

Revolutionary Rebels and the Marxist Paradox

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During the Cold War, many rebel movements adopted a revolutionary agenda, with a Marxist or socialist orientation. A large qualitative literature contends that revolutionary rebels were generally high quality rebels, but their overall impact has not been investigated? We find that civil wars where the main rebel group was socialist, tended to be fought as highly demanding irregular wars rather than conventional or symmetric, non-conventional wars, lasting longer and resulting in more fatalities. However, contrary to our expectations, we find that quality did not translate into positive outcomes: socialist rebels tended to be defeated at a higher rate compared to other rebels--hence a "Marxist Paradox." To account for it, we argue that the states they challenged had to step up their game. Our analysis suggests the usefulness of incorporating rebel political identity and historicizing the study of civil war; it also points to the state-building dimension of civil wars implicating revolutionary rebels and underlines the implications of their emergence for the way conflict is shaped.

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1. Introduction

The emergence of the Islamic State (or Islamic State of Iraq and Syria-ISIS) in Syria and its rapid conquest of vast swaths of territory in Iraq in the summer of 2014, including the city of Mosul, took most observers by surprise and gave rise to a profusion of arguments stressing their religious and sectarian dimension (Zelin 2014). Alternatively, it is possible to see ISIS as a “revolutionary” armed group, suggesting a different way of understanding ISIS and similar jihadi groups (Kalyvas 2014). But who is a “revolutionary” rebel actor and what is the actual impact of such a political identity? What do we know about these actors, their behavior, and performance?

In this paper, we explore the impact of the last major wave of revolutionary insurgencies, which were motivated by various strands of Marxist-Leninist ideology. First, we explain why it is important to track and interpret historical trends in civil wars. We then argue that those trends can be studied fruitfully through the lens of rebel political identity. We discuss the key features of revolutionary socialist rebels and we conclude that they were generally high quality rebels. We derive a set of predictions about their impact which we proceed to empirically explore. We find that civil wars where the main rebel group belongs to this type, tend to be fought as highly demanding irregular wars that last longer and result in more fatalities—and that these differences cannot be reduced to external funding provided by superpowers and their allies. Contrary to our expectations, we find that socialist revolutionary rebels were no more likely to succeed than other types of rebels—hence a “Marxist Paradox” which we explain by pointing to the fact that their foes had to step up their quality as a response to the challenge, something that was possible because of the Cold War. We also point out a notable exception: rebels that were at once revolutionary and secessionist generally did better than their non-secessionist counterparts.

From a theoretical perspective, our analysis highlights the role of ideology as an important and overlooked dimension of rebel groups and specifies a way to approach it empirically. Our analysis moves beyond the dominant typology of rebels in the literature (secessionist versus non-secessionist ones) and points to the state-building dimension of civil wars that implicate revolutionary rebels. Lastly, it suggests some intriguing possibilities about ongoing conflicts entailing jihadi rebels.

2. Civil wars and history

The crossnational literature on civil wars is remarkably ahistorical. With few exceptions (most notably Arreguin-Toft 2005 and Lyall and Wilson 2009), studies seeking to explain some civil war dimension (e.g. onset or termination of civil wars) treat all conflicts of the period that begins with the end of the Second World War until the present as if they were fundamentally similar. At best, potential differences are captured statistically through the use of various controls and fixed effects. This is not surprising since the main goal has to been to identify the set of variables that on average explain the outcome of interest across time and space. However, the absence of attention to historically-generated but systematic heterogeneity has led to some artifactual results (Kalyvas and Balcells 2010). More fundamentally, however, the absence of attention to history is problematic if the goal is the deeper understanding of conflict, as Tony Judt (2008:15) has rightly warned: by consigning defunct dogmas to the dustbin of history, we pay a huge price, he points out. “The allegiances of the past—and thus the past itself—become utterly incomprehensible.”

This issue is best illustrated in a recent work of William Reno (2011:1-2), who begins his study of civil wars in Africa with the observation of the dramatic shift in the way war has been waged in West Africa: “In 1972, supporters of an anti-colonial liberation struggle in Guinea-Bissau reported that a United Nations (UN) delegation spent seven days in rebel-held territory to learn about the administration that rebels had built to provide services to people there. To the rebels’ supporters, this was “the only government responsible to the people it has ever had.” A person suddenly transported from that “liberated zone” three and half decades forward through time would be in for a shock. UN officials in West Africa reported that in Guinea-Bissau it was hard to distinguish between state security and forces and armed drug traffickers they were allegedly in league with one another and showed little concern for the welfare of the wider population.” Reno adds, and provides persuasive evidence in support of his claim, that this shift was a general one across the continent: “Congo, Somalia, Nigeria’s Delta region, and many other places, suffered from what seemed to be an excess of rebel groups who were fighting one another as much as governments and how largely displayed a dearth of interest in providing people with an alternative vision of politics or even in administering them in “liberated zones.” The observation that wars are now nastier and greedier than they were in the past is neither new (e.g. Kaldor 1999) nor necessarily accurate (Kalyvas 2001). However, there is a more substantial claim being made here, namely that rebels of the past two decades have different from what they used to be before, in some key aspects.

As Reno suggests, along with multiple qualitative studies and journalistic accounts, a startling shift appears to have taken place in the character of rebel actors after the end of the Cold War. Kalyvas and Balcells (2010) document a shift in the method though which civil wars were fought after the end of the Cold War, away from irregular (or guerrilla) war and toward more symmetric forms of military engagement. But if the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the era in which revolutionary socialism provided a credible alternative ideology to capitalism is associated with changing patterns of warfare, how are these changes connected to the changing political identity of rebel groups? And how did the availability of a socialist perspective shape key features of civil wars and their outcomes?

3. Rebel type

Only recently has systematic comparative research on civil wars moved away from the search of a set of master structural variables underlying civil wars (poverty, ethnic diversity, etc.) to focus instead on the characteristics of rebel groups and how these may affect their strategic choices and performance. Still, the study of exactly how ideological differences explain variation in group behavior and outcomes remains under-explored (Blattman & Miguel, 2010).

