

Elections and Ethnic Civil Wars*

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Current research on the influence of democracy and democratization on civil war has typically relied on aggregated indices of regime type. This study deviates from this conventional approach by focusing more closely on whether there is a link between elections and conflict behavior. First we study the influence of competitive and non-competitive elections on civil-war onsets at the country level. The study proceeds by disaggregating the analysis to the level of ethnic groups. At this level we examine how ethno-nationalist mobilization and sore-loser effects may provoke post-electoral violence. Our findings reveal that elections can be associated with ethnic civil wars depending on whether the elections are competitive or not and whether the conflict is territorial or governmental.

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Introduction

Following up earlier studies on democratization and the risk of interstate wars, recent research has tried to examine how regime transitions and changes towards greater democracy may affect the likelihood of civil wars (e.g., Gleditsch 2002, Mansfield and Snyder 2007a, Cederman, Hug and Krebs 2010). There is a clear motivation for doing so as many of the causal mechanisms advanced for suggesting a link between democratization and interstate wars – for instance by Mansfield and Snyder (1995, 2005), Mann (2005) and others – seem to apply equally well to incentives for violence in the form of civil wars. More specifically, Mansfield and Snyder’s (1995) main argument relies on the diversionary incentives of elites facing pressures for political reform, while Mann’s (2005) argument is largely based on incentives for ethnic cleansing and nepotism when democratization forces leaders to be more dependent on securing popular support. As such, it is not particularly surprising that the case studies presented by Snyder (2000) and Mann (2005) on closer inspection include many examples of conflict within countries rather than exclusively interstate wars.¹ More recently, Collier (2009) has pointed to how elections in “dangerous places”, or states that have a high likelihood of conflict, often appear to precede the outbreak of violence.

Although at least three existing studies (e.g., Gleditsch 2002, Mansfield and Snyder 2007a, Cederman, Hug and Krebs 2010) explicitly model the possible effects of democratization on civil war in their empirical specification, there have been few explicit tests of the specific causal mechanisms postulated in this line of research.² In this paper, we examine the effect of one specific causal factor related to various mechanisms, namely the holding of elections. While democratic governance is clearly about much more than elections alone, elections play a central role in almost all definitions of democracy (for prominent examples, see Schumpeter 1942, Dahl 1989, 1998, Karl 1990, Alvarez, Cheibub, Limongi and Przeworski 1996, Manin 1997, Bunce 2003). Thus, in any case of a transition from an autocratic to a democratic regime, elections must be held at some point.³

In the next section, we offer a very brief discussion of the existing literature suggesting that democratization may increase the risk civil conflict. We then seek to move beyond the existing literature focusing on democratization to focus more specifically on the role of elections and how this may influence the prospects for conflict. We first expose our arguments to a statistical test at the country level. Following up this first analysis, we then conduct additional disaggregated tests where we distinguish between particular actors that may engage in violence, relying on the

1 The break-up of the former Yugoslavia clearly includes elements of both *intra* and *interstate* conflict. Mansfield Snyder also highlighted Rwanda as a supportive case, yet it is difficult to see how this can be characterized as an interstate conflict.

2 Hegre, Ellingsen, Gates and (2001) also discuss the implications of the effects of democratization on civil war, but their approach does not explicitly consider democratization or changes in degree of democracy. In addition, Treier and Jackman (2008) and Vreeland (2008) suggest that the Polity IV indicators can be problematic for testing the effects of political regimes on conflict, and argues that the estimated effects of democracy on conflict are reduced when these issues are addressed (although see also Marshall and Cole 2008 and Gleditsch, Hegre and Strand 2009).

3 Obviously, elections can also play a role under authoritarian rule (see, e.g., Levitsky and Way 2002; Lust-Okar 2006).

new dataset on ethnic power relations (EPR) introduced by Cederman, Wimmer and Min (2010). We also consider different types of civil war in terms of the insurgent objectives.

Literature review

In this overview of the literature, we start by considering democratization processes in broader terms before turning to conflict-inducing, electoral mechanisms. Although the link between democratization and domestic violence need not be limited to conflicts that involve ethnic differences between the antagonists (see for instance Huntington 1968, Przeworski 1991), much of the recent work on how democratization might lead to internal conflict focuses specifically on societies that are ethnically diverse and polarized. This literature builds directly on classical studies that highlight the destabilizing influence of ethnic politics on democratic institutions (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972; Horowitz 1985).

