theory—those deriving most of their income from illegal resources and those doing it from legal lootable resources. The state was willing to destroy the most powerful insurgency controlling the Shan State because it was also a threat to its ability to profit from the opium trade. This is precisely a behavior we would observe when legal lootable resources are involved. For conceptual purposes, it can be said that in Burma’s context, illegal resources were “legalized” when the state became an important actor in their exploitation.

Like other cases, Burma’s state was absent from the areas that gave rise to powerful insurgencies. For more than 30 years starting in 1950, the Shan State in the northeastern side of the country was so forgotten by the central government that there were up to 40 armies operating there at any one time, until power was successfully consolidated by some warlords who were able to control the region’s ubiquitous opium trade: China’s Kuo Min Tang in the 1950s; Khun

Sa in the late 1960s; Lo Hsing-han at the beginning of the 1970s; Khun Sa again in the 1980s and more recently, the United Wa State Army (McCoy 1999: 306). Not only was the Burmese state aloof, it was complicit (Bernstein & Kean 1996; Brown 1999; Cohen 1998; McCoy 1999; Steinberg 2000: 262), and the country's Eastern Command gave tacit support to Khun Sa's Shan United Army in the late 1980s, allowing it to occupy 150 miles of strategic heroin trafficking territory along the Thai-Burma border (McCoy 1999: 311).

Burma stands out as a special case because of the state's direct participation in the exploitation of illegal resources (heroin). This creates the artificial "legalization" of an illegal resource, and thus explains to some extent the unexpected behavior on the part of the state and the insurgents.

The civil conflicts in Colombia and Peru are characterized by lower levels of intensity and states that appear uninterested in the areas controlled by the insurgents. These observable outcomes are explained by my theory in the section on illegal resources. Angola and Sierra Leone, on the contrary, have higher levels of intensity and states that are actively seeking to take over insurgent territory. In Angola's case, we can see how the war turns more intense when resources become a central factor in the insurgency's revenue. Both states enter into agreements with foreign entities as a means to engage in a total war with the rebels without having to sacrifice all the military and security resources that are spread across different areas of the country.

Burma stands out as a hybrid case because the state is a direct participant in the narcotics business. Therefore, we see characteristics of a war in which illegal resources are the insurgents' backbone—all the agreements with 15 insurgent groups and the government's *laissez faire*

attitude towards them—and of one where legal lootable resources represent the rebels’ livelihood—a total war against the Shan State Army.

Some Statistics

These statistics need to be handled with caution, as they are very unreliable for some of the countries under consideration. I, however, have decided to include them as a guide for ways in which this theory can be tested once more reliable data become available.

TABLE 2: Civil war outcomes in gemstone and drug producers that experienced civil strife in the 1990s^a

	<i>Conflict</i>	<i>Intensity^b</i>
<i>Legal lootable</i>	UNITA v. government (Angola)	57,900 (1992-2002) or 0.46% of population ^c
	Several v. government (DRC)	147,377 (1998-2001; 2006-2008) or 0.32% of population
	NPFL v. government (Liberia)	11,100 (1989-1995) or 0.57% of population
	RUF v. government (Sierra Leone)	14,212 (1991-2000) or 0.35% of population
	Khmer Rouge v. government (Cambodia)	1,450 (1990-1998) 0.01% of population
<i>Illegal</i>	SSA, later SSNA ^d v. government (Burma)	1,500 (1972 ^e -73; 1976-88; 1994; 1995-2001) or 0.0034% of population
	Several ^f v. government (Colombia)	36,093 (1985-2008) or 0.09% of population
	Sendero Luminoso v. government (Peru)	18,678 (1982-1999) or 0.07% of population

a. Original list from: Ross (2004a). I have removed Russia because its civil war lies outside the scope of this paper. Afghanistan is also not included because its strife can be traced back to foreign occupation during the Soviet invasion of 1979-1989, the ensuing skirmishes for power until 1996, and then the American occupation after 2003.

b. Source: Lacina and Gleditsch (2005). When best estimates are not available, I use low estimates.

c. Base year is 1995 for all countries. Source: World Bank Search

<http://search.worldbank.org/data?qterm=population%20statistics&language=EN&format=html>

d. Burma has had more than 10 insurgencies. I choose only the Shan State Army for being the largest (Ploughshares) and most pertinent (drug trade) for our purposes (Front Line).

e. I choose this year because, according to Frontline, it is when “heroin exportation from Southeast Asia's Golden Triangle, controlled by Shan warlord, Khun Sa, becomes a major source for raw opium in the profitable drug trade.”

f. It is acceptable to combine the different insurgent groups into one broad category because the largest, the FARC and the ELN, derive most of their income from illegal resources—drugs, kidnappings, extortion, armed patronage, so it is likely that these two groups are the main drivers behind the outcomes we observe.

The theory seems to be at least partially supported by the findings in Table 2. Almost all of the civil conflicts characterized by a considerable struggle over legal natural resources like diamonds or timber are deadlier in a shorter time than those in which illegal resources are the norm, which are characterized by lower intensities over longer periods. The one exception is Cambodia. Let us now control for other potential explanations for these varying levels of intensity.