Until recently, the only such dimension of interest was between ethnic and non-ethnic civil wars and the corresponding rebel groups (Sambanis 2001). Things have begun to change recently and a number of new studies has stressed a variety of organizational dimensions, primarily on the rebel side--but also on the state one as well. Notable contributions include Ugarriza and Craig (2012) who find that ideology is a crucial variable differentiating the level of rebel combatant agreement with their group in Colombia and Toft and Zuhov (2014), who compare the performance of

Islamist and Nationalist groups in the Caucasus and find the former to be more resilient compared to the latter due to their ability to depend less on local civilian support. On the theoretical and conceptual front, Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood (2014) make a compelling case for the necessity of taking the ideology of rebel groups into account. Perhaps the most important recent contribution is the social-institutional theory proposed by Staniland (2014) which predicts that the level of cohesion and performance of rebel groups is a function of the prewar networks where insurgent leaders were embedded. Four basic types of rebel groups (integrated, vanguard, parochial, and fragmented) reflect different combinations of prewar networks which are argued to have a stronger predictive power on group cohesion and survival compared to variables such as ideology, ethnicity, state enemy or resource flows. Overall, this is a new and promising literature, still at an early stage. Theorizations stress different dimensions and empirical research is primarily located on the subnational level. Our contribution focuses on rebel political identity and adopts a broad, crossnational perspective. We argue that the combination of these two dimensions points to a key historical juncture in post-WW II civil wars which has been neglected.

First, we question what is perhaps the most entrenched distinction between rebel types in the civil war literature, namely between ethnonationalist/secessionist and “ideological” rebels. We point to the adoption of a socialist revolutionary ideological outlook by a subset of currently forgotten secessionist armed actors: the so-called National Liberation Movements of the Cold War era. We show that these rebels share with non-secessionist socialists a predilection for fighting asymmetric or irregular wars.

Second, our analysis shows that socialist revolutionary rebellions are associated with a particular way of fighting civil wars or technology of rebellion (Kalyvas and Balcells 2010): irregular or guerrilla warfare. Although this technology was used by a variety of rebel actors, socialist revolutionary rebels used it to the almost total exclusion of any other technology. We argue that this choice is consistent with our understanding of the characteristics of socialist revolutionary rebels. Furthermore, we disentangle the role of USSR/Soviet bloc support from that of ideologies and we argue that the latter do matter.

Third, we explore the impact of both socialist revolutionary rebels and National Liberation movements on three dimensions of civil wars: their severity, duration, and outcomes. We find that revolutionary socialist rebels were generally involved in more violent civil wars that tended to last longer and were more likely to produce victories for their foes than for themselves (the last finding does not hold for National Liberation movements). Our findings point to an apparent paradox since the factors that contributed to raise the ability of rebels to fight effectively failed to lead them to victories.

Finally, we explore this “Marxist paradox” by focusing on the determinants of socialist revolutionary insurgencies. We find that these rebels were more likely to take on stronger states than other rebels. They were more likely to pick fights against strong opponents both because they were “better” rebels to begin with, but also because their emergence led to the corresponding strengthening of their opponents, especially in the context of the Cold War—but also because the credible revolutionary threats trigger polarization and counter-mobilization—in the parlance of that era “counter-revolution.” In an ironic way, it was the quality of these rebels that in the end accounted for the higher rate at which they were defeated.

4. Revolutionary socialist rebels

Revolutionary socialist rebels of many hues were a staple of the Cold War, although they have not completely disappeared after its end. The same was true of National Liberation Movements, political movements typically engaged in armed rebellion, which were simultaneously nationalist and Marxist. The adoption of a socialist rhetoric usually came in tandem with political and military support from the Soviet Union and/or China, and their allies. The role of Cuba, for instance, was very important in Africa. Today, it is easy to dismiss Marxism as mere window-dressing, a set of empty words adopted at low (or no) cost by rebels in order to gain access to the resources of the Soviet bloc. However, such an interpretation is problematic, as persuasively argued by Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood (2014). For one thing, the founders and leaders of these movements were often intellectuals who had genuinely adopted some version of Marxism (Reno 2011; DeFronzo 2011; Gott 2007). For another, and despite of doctrinal divergences, the ways in which they built their movements followed a set of common practices which came to constitute a particular form of waging war, described as “revolutionary war” (Trinquier 1964) or “robust insurgency” (Kalyvas and Balcells 2010).

Guerrilla war is arguably as old as human history, but “robust insurgency” is closely intertwined with Marxist activism. The actual term “guerrilla” (small war) comes from the native resistance against the Napoleonic armies that invaded Spain in 1807; it was later analyzed by Clausewitz in his famous treatise *On War*. Generally, most of what is described as guerrilla warfare in the pre-Second World War period consists of indigenous resistance against colonial encroachment, sometimes taking the form of an unfortunate frontal clash between vastly unequal armies, leading to a high propensity of (crushing) victory for the stronger actor. In contrast, what became known as “people’s war” or revolutionary guerrilla warfare emerged in the 1930s. It was honed by Mao Zedong in interwar China, “test-driven” by communist resistance movements in Europe and Asia during the Second World War, and reached its apex during the Cold War throughout the developing world. Although sharing the same moniker with traditional guerrilla war, this was a very different kind of war, a fact fully recognized by the counterinsurgency theorists (Trinquier 1964; Galula 1964; Leites and Wolf 1970). Marxism is connected to Revolutionary guerrilla warfare in three ways (Kalyvas and Balcells 2010).