Two main mechanisms are highlighted in the more recent research. First, democratization is often linked to an attempt to craft the character of the state so that the *demos* corresponds to an *ethnos*. Hence, political actors, through ethnic cleansing and other forms of active discrimination and nepotism, will attempt to ensure that the state serves the interest of particular ethnic groups (Mann 2005). In a more competitive political environment, ethnicity may become much more salient than in a closed political system.⁴ Collier (2009, 70f), for example, argues that the Kenyan opposition leader Raila Odinga in 2007 ran on a platform that in practice would amount to ethnic cleansing against the dominant ethnic group, the Kikuyus, which formed the main support base for the incumbent leader Mwai Kibaki. Moreover, considerations regarding provision of public goods and access to state resources are often politically contentious in early phases of democratization in ethnically segmented societies (see e.g. Breton 1964).

Second, pressures to hold on to political power may lead incumbent leaders to play the ethnic card and drum up nationalist sentiment and hostility to other groups in order to hold on to political power. Mansfield and Snyder (1995), for example, argue that “democratizing states are war-prone not because war is popular with the mass public, but because domestic pressures create incentives for elites to drum up nationalist sentiment. . . . Elites need to gain mass allies to defend their weakened positions . . . [and] often use appeals to nationalism to stay astride their unmanageable political actions.” (Mansfield and Snyder 1995, 88). Similarly, “[d]emocratization creates a wider spectrum of politically significant groups with diverse and incompatible interests. . . . [W]here political parties and representative institutions are still in their infancy, the diversity of interests may make political coalitions difficult to maintain. Often the solution is a belligerent nationalist coalition.” (Mansfield and Snyder 1995, 89).

The principal mechanisms behind these arguments are 1) that ethnic affiliation often dominates other cleavages in post-authoritarian political environments, and 2) the diversionary conflict argument, where elites can strengthen their core support by

⁴ Mann (2005) advances more subtle and detailed arguments, yet the emphasis is still on ethnic nepotism.

attacking or highlighting tension with other groups. Given that elites need to mobilize supporters to survive elections, diversionary conflict – whether directed against other states, as in interstate wars, or other ethnic groups – arises as a consequence of mobilization efforts by elites emphasizing group differences. However, opposition groups may also engage in similar behavior, and many observers point to the strong role of ethnic outbidding in political mobilization in the wake of autocratic rule where popular support plays a minor role.⁵

The arguments discussed above are implicitly linked to the role of elections as a factor that may exacerbate the risk of conflict. Mann's (2005) argument emphasizes the fact that some ethnicities should not be part of the *demos*. This implies that in the process of democratization we may see active attempts of exclusion or intimidation carried out, and such efforts often take on violent forms. Actors running on exclusivist ethnic platforms may try to prevent ethnic groups from participating in elections either on formal grounds or through undermining the ability of other groups to perform well in elections. Mansfield and Snyder's (1995) argument about ethnic outbidding highlights how such political mobilization strategies may lead to the use of violence in election campaigns.

More explicitly, violence may arise over the outcome of elections, either due to actual or perceived irregularities, or if actors reject their outcomes. These mechanisms apply to both ethnic and non-ethnic conflicts. Przeworski (1991) argues that democracy is not established as long as the losers of elections are not ready to accept defeat. Building on this insight, Strand (2005) relates elections to violence, and finds that elections in incomplete democracies increase the likelihood of conflict onset. Focusing on competitive elections in developed countries, Anderson and Mendes (2005) explore the link between lost elections and protest behavior finding that political minorities in new democracies are more prone to experience violence after elections. Collier (2009) highlights how “sore losers” in elections often start violence after elections.⁶

More generally, Collier (2009) argues that elections only will help ensure peaceful competition over political power if the rule of law is guaranteed, and if not, conflict may result since their outcomes are unlikely to be accepted by the losing parties. Mansfield and Snyder (2007b) make similar arguments in favor of “sequencing” democratization, so that elections are postponed until countries have reached a sufficient threshold of internal stability and capacity for democracy. However, Birnir (2007) comes to the opposite conclusion, namely that the first democratically held elections may actually stabilize ethnic politics. Her findings indicate that, in the long run, such a stabilizing effect may be sustained through inclusive representation of all ethnic groups in the legislative and executive process.⁷

5 In some sense this idea of ethnic outbidding is predicated on what Deutsch (1953, 104) calls one source of national conflict, namely the mobilization of both assimilated and not assimilated populations. One has to note, however, that mobilization in Deutsch (1953) refers primarily to social rather than to political mobilization. Similarly, assimilation is not related to access to power, since it again refers to social communication in the context of the dominant culture.