TABLE 3: Armed forces personnel (% of labor force)^a, Topographical variation (in meters)^b and intensity (% of pop./year)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Armed forces personnel (% of labor force) 1995</i>	<i>Max elevation minus lowest elevation</i>	<i>Intensity (% of pop. Per year)</i>
Khmer Rouge v. government (Cambodia)	6.3%	1,810 m	0.001%
NPFL v. government (Liberia)	2.7%	1,380 m	0.095%
UNITA v. government (Angola)	2.2%	2,620 m	0.046%
Several v. government (Colombia)	1.8%	5,775 m	0.004%
Sendero Luminoso v. government (Peru)	1.8%	6,768 m	0.004%
SSA, later SSNA v. government (Burma)	1.6%	5,881 m	0.00016%
RUF v. government (Sierra Leone)	0.5%	1,948 m	0.038%
Several v. government (DRC)	0.4%	5,110 m	0.053%

*. Base year is 1995 for all countries. Source: World Bank Search.
<http://search.worldbank.org/data?qterm=population%20statistics&language=EN&format=html>

*. Point of maximum elevation minus point of lowest elevation as per the CIA World Factbook. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>>. This is the methodology used by Fearon and Laitin (2003) for the same variable.

Based on the table above, the strength of the armed forces (in terms of their percentage of the labor force) does not appear to have an independent effect on conflict intensity. One could conjecture that the more manpower, the more intensity, since there would be enough people to carry out an aggressive war. But this does not appear to be the case. There is no discernable pattern of correlation. Sierra Leone has a low number of armed forces as a percentage of the labor force and high intensity; but Angola has a high number of armed forces as a percentage of the labor force and high intensity as well. Cambodia reads very high on armed forces personnel but presents a very low intensity. Burma's armed forces personnel is similar to Colombia and Peru's, but the country has a very low intensity.

An alternative independent variable that could explain the differences in intensity is topographical variation. If a country has too many mountains that are very high, then we can argue that the security forces and the insurgents will have a very difficult time fighting one another, and thus intensity should be low. Table 3 shows the topographical variation for the countries in this study. Fearon and Leitin (2003) use this same measure in their influential work.

The cases with the highest intensity are (from more to less): Liberia, DRC, Angola, and Sierra Leone. The DRC's is the second most intense conflict in spite of having a small reading on the armed forces personnel and a high value on topographical elevation. Based on these two variables, we should expect the DRC to have low intensity, because the few people involved in the armed forces would have a difficult time (due to the high elevation) engaging the insurgents. My theory is able to predict the DRC's high intensity in spite of having high elevation and small armed forces. Nevertheless, making inferences from such a small number of cases is risky. At the very least, this plausibility probe has shown that the theory has promise.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to explain why some civil wars are more intense than others; intensity understood as the number of combatant deaths over time. I posited that the key to answering this question was to be found in the resources the insurgents were exploiting for survival. If they were relying on illegal resources (drugs, armed patronage, kidnappings, extortion) for most of their revenue, then intensity should be low. If, on the contrary, their main source of revenue was legal lootable resources (secondary diamonds, timber, etc), then intensity should be high. The theory is somewhat supported by the findings in the Plausibility Probe section.

Illegal resources engender low intensities because there are two dynamics at play: 1) The state is risk averse and focused on the largest urban centers and areas of resource extraction, and it is thus not willing to engage the insurgents directly. 2) The insurgents' survival is provided by a good or service that is illegal in the international community. It makes little sense for them to give up their profitable livelihood in order to partner with a state that is fragmented and, in many cases, cash-strapped.

Legal lootable resources propitiate a condition of total war because the state wants to hoard the resources present in insurgent territory. The insurgents will fight it out with the state in order to survive, and because they realize the only way to guarantee continued access to their resources is through total control of the state.

The Plausibility Probe appears to underscore the theory. Civil wars in which insurgents have derived significant portions of their revenue from illegal resources are of lower intensity than those in which the insurgent resource has been a legal lootable resource. The wars in

Colombia and Peru, for instance, are less intense (in terms of combatant deaths per year of conflict) than those in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola. This correlation must be treated with caution, however. The small number of cases in this paper limits the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, the fact that Cambodia is not predicted by the theory may indicate that what makes a difference is whether the insurgents derive most of their revenues from diamonds or not. Perhaps the diamond trade specifically (and not legal lootable resources in general) is responsible for civil wars of higher intensity. This could be because of the highly centralized nature of commerce in diamonds. The more centralization may allow focusing bellicose resources more intensely (Manning 2011).

One way to nuance insurgent resources even further would be to expand the theory to include two additional types: insurgencies whose main source of revenue is a foreign government and insurgencies that tax the populations they control as their main means of survival. These two added types would allow for the inclusion of many more civil wars covering more years, thereby facilitating larger comparisons.

This theory leaves another important puzzle unanswered: why a state all of a sudden “decides” to go after an insurgency relying on illegal resources for its survival. After decades of “chronic insurgency” (Kay 1999: 98), Colombia finally got around developing a coherent strategy to wrest control in some areas of the country from the insurgents, and eventually was able to render its former foe inoperable. Peru did something similar in a shorter period. One place to look for clues could be the level of elite insecurity in the country. Perhaps there is a point after which insecurity is so severe that the equilibrium of coexistence I describe is broken and elites become “united” around a common purpose. Further research should seek to quantify this possibility and consider both sides of the equation—the insurgency and the state—to arrive

at more accurate findings. If resources are important for the insurgents, they must also be important for the state. The interaction between the insurgency's means of survival and that of the state's hold considerable promise to enhance our understanding of civil wars.

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