First, whereas traditional guerrilla warfare depended on the mobilization of local resources with the occasional support of a neighboring state, Marxist insurgencies benefited from extensive and multifaceted superpower support. Although opportunism was certainly not absent, it did not exhaust the range of motivations; and although material support typically included the supply of weapons and advisers, it extended to multiple forms of assistance, including political training and indoctrination. Most importantly, assistance and support were channeled through transnational social movements. Thousands of radical activists built supra-regional and even global contacts and networks while training in Soviet-funded military camps and universities, the most famous of which was the “Patrice Lumumba Friendship University” in Moscow. The key role played by a transnational social movement clearly delineates robust insurgency from traditional guerrilla warfare. Whereas the latter was based on the mobilization of primarily conservative, local sentiments and/or local patronage tribal and kin networks, the former mobilized transnational

revolutionary networks; these would link-up with traditional rural networks but assume the leadership.

Revolutionary beliefs constitute the second critical component of Marxist insurgencies. The power of these beliefs was well understood by counterinsurgents and is worth stressing, as recent research has tended to disregard the ideological Che Guevaras in favor of the predatory Charles Taylors. Beliefs were relevant in three ways. First, the perception that a credible counter-hegemonic model of political and social organization was available and could be attained captured the imagination of millions. Specific ideas and labels varied, but the faith in the possibility, indeed inevitability, of radical political transformation did not. Second, beliefs were important as sources of motivation for the crucial “first movers” who were invested tremendous risk and suffered enormous deprivation for the cause of revolution. Lastly, beliefs mattered as perceptions about the feasibility of radical change via the specific path of armed struggle: subordinate or weak actors could successfully take on stronger actors provided they learned how to deploy the right techniques.

The last component was military doctrine: irregular war was never a simple matter of military tactics, akin to insurgent “special forces” storming their way to power. Instead, rebel entrepreneurs learned that the key to success lay in the patient formation of a highly structured political organization, typically a party, in control of a centralized, disciplined, and politically indoctrinated army. Its objective was to acquire (“liberate”) and govern territory, usually located in the periphery of the country—and to do so by developing comprehensive political institutions. On the one hand, a tightly run organization guaranteed discipline and effective command and control in the absence of which rebels could never hope to face off the state’s military superiority. On the other hand, territory constituted a key resource for armed struggle. Effective administration was supplemented by mass mobilization in liberated areas, and constituted the key foundation for the development of armed struggle under conditions of military inferiority. This amounted to revolutionary state-building (Kalyvas 2006), which was absent in traditional guerrilla warfare.

Robust insurgency was an innovation whose global breakthrough came about with the success of the Cuban Revolution, “which put the guerrilla strategy on the world’s front pages” (Hobsbawm 1996:438). The writings of Mao Zedong, Che Guevara, Régis Debray, and Amílcar Cabral, among others, were widely disseminated and read by thousands of activists and sympathizers in the developing world, especially among the educated urban youth. There was plenty of heated debate about the specific model of revolutionary action: from Maoist doctrine (positing a transition from guerrilla to conventional warfare) to “foquismo” (the voluntaristic, vanguard action by small armed groups that would focalize mass participation, advocated by Che Guevara) to Carlos Marighella’s urban warfare). In the end, however, Marxist activists who turned their armed challenge into a major civil war, followed the same basic practices, which included (a) a central role played by a political party; (b) high levels of centralization and discipline (c) the practice of mass ideological indoctrination, both of fighters and populations ruled by the rebel group, and (d) the construction of an extensive rebel state apparatus with extensive functions. Although these elements can also be found among non-Marxist rebel groups, it was Marxist rebel groups that most consistently used them. The examples of China, Cuba, and Vietnam confirmed in the minds of revolutionary activists around the world that, despite occasional setbacks, guerrilla warfare correctly waged was both a feasible and successful path to political and social change.

In short, we argue that there are good reasons to think that the adoption of a socialist revolutionary political identity by rebels was consequential: it allowed them to implement and effectively sustain a technology of rebellion that made them effective challengers of state security forces.

To summarize, drawing from a rich case-based, qualitative literature, we learn that revolutionary socialist rebels (at least those that were able to cross the initial threshold of relevance and pose a credible threat to the state) tended to be well organized, well disciplined, and centralized, on top of being the recipients of considerable external funding and assistance from the Soviet Union or China and their satellites. This suggests that conflicts involving revolutionary socialist rebels would tend to be more lethal and longer compared to those involving non-Marxist rebels (those that were equally able to cross the initial threshold of relevance and pose a credible threat to the state), and that they would be more effective in securing a positive outcome for their cause.

4. Empirics

We use a dataset of 147 civil wars, covering the 1944-2004 period and based on the list of civil wars in Sambanis (2001), to which we have made some minor modifications.¹ We have coded all major civil wars based on the ideology adopted by the main rebel organization, thus producing four groups. The first consists of civil wars dominated by **Revolutionary Socialist Rebels**, coded if the main rebel group professed a Marxist ideology at the outset of the war (i.e. when they produced political manifesto or made public declarations that had references to Marxism, Marxism-Leninism, or to a Socialist revolution).² The second category includes **Secessionist Rebels**. We coded this category following Sambanis' (2001) coding of secessionist wars and subtracting those rebels displaying a Marxist agenda.³ The third group contains **Marxist National Liberation Movements** (or "MNL"), i.e. those rebels with both a Marxist ideological profile and a secessionist agenda, coded as the intersection of the previous two variables. The fourth group contains the residual (**Others**), civil wars where the main rebel organization was both non-secessionist and non-Marxist. Table 1 displays the distribution of civil wars following this coding.

¹ We have added 7 cases of civil wars that started after 2001; we have excluded Pakistan (1994-1999) and India (1946-1948), because they are instances of communal violence and large-scale rioting which, following Varshney (2001:365), are distinct from civil wars. Following Fearon and Laitin (2003), we have folded the case of Sierra Leone (1997-2001) into the conflict that started in 1991. We have also excluded a total of 8 cases that were insurrections and riots or urban terrorist campaigns (or both), such as the Iranian revolution of 1978, the "dirty war" in Argentina in the mid-seventies, or the Palestinian "intifadas" after the mid-eighties.