6 See also the examples discussed in Hoddie and Hartzell (2005).

7 A related argument appears in Lindberg's (2009) work on elections in Africa, namely that repeated elections contribute to successful transitions.

Country-level analysis

Based on an explicit measure of regime-type change, Cederman, Hug and Krebs (2010) show that democratization periods appear to be more conflict prone. Their aggregated analysis, however, does not allow for a precise assessment of the causal mechanisms underlying the observed relationship. Focusing on causal mechanisms linked to elections renders the analysis more focused and specific than in previous work based on more sweeping measures of regime type.⁸

As has been argued above, some mechanisms linking elections to violence are of a general nature (e.g. the sore-loser effect), while others (e.g. competitive ethnic mobilization) apply only to ethnic conflicts. On the whole, we have found that there are more electoral mechanisms that can produce ethnic conflict than mechanisms relating elections to an increased risk of non-ethnic conflicts. This reasoning on the effects of elections yields the following hypotheses:

H1a: The likelihood of civil war increases after elections, and this increase is highest for ethnic wars.

Elections, however, come in different shapes and forms and are held not only in democratic (or democratizing) regimes, but in autocracies as well (e.g., Levitsky and Way 2002; Lust-Okar 2006). Hyde and Marinov (2008) convincingly argue that different types of elections have often quite distinct consequences. Partly drawing on their work and Birnir's (2007) study of ethnic mobilization, we also make the assumption that the causal mechanisms linking elections to conflict operate differently according to the nature of the elections. For instance, the sore-loser mechanism advanced both by Przeworski (1991) and Collier (2009) can only apply in competitive settings, that is in elections where multiple candidates run for the same elected position. Note that these arguments are relevant regardless of whether the conflict is ethnic or non-ethnic. This reasoning leads us to the following hypothesis:

H2a: Competitive elections increase the likelihood of both ethnic and non-ethnic civil war.

In non-competitive elections, by definition, the sore-loser mechanism cannot operate, because being a sore loser presupposes that the opposition's misgivings are to some extent unjustified. However, as we have seen, other mechanisms can trigger conflicts. In case of electoral non-competitiveness, some groups will by fiat be excluded both from the electoral competition and, by implication, from political power. Such exclusion is likely to be especially entrenched if supported by "sticky" categorical markers, such as ethnic group membership. Based on this reasoning, we postulate that non-competitive elections are likely to trigger ethnic, rather than non-ethnic, violence:

⁸ Given that elections, as demonstrated by Strand (2005) and Collier (2009), have different effects on conflict according to the prior political regime and economic development, in a previous version of this paper we considered the effect of elections depending on whether the incumbent leader had come to power in an irregular fashion (Goemans, Gleditsch and Chiozza 2009) as well as a country's economic development. Although our analyses suggested some differences, the effects were not very large and we thus simplify our analysis in this version of the paper by omitting these features. In addition, the introduction of the distinction between competitive and non-competitive elections (see below) offers a cleaner way to assess how elections play out in different contexts (see for instance Hyde and Marinov 2008).

H2b: Non-competitive elections increase the likelihood of ethnic civil wars more than for non-ethnic civil wars.

A test of these hypotheses gives us the opportunity to check whether the families of mechanisms reviewed above appear to point in the right direction. In this section, we propose a straightforward model considering the effects of elections on the risk that a country will experience conflict. The information on elections comes from the work of Golder (2004) and Hyde and Marinov (2008).⁹ Hence we consider only elections to national office (presidency or seat in parliament) and the time period since 1960 (given that the Hyde and Marinov (2008) data does not cover elections before this date). To identify the subset of elections that are competitive we follow Birnir (2007) and rely on IDEA's coding.¹⁰ By extension, all other elections appearing in the Golder (2004) and Hyde and Marinov (2008) datasets are considered non-competitive.