² We have adopted a broad definition of "Marxism" and "Socialism" but we ran our analysis with a more restrictive definition (focusing on hardcore Marxism-Leninism) and we found no differences.

³ See Appendix for the coding protocol. We have used alternative coding rules as well; for example, we have generated a different MNL category as the intersection between Revolutionary Socialist Rebels and Ethnic Rebels (as coded by Sambanis); we have also divided Socialist Rebels into those emphasizing a deep structural transformation of their society and those trending toward a more superficial rhetoric Socialism. No results change when using these alternative coding in the analysis.

Secessionist wars dominate (46%). Close to 28% of civil wars were fought by revolutionary socialist rebels, down to 19% once the 7% of Marxist secessionists (MNL) are differentiated. About 30% of civil wars were fought by non-secessionist, non-Marxist rebels.

Table 1. Categories of War by Rebel Ideology

	Observ.	%
Revolutionary socialist	28	19
Secessionist	68	46.2
MNL	10	6.8
Other	41	27.9
Total	147	100

Table 2 provides an overview of the relation between secessionist civil wars and civil wars with socialist revolutionary rebels. It indicates that although the majority of revolutionary socialist wars are non-secessionist (74%), a substantial minority (26%) was. Note as well, that all of Marxist liberation movements appear during the Cold War. Hence, although it is correct to say that most Marxist rebels were fighting for the control of the center, it is incorrect to draw a distinction between “ideological” and “secessionist” rebels, the way the literature has so far done. We explore the empirical implications of this point in the following section.

Table 2. Socialist Revolutionary Rebels and Secessionist Wars

	Non-Sec	Sec	Total
Non-Marxist Rebels	41 37.61	68 62.39	109
Marxist Rebels	28 73.68	10 26.32	38
Total	69 46.94	78 53.06	147

Table 3 displays the relationship between revolutionary socialist rebels and the technology of rebellion they relied on. Kalyvas and Balcells (2010a) distinguish between three basic categories: irregular or guerrilla war, conventional war and symmetric non-conventional (SNC) war.⁴ Our

⁴ Irregular civil wars are those wars in which the government or state army “faces guerrilla forces that usually evade direct clashes and hide among the civilian population. Frontlines are unclear and the underlying character of irregular war is military asymmetry between the two sides.” Conventional civil wars are those that “have clear frontlines, where attacks take place mostly from barricades and stable positions, and in which there are big major battles that are usually determinants for the war outcomes.” Finally, SNC civil wars are those in which “two irregular

expectation is that because of their characteristics, revolutionary socialist rebels had a comparative advantage in starting and sustaining irregular wars. As Table 3 indicates, Marxist insurgencies are heavily concentrated in the irregular war category. The notable finding is that secessionist Marxist rebels also fought irregularly at the same rate with revolutionary socialist ones. This is clearly different from all other secessionist rebels, who fought irregular wars at a much lower rate. This affinity suggests that the factors that led to the adoption of irregular war by Marxist secessionists are similar to those that recur in revolutionary socialist rebellions.

Table 3. Marxist Rebels and Technologies of Rebellion

	Conventional	Irregular	SNC	Total
Rev. Socialist	4 14.29%	23 82.14%	1 3.57%	28 100%
Sec	27 39.71%	35 51.47%	6 8.82%	68 100%
MNL	2 20%	8 80%	0 0%	10 100%
Other	17 41.46%	13 31.71%	11 26.83%	41 100%
Total	50 34.01%	79 53.74%	18 12.24%	147 100%

As for temporal patterns (Figure 1), they are also consistent with the historical record. We know that revolutionary socialist rebellions are closely associated with the Cold War ;what we find is that both socialist revolutionary and MNL rebellions are features of the last phase of the Cold War, the 1970s and 1980s, representing a phase where nuclear détente between the two superpowers coincided with the escalation of proxy wars in the periphery.⁵ In terms of their geographical presence (Figure 2), these rebels were present across all continents. It is worth recalling that the revolutionary thrust in the Arab world was carried by revolutionary socialist rebels, sometime secessionist ones (as in Palestine).

armies, none of which is the government army, face each other across a frontline equivalent in a war consisting primarily of raids.”

⁵ The differences in types by decade are statistically significant (ChiSquared at the 99% level).