Our data on whether a country sees the onset of a civil war come from the Uppsala-PRIO Armed Conflict Data (Gleditsch et al. 2002, with the extensions of Harbom and Wallensteen 2009).¹¹ We estimate a multinomial logit,¹² where we distinguish between the risk of ethnic and non-ethnic conflicts, over no conflict as the reference category. The ethnic and non-ethnic civil war distinction is based on the EPR data (see Wimmer, Cederman and Min 2009 ; Cederman, Wimmer and Min 2010). Tables A.2 and A.3 in the Appendix list the relevant conflict cases, divided into ethnic and non-ethnic wars. We also include a number of control variables commonly believed to be associated with civil war that may also plausibly be associated with the likelihood of democratization (for a more detailed discussion of the control variables, see Cederman, Hug and Krebs 2010 and Wimmer, Cederman and Min 2009). Observations with ongoing conflicts are coded as missing, and we correct for time dependence using the non-parametric Beck, Katz and Tucker (1998) approach based on time since previous conflict (or independence). Table 1 reports the empirical results, with robust standard errors clustered by country to take into account variation across countries not reflected in the covariates.

[Table 1 about here]

In Model 1.1, we find a positive and statistically significant coefficient for elections on ethnic civil war, indicating that elections make civil war more likely in the subsequent year.¹³ However, we find no evidence that elections make non-ethnic civil

9 Given the different coverage or emphasis of these two datasets, we simply combine the information on election years from these two sources. Hence, we code a year as an election year when one source indicated that an election (either presidential or parliamentary) took place in that year.

10 We used the Quality of Government dataset (Teorell, Charron, Samanni, Holmberg and Rothstein, 2009), which relies on the information provided by IDEA (<http://www.idea.int/vt/>).

11 We use this conflict coding while removing three instances where the United States is coded as being involved in an internationalized civil war, since these conflicts either did not take place on its core territory or did not involve indigenous groups.

12 We also estimated all the multinomial logit models reported as multinomial probit models, which are sometimes seen as preferable since this does not rely on the assumption of the absence of irrelevant alternatives. Although there are some slight differences in the estimates, none of the substantive interpretations are in any way affected.

13 Given the yearly data this coefficient is likely to be biased toward zero, since in some cases an election and a conflict onset happen in the same year in the sequence expected according to our hypotheses. Our lagged election variable will, however, not pick up such civil war onsets.

wars more likely, and the coefficient for the impact of elections on non-ethnic conflict over the no conflict outcome is actually negative, although it is not statistically significant. Hence, this lends to support to our first hypothesis.

The effect of elections is also illustrated in Figure 1, where we depict the density of the simulated maximal effect of elections on the probability of the three outcomes, namely no war, an ethnic war and a non-ethnic war.¹⁴ The figure tells us that the estimated effect of an election on average yields an increase in the probability of an ethnic war of approximately 1 percent, and much of the mass of the density function lies to the right of zero. This is not the case for the densities for the no-war outcome and the non-ethnic war; both are centered close to zero indicating that elections have no noticeable effect of the likelihood of these outcomes.

[Figure 1 about here]

The control variables behave as one would expect. Both wealth and population size have a strong influence on ethnic and non-ethnic civil wars, as reflected by Hegre and Sambanis' (2006) sensitivity analysis. As would be expected, the share of the population that belongs to excluded ethnic groups has a particularly strong effect on the onset of ethnic conflict, but it should be noted that this effect comes close to significance for the non-ethnic conflicts.

Our second set of hypotheses suggests that the effect of elections is contingent on their character, namely whether they are competitive or not. Model 2.2 reports the results of a test of this hypothesis. Hypothesis 2a finds marginal support in the results, since competitive elections increase the likelihood of civil war onsets, independent of whether they are ethnic or not. However, these two effects are not statistically significant and of substantively marginal importance (see Figure 2). Hence, if we presume that the effect of competitive elections on civil war occurs mostly through the sore-loser mechanism, our results would indicate that this mechanism plays a role in both types of elections. However, we cannot be sure that this effect is well established at the country-level.

In contrast, Hypothesis 2b finds much more support in the results of Model 1.2. More specifically, we find a positive effect of non-competitive elections on the likelihood of ethnic-war onset, but none for the onset of non-ethnic war. The maximal effects related to our two hypotheses are again graphically illustrated in Figure 3.