Figure 1. Temporal Patterns

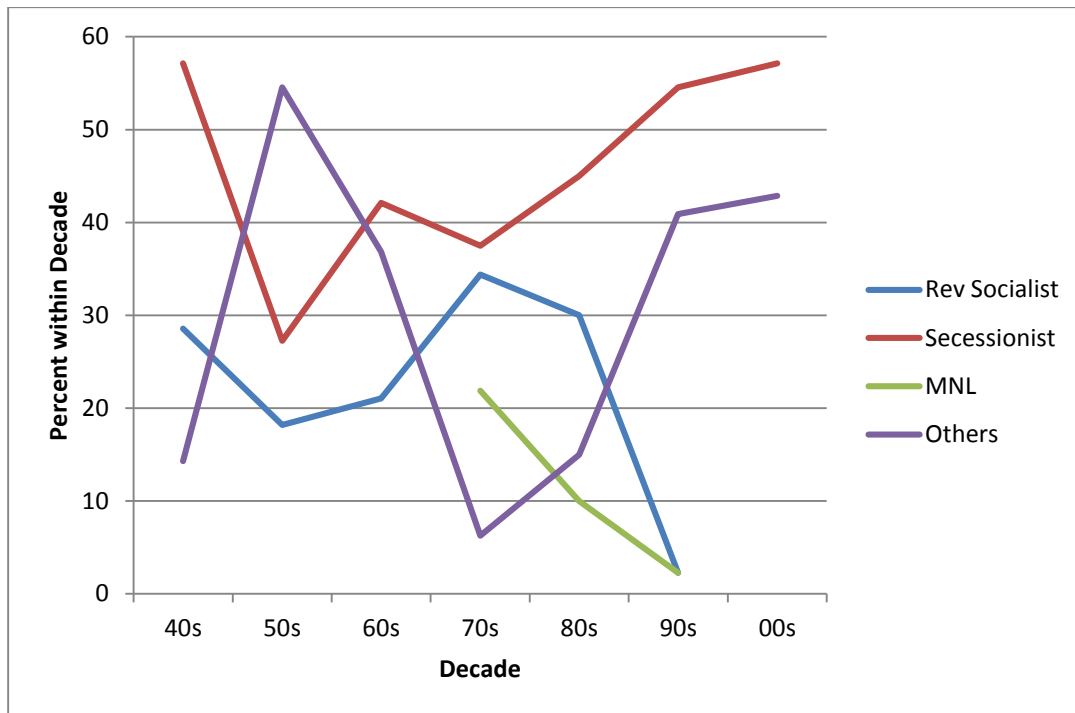
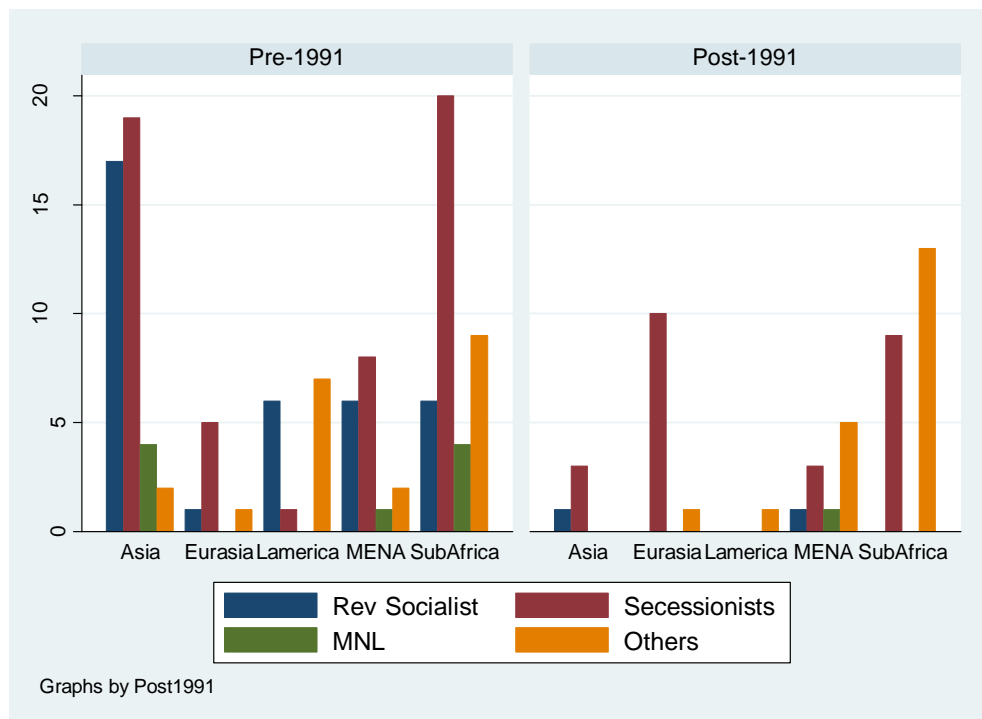


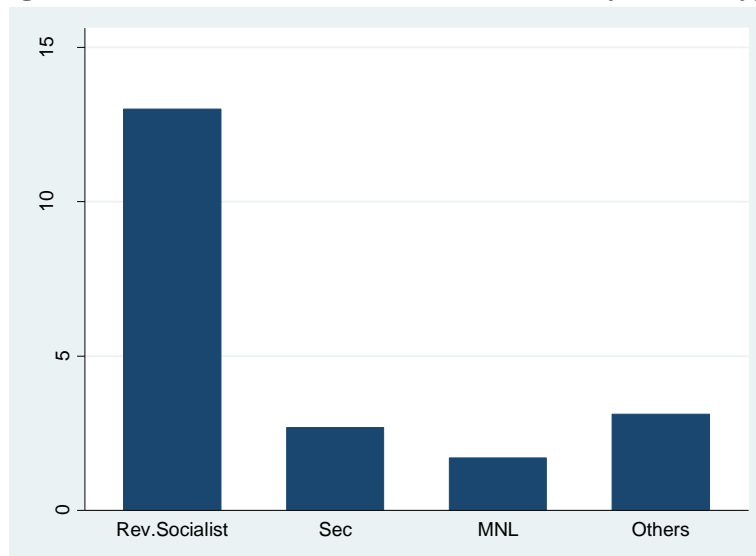
Figure 2. Geographical Patterns



4.1 Conflict severity

Beginning with simple descriptive data we find that civil wars where revolutionary socialists were the main rebel actor were on average, and controlling for duration and population, more lethal than all other wars (Figure 3). The descriptive data is, in other words, consistent with the expectation of “tougher” fighters; contrary to our expectations, however, MNL appear to have been involved in conflicts of lower intensity.

Figure 3. Mean of Normalized Battledeaths by Rebel Type



We regress the total number of deaths in civil war —using again Battledeaths from Lacina (2004) and Lacina and Gleditsch (2005)⁶— on a number of correlates, which include the main variables in the literature (i.e. *Population*, *Democracy*), as well as variables that are relevant in our theoretical framework. The results are included in Table 4.⁷ We find that wars featuring revolutionary socialist rebels are overall more severe. They are likely to produce higher levels of battledeaths, even when controlling for technology of rebellion, as well as for common variables such as duration.

⁶ Like these authors, we include log of Battledeaths instead of the absolute numbers.

⁷ Note that in these models we lose number of cases (52). This is caused by missing data on the variable Battledeaths.