[Figures 2 and 3 about here]

The findings so far seem to suggest that the causal mechanisms related to elections play a role in the onset of civil wars. However, country-level analysis makes it difficult to disentangle further the processes driving these results (Cederman and Gleditsch 2009). Therefore, we proceed by disaggregating the analysis to the group level.

14 All other variables were held constant at their mean values except the variables taking into account time dependence which were all set to zero.

Group-level analysis

Building directly on the EPR dataset, we use as our unit of analysis the individual politically relevant ethnic groups identified around the world from 1946 through 2005 (see Cederman, Wimmer and Min 2010). This group-level dataset has the advantage of covering all ethnic groups regardless of their access to national executive power, together with explicit coding of this variable.

Our first task is to replicate the country-level findings reported in Table 1. Is it possible to find support for a general election effect (H1) at the group-level? Model 2.1 regresses a number of group-level and country-level determinants on ethnic groups' involvement in ethnic conflict (see Table 2).¹⁵

As can be seen, H1a receives some support at the group level, though the effect is not very strong. The other determinants exhibit effects according to our theoretical expectations. In line with previous scholarship, excluded groups are much more likely to experience conflict (see Cederman, Wimmer and Min 2010). While economic wealth continues to be highly relevant for conflict onset, population figures at the national level are not connected to conflict behavior at the group level.

To better capture the political environment of elite decision-making, the current model also includes an indicator that records whether there is a history of leaders being removed from office violently, causing the death of this person, based on the ARCHIGOS data (see Goemans, Gleditsch and Chiozza 2009). As reflected by the positive and highly significant coefficient, this variable has a very strong impact on the onset of ethnic civil wars.

It is possible that these relatively weak findings reflect mixed effects of competitive and non-competitive elections. At least partly confirming this view, Model 2.2 shows that ethnic groups become more likely to engage in conflict following non-competitive elections. While this result barely misses significance at the 0.05 level, the effect of competitive elections is much weaker and not nearly as precise. Together these findings offer further evidence strengthening both H2a and H2b.

[Table 2 about here]

However, it is necessary to proceed beyond this relatively general analysis. In particular, we need to disentangle the conflict type in question. As argued by Buhaug (2006), territorial and governmental conflict are generated by fundamentally different processes. While the former class of conflict hinges on territorial incompatibilities, such as the autonomy or independence of regions usually associated with distinct ethnic groups, the latter type involves direct challenges to governmental power at the center of the state, and are much less likely to be based on ethnic affiliation. The Uppsala/PRIO ACD conflict coding separates these two types explicitly through the stated incompatibility. In the following, we consider mechanisms driving each type of civil war separately, starting with mechanisms driving governmental civil wars.

15 As in the country-level regressions, we rely on logit models with clustered standard errors and a "peace year" correction. Observations with ongoing conflict are excluded.

We start by considering electoral mechanisms that trigger territorial civil wars. In these situations, the ethnic groups tend to be small relative to the country's total population and therefore pursue territorial aims, such as secession or various degrees of autonomy, rather than attempting to seize central state power.

For territorial civil wars, it can be expected that the election effect derived from difficulties of defining the *demos*, that is the popular unit forming the basis for democracy (Dahl 1989). By inviting citizens to participate in national politics, elections imply a certain level of commitment to the polity as a whole. It can be expected that contested *demos* definitions may trigger conflict (Rustow 1970). In particular, leaders of competing ethnic groups can use electoral campaigns to drum up support for secessionist or autonomist platforms that challenge the sovereignty of the state. In such cases, political violence may become an attractive alternative to democratic participation.

Given that the very definition of the polity is at stake, the *demos*-effect should operate independently of whether elections are truly competitive or not. The resistance of ethno-nationalist groups that are unhappy with current state borders is unlikely to be mollified by competitive elections. This is so because elections confirm, and render more visible, the current power structure, including structures of dominance and alien rule.

In brief, this reasoning yields the following hypothesis:

H3: The likelihood of territorial ethnic civil war increases after both competitive and non-competitive elections.

Having briefly discussed our theoretical expectations as regards territorial conflict, we now turn to civil wars featuring direct challenges to the government.

Governmental conflicts are also likely to result from elections regardless of the degree of competitiveness in electoral politics. Yet, for this type of conflicts, it is possible to differentiate between two main mechanisms that are associated with both types of elections.