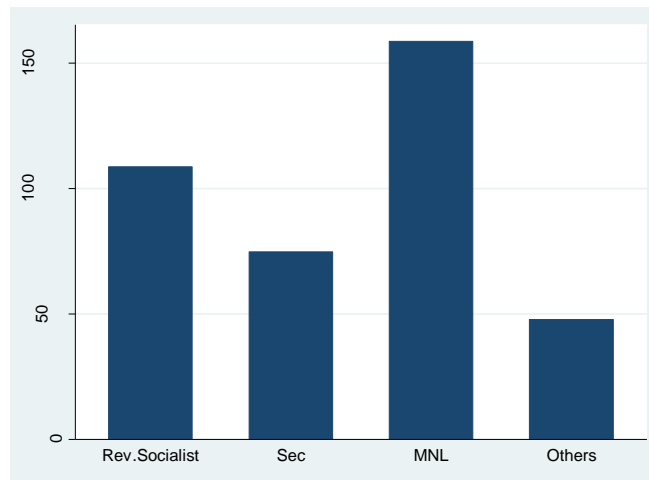
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
Rev.Socialist	1.03*	0.74	0.90*	0.99*	1.03**	1.07**
	(0.54)	(0.48)	(0.48)	(0.59)	(0.49)	(0.51)
Sec	0.15	-0.28	-0.52	0.13	-0.32	-0.49
	(0.46)	(0.46)	(0.47)	(0.47)	(0.45)	(0.46)
MNL	1.13**	0.29	0.17	1.08**	0.39	0.31
	(0.46)	(0.47)	(0.50)	(0.51)	(0.48)	(0.52)
Duration (Months)		0.0074***	0.0080***		0.0087***	0.0088***
		(0.0019)	(0.0019)		(0.0020)	(0.0020)
Population (Log)		0.23*	0.39**		0.31**	0.42***
		(0.13)	(0.15)		(0.13)	(0.16)
Democracy		-1.19**	-0.98*		-1.15**	-1.01*
		(0.51)	(0.55)		(0.52)	(0.56)
Eurasia			1.61**			1.45*
			(0.73)			(0.81)
Latin America			0.46			0.46
			(0.68)			(0.69)
MENA			1.07			0.84
			(0.74)			(0.82)
Sub-Saharan Africa			0.67			0.55
			(0.59)			(0.60)
Conventional CW				-0.10	0.72*	0.42
				(0.44)	(0.37)	(0.46)
SCN CW				-0.074	0.69	0.59
				(0.66)	(0.60)	(0.67)
Constant	9.07***	6.63***	4.53**	9.13***	5.42***	4.00**
	(0.35)	(1.14)	(1.72)	(0.44)	(1.30)	(1.79)
Observations	98	95	95	98	95	95
Pseudo R^2						

Table 4. Conflict Severity (DV: Battledaths)

4.2. Duration

Turning to duration, the descriptive data (Figure 4) suggests that both civil wars featuring Revolutionary Socialist rebels and MNL last longer compared to the other two categories—a result consistent with our expectations. Unlike severity, the two types of Marxist rebels are now comparable (in fact, MLN are associated with the longest wars

Figure 4. Duration



We estimate an OLS regression with duration of conflict (in months) and a similar set of covariates (Table 5). We introduce some changes on the right-hand side: we now include Rough Terrain and GDP per capita, which we would expect to have a positive and negative effect on duration, respectively, and we exclude Democracy, for which we have no theoretical priors on its effect on duration of conflicts. Our results point to longer duration being associated with both revolutionary socialist and National Liberation but the first indicator loses its power when technologies of rebellion are introduced.

Table 5. Determinants of Duration (Months)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
Rev.Socialist	60.8** (23.3)	63.6*** (23.3)	49.5* (25.3)	60.8** (23.3)	27.9 (26.5)	38.2 (23.3)
Secessionist	26.9* (14.6)	28.8* (16.6)	30.7* (17.4)	26.9* (14.6)	22.5 (17.6)	21.8 (16.4)
MNL	110.8*** (28.0)	115.4*** (27.6)	107.7*** (29.5)	110.8*** (28.0)	84.8** (33.8)	91.3*** (33.0)
roughterrain		-0.0050 (0.016)	-0.011 (0.016)		-0.0058 (0.015)	-0.00050 (0.015)
lpop		8.15* (4.17)	5.59 (4.43)		1.72 (4.50)	3.74 (3.87)
gdpcapita_fl		-10.2** (4.77)	-3.90 (5.53)		-2.37 (5.27)	-7.95* (4.50)
Eurasia			-66.9*** (25.5)		-58.0** (24.8)	
Latin America			-14.2 (34.9)		-20.4 (35.1)	
MENA			-42.7 (28.5)		-35.8 (26.0)	
Sub-saharan Africa			-27.9 (28.9)		-23.6 (28.6)	
Conventional CW					- 52.1** *	-55.7*** (15.7)
SNC CW					-43.0** (18.1)	-46.9** (18.5)
Constant	47.9*** (9.10)	-13.4 (39.7)	29.2 (60.8)	47.9*** (9.10)	94.0 (67.2)	60.4 (41.6)
Observations	142	132	132	142	132	132
Pseudo R^2						

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

However, when we restrict our analysis to irregular wars, we find that revolutionary socialist rebels are significantly associated with longer wars, but not MNL (Table 6). Although this is not the strongest result it does suggest the presence of a pattern that has been completely missed by the duration literature (e.g. Regan 2002; Fearon 2004; Cunningham 2006; Cunningham et al. 2009).

Table 6. Determinants of Duration: Irregular Wars Only (Months)

Variable	M1	M2	M3
Rough Terrain	0.630	0.369	
Population (Log)	10.495	10.347	
GDP capita	-7.864	-21.399*	
MNL	-38.476	-49.629	-12.238
Revolutionary Socialists	73.038**	76.799*	73.561**
Secessionists	44.396	73.262*	51.586*
Eurasia		-88.295***	
Latin America		40.099	
MENA		31.695	
Sub-Saharan Africa		-39.576	
_cons	-42.615	-23.074	56.091***

4.3 War outcome

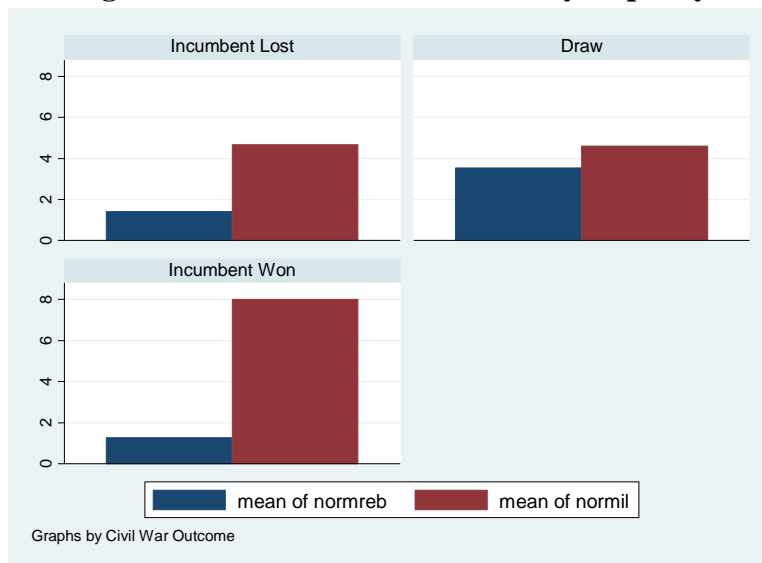
We lastly turn to the outcome of civil wars to explore the impact of the type of rebel actor (Table 8). The descriptive data suggest that Revolutionary socialist rebels were not frequent winners; in fact they were as likely to lose as secessionist rebels. In contrast, MNL were highly successful (winning in 40% of the wars they were involved in, although the number of cases is small). Figure 5 displays the relation between war outcomes and an indicator of the military capacity of the two sides drawn from Cunningham et al. (2009) and normalized to the population of the country (total numbers/thousands of population of the country; *Normreb*: size of the rebel armed group; *Normreb*: size of the rebel armed group. Military Personnel data, in thousands, from COW 3.02 (Singer et al. 1972); Normalized to the population of the country (total numbers/thousands of population of the country). We find that outcomes do not have much to do with relative capacities of rebels vis-à-vis state militaries—with the exception of draws, which occur in places where the capacities approach parity.

Table 7. War Outcome by Rebel Type

	Revolutionary Socialists	Secessionists	MNL	Others	Total
Incumbent Lost	5 (17.86)	17 (25)	4 (40)	9 (22.50)	35 (23.97)
Draw	8 (28.57)	15 (22.06)	1 (10)	13 (32.5)	37 (25.34)
Incumbent Won	15 (53.57)	36 (52.94)	5 (50)	18 (45)	73 (50.68)
Total	28 (100)	68 (100)	10 (100)	40 (100)	146 (100)

Column percentages in brackets

Figure 5. War Outcome and Military Capacity



As an additional test, we explored the determinants of civil wars with revolutionary socialist rebels compared to the other types of civil war (the base category are the residual “other wars”) (Table 8). The results confirm that revolutionary socialist rebels appear to have fought against stronger states, as proxied by their GDP per capita.

Table 8. Determinants of Marxist Rebellions (“Other Wars” Base Category)

	(1)	(2)	(3)
	M1	M2	M3
Rev_Socialist			
conventional	-2.15***	-2.03***	-2.00**
	(0.74)	(0.75)	(0.78)
snc	-2.16**	-2.16**	-1.02
	(1.07)	(1.05)	(1.17)
roughterrain	0.019	0.019	0.017
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.011)
ethnicwar	-1.43**	-1.37**	-1.49**
	(0.64)	(0.64)	(0.68)
gdpcapita_fl	0.49**	0.52**	0.66**
	(0.22)	(0.24)	(0.27)
newpostcomm		-13.7***	
		(1.44)	
post1990			-3.07***
			(1.19)
Constant	0.24	0.18	0.41
	(0.68)	(0.69)	(0.65)
Sec			
conventional	-0.78	-0.83*	-0.72
	(0.49)	(0.50)	(0.50)
snc	-1.46**	-1.45**	-1.21*
	(0.65)	(0.64)	(0.67)
roughterrain	0.020	0.020	0.016
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.011)
ethnicwar	1.18**	1.16**	1.15**
	(0.56)	(0.56)	(0.58)
gdpcapita_fl	0.30*	0.27	0.35*
	(0.17)	(0.20)	(0.18)
newpostcomm		0.48	
		(1.39)	
post1990			-0.59
			(0.52)
Constant	-0.65	-0.58	-0.47
	(0.60)	(0.59)	(0.60)
National Liberation Rebels			
conventional	-2.37*	-2.26*	-2.09

	(1.23)	(1.24)	(1.39)
snc	-15.9***	-15.9***	-18.2***
	(0.57)	(0.57)	(0.79)
roughterrain	0.020	0.020*	0.047**
	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.021)
ethnicwar	1.45	1.48	1.41
	(1.13)	(1.13)	(1.12)
gdpcapita_fl	0.017	0.067	0.34
	(0.29)	(0.31)	(0.30)
newpostcomm		-13.6***	
		(1.77)	
post1990			-64.2**
			(29.8)
Constant	-2.04*	-2.11*	-2.92***
	(1.21)	(1.23)	(1.11)
Observations	137	137	137
Pseudo R^2	0.187	0.194	0.241

Standard errors in parentheses

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

5. Disentangling ideology from funding

Were the specific characteristics of revolutionary socialist rebels the result of their ideology or did they derive from the fact that they were the recipients of support from the USSR and other communist powers? If the second is correct, was the outlook of revolutionary socialist rebels merely window-dressing intended to capture external support? It is not easy to answer this question since most revolutionary socialist rebels were both receiving significant levels of external assistance *and* displayed publicly a revolutionary socialist agenda. However, one way to disentangle these two factors is to examine those revolutionary socialist rebels who, for specific historical or geographic reasons, did not receive outside funding.