Let us start with non-competitive electoral processes. As we have seen, such public events can raise the visibility of prevailing power structures, but beyond this, electoral scams may also be used to justify the downgrading of oppositional ethnic groups. Adding insult to injury, the victims of exclusion are exposed to real and palpable grievances beyond being exposed to humiliating, undemocratic procedures. Such loss of status leave the recently excluded groups with little influence other the resort to arms. Such a theoretical expectation is compatible with Birnir's (2007) findings that electoral politics can be stabilizing only when ethnic groups are adequately represented within the country's democratic institutions.

Summing up the argument, we postulate that:

H4. After non-competitive elections, downgraded groups are more likely to fight the government than those groups that do not experience a status loss

Is there a link between competitive elections and governmental conflict? Based on the models in Table 2 and previous research (see e.g. Cederman, Wimmer and Min 2010), we know that larger ethnic groups are generally more likely to become involved in civil wars. Here we assume that the size effect is especially important for governmental conflicts because only the largest groups are capable or willing to claim central power (see Table A.3 for a list of the post-electoral, governmental conflict cases).

In addition, we postulate that direct challenges to governmental power are more likely following elections because electoral events increase the level of political competition and lead to large-scale mobilization, especially where large groups are dissatisfied with the outcome of the election. Horowitz (1985, 331) describes how such “polarizing elections” are likely to provoke ethnic coups. Thus, the “sore loser” effect, whether driven by honest or dishonest behavior of the incumbent, can be expected to be larger wherever a larger proportion of the population feels excluded from power.

Unfortunately, our election coding does not extend to electoral outcomes linked to groups, but we can use the demographic size of the group in question as a proxy for the sore-loser effect.

H5. After competitive elections, large groups are especially likely to fight the government than small ones.

Having stated our hypotheses relating to territorial and governmental conflict, it is now time to assess their validity. Table 3 introduces three multinomial logit regressions that allow us to do so. Representing the simplest specification, Model 3.1 tells us that territorial conflicts are indeed more likely after either type of elections, as suggested by H3. Both competitive and non-competitive polls have a powerful and significant impact on the territorial onsets. Compared to the models in Table 2, the remaining variables behave similarly. Figures 4 and 5 depict again the maximal effects of competitive and non-competitive elections demonstrating the latter's substantive impact on the likelihood of the two types of ethnic civil wars

[Table 3 about here]

[Figures 4 and 5 about here]

Drawing on a variable indicating if the group in question experienced a status loss during the two previous years, as specified by Cederman, Wimmer and Min (2010), the second regression tests whether downgrading in connection with elections triggers conflict (see Model 3.2). In addition to a straight dummy variable for downgrading, the model features interaction effects with both competitive and non-competitive elections. This analysis yields a powerful confirmation of the hypothesis. Indeed, the latter type of polls can be shown to interact with downgrading to produce a strong effect on governmental civil wars. Figure 6 depicts this considerable marginal effect. In contrast, the effect of competitive elections, or any type of election on territorial conflict, does not seem to be present in the sample because a lack of situations of these types. A peek at the cases reveals that there are some instances that seem to confirm the postulated logic, including the Igbo insurrection in 1966 in Nigeria and the violent challenge of the Congolese government by Lari and Mbochi groups in

1993. Other cases are less obviously linked to elections, especially those that are genuinely authoritarian, such as the Kabré in Togo 1991 and the Fulani in Cameroon 1984.

[Figure 6 about here]

Finally we investigate the electoral size-effect on governmental conflicts (see H5). To this end, Model 3.3 introduces mixed effects involving group size and both competitive and non-competitive elections. This means that we break up the effect of group size into two parts with the help of an interactive term that combines the effect of elections with that of size.

The findings show that the electoral size-dependent effect is very powerful and highly significant. Thus, a substantial part of the dependence on demographic size materializes in the aftermath of elections.¹⁶ Figure 7 depicts the effect of competitive elections for a large group, clearly demonstrating that governmental conflicts become much more likely. For territorial conflicts, things look very different. In fact, here the net effect of elections on conflict is negative and almost statistically significant. It remains unclear what explains this result.