We examined the ideological orientation and practices of twelve groups for which initial research indicated no external support for the USSR, China, Cuba or another communist power. Of these groups, six were coded as Marxist Nationalist Liberation movements. With two exceptions, their socialist credentials were solid (the exceptions are the LTTE/Sri Lanka and Polisario/Morocco which had a socialist agenda early on but abandoned it early on), all other groups fit clearly into the revolutionary socialist ideological mold: FRETILIN (Indonesia), PKK (Turkey), EPLF and TPLF (Ethiopia). With one exception, these groups were able to generate their own financing (Polisario was supported by Algeria). We also examined seven the revolutionary socialist rebel groups. With one exception (the BLA in Pakistan whose depth of commitment to Marxism is difficult to ascertain) all other groups had a clear revolutionary socialist outlook: FARC (Colombia), SL (Peru), CPP, NPA and NDF (Philippines), CPI-M (India), and CPN-M (Nepal). In spite of not receiving any outside support, they displayed key characteristics associated with revolutionary socialist rebels in terms of organization and behavior. Comparing the six MLN groups to the six Socialist Revolutionary rebel groups suggests that, despite idiosyncratic differences, they do belong to the same “family” of movements. Clearly, Marxist National

Liberation movements are an actor whose profile and practices placed it in a different mold from most secessionist rebel groups.

Our analysis lead us to conclude that the practices displayed by these rebel groups were the results of the spread a global ideology and its corresponding practices. To be sure, some of these practices spilled over to some other rebels or persisted after these rebels abandoned their initial ideological commitment (e.g. Hezbollah in Lebanon or LTTE in Sri Lanka), but they nevertheless point to a clear case of political identity being associated with a very specific type of social practice.

We also conducted a series of tests (results to be included) to explore the dynamics of external support for both rebels and states. We find that external support tends to be distributed symmetrically. There is a strong and positive relationship between rebels receiving external support and governments receiving external support. Furthermore, external support was not an exclusive feature of the Cold War, although both revolutionary socialist and National Liberation rebels and the governments facing them, were more likely to receive high levels of external support compared to the rest. More specifically, 60% of revolutionary socialist insurgents received medium and high levels of external support while 82% of governments fighting revolutionary socialist rebels received medium and high levels of external support. In addition, highly supported rebels were less likely to fight irregular wars (they tend to fight conventionally), but highly supported governments were more likely to face irregular rebels; in other words, an insurgency tends to be a red flag leading to more substantial levels of external support for a government.

6. Conclusions

Our analysis points to several findings. First, revolutionary socialist rebels consistently fought irregular wars. Although irregular warfare was used by other actors as well, revolutionary socialist rebels used it to the exclusion of almost every other technology of rebellion. Given that irregular war was the technology of choice in about half the civil wars fought after 1944, the close association of revolutionary socialist rebels and irregular war at a rate surpassing 80% is striking and telling. Second, we find that the Marxist-oriented National Liberation Movements of the Cold War diverge from the average secessionist rebels, in that they were fought in ways that closely match non-secessionist Marxist rebels, i.e. using irregular warfare. This finding is an indirect confirmation of the relevance of a revolutionary political identity that had an impact across the secessionist/non-secessionist divide. Third, both revolutionary socialist rebels and National Liberation ones fought more intense and longer wars, reflecting their higher quality. And yet, we found, this quality did not translate into positive results: revolutionary socialist rebels were no more likely to win compared to other types of rebels. This does not apply, however, to Marxist-inspired national liberation movements, those combining a revolutionary and secessionist agenda were more successful, pointing to the powerful dimension of the combination of nationalism and revolution.

The reason for the discrepancy between quality and outcomes, we suggest, is that their higher quality made the challenge they posed to governments much more credible and, as a result, attracted substantial support for governments contributing to their resilience. In parallel, their high quality turned the threat of revolutionary change credible and generated a counter-mobilization by the threatened elites. Thus, an indirect effect of these dynamics is that civil wars with revolutionary

socialist protagonists effectively contributed to state building rather than state failure. Our analysis is consistent with Slater's and Rush Smith's (2015) observation that counterrevolutions in the postcolonial world have been distinctively and exceedingly productive of durable political order, although we specify a distinctive subset where counterrevolutionary state-building took place in the context of civil war.

In sum, our findings call for an incorporation of rebel political identity based on their ideological outlook into existing models of civil war onset, dynamics, and termination. They also call for the historicization of the study of civil wars. As Judt (2008:15) argued: "If we are to understand the world whence we have just emerged, we need to remind ourselves of the power of ideas. And we need to recall the remarkable grip exercised by the Marxist idea in particular upon the imagination of the twentieth century."

To close by returning to the introduction, our analysis is perhaps not of historical interest only. When it comes to key characteristics, from the stress on a utopian worldview to the creation of a disciplined and highly motivated army and extensive state-like institutions, jihadi insurgencies can easily be described as revolutionary actors. Second, given such a description, we would expect them to fight intense and long civil wars, challenging existing regimes. They also ought to be primarily involved in irregular wars (which is not the case of ISIS presently, either in Syria or Iraq). Third, their quality and capacity should not lead us to expect easy or quick victories. In contrast, their radicalism and the threat it poses to the existing order are likely to cause substantial counter-mobilization, likely leading to the shoring of the regimes that are challenged and hence. Perhaps only if they manage to emulate the nationalist liberation movements of the Cold War, and combine a revolutionary agenda with a nationalist message could they hope for a better outcome. Whether the Sunni sectarianism championed by ISIS would come to play an analogous role to that of the Marxist National Liberation Movements of the Cold War, remains to be seen.

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