[Figure 7 about here]

Conclusion

This paper has explored the effect of elections on internal conflict or civil war. We find a great deal of support for such a connection, both in comparisons of entire countries and ethnic groups across the globe. Our results connect elections with violence primarily in the case of ethnic conflicts. We found that post-electoral situations are only weakly associated with non-ethnic civil wars. Furthermore, group-level analysis suggests that the electoral influence makes itself known in different ways, depending on the type of ethnic conflict and elections. Whereas we have been able to show that the conflict-inducing election effect is mediated through groups' demographic sizes and changes in their power status in governmental conflicts, our analysis merely states that territorial conflicts tend to follow both competitive and non-competitive elections.

It is necessary to reiterate that the current paper is very much preliminary. Thus there is plenty of room for improvement. More direct tests of the main theoretical explanations would be highly desirable. In particular, an evaluation of the sore-loser logic would benefit a lot from data on electoral outcomes linked to the groups in our sample. Likewise we have started to look into the impact of "first elections" after election-free periods, but we are not ready to present results yet. Moreover, group-level analysis leaves out an important layer of political actors, such as political parties and rebel organizations, that are usually directly responsible for the outbreak of conflict. Information about such organizations would be very helpful in further evaluating competing explanations of the influence of ethnic politics on civil-war violence. The current research design, based on yearly observations, is relatively

¹⁶ Birnir (2007) finds that the group's size in the legislature has a negative impact on conflict, which is fully compatible with the present result.

crude as regards the precise sequence of elections and violence. It is conceivable that duration models, with more precise information about dates of elections and conflict onset could improve the precision of causal inference, although the relative timing may be difficult to tease out with better data, especially since low-level conflict makes it difficult to pin down the exact starting point of a civil war.

All the same, we believe that the current, preliminary study sheds valuable light on the problem of post-electoral violence. Because democratization is a notoriously difficult concept to measure, our focus on elections, offers a useful complement to previous democratization research. By disaggregating such effects, both in terms of the level of analysis and the type of conflict, we are able to come closer to the causal mechanisms responsible for the outbreak of conflict.

Appendix

Table A.1: Conflict outbreaks in year after elections

country	year
Ethnic civil wars after competitive elections	
India	1978
Russia	1994
United Kingdom	1971
Turkey	1984
Spain	1980
Togo	1986
Niger	1996
Ethnic civil wars after non-competitive elections	
Nigeria	1966
Georgia	2004
Togo	1991
Cameroon	1984
Azerbaijan	1992
Moldova	1992
Yugoslavia	1998
Pakistan	1971
Lebanon	1958
Bolivia	1952
Syria	1979
Congo	1993
Guatemala	1965
Non-ethnic civil wars after competitive elections	
Uzbekistan	2000
Israel	2000
Chad	1997
Madagascar	1971
Morocco	1971
Iran	1997
Bolivia	1967

Sri Lanka	1971
Paraguay	1989
Nepal	1960
El Salvador	1979
Peru	1981
Uruguay	1972
United Kingdom	1998
Spain	1987
Argentina	1955
Argentina	1974
Argentina	1963
Non-ethnic civil wars after competitive elections	
Cambodia	1967
Paraguay	1954
Guatemala	1954
Haiti	1989
Tajikistan	1992
Sudan	1976
Tunisia	1980

Table A.2: Group-level outbreaks of governmental conflict in year after elections

Country	group	year	log(group size)
Competitive elections, downgraded			
Togo	Ewe (and related groups)	1986	-0.48
Non- competitive elections, not-downgraded			
Bolivia	Aymara	1952	-1.42
Lebanon	Shi'a Muslims (Arab)	1958	-1.61
Lebanon	Sunnis (Arab)	1958	-1.51
Chad	Sara	1991	-0.64
Bolivia	Quechua	1952	-0.94
Guatemala	Mayas	1965	-0.93
Non- competitive elections, not-downgraded			
Congo	Mbochi (proper)	1993	-2.23
Nigeria	Igbo	1966	-1.5
Syria	Sunni Arabs	1979	-0.45
Togo	Kabré (and related groups)	1991	-0.97
Cameroon	Fulani (and other northern Muslim peoples)	1984	-1.8
Congo	Lari/Bakongo	1993	-1.03
Chad	Toubou	1991	-2.43

Table A.3: Group-level outbreaks of territorial conflict in year after elections

country	group	year	log(group size)
Competitive elections, not downgraded			
Russia	Chechens	1994	-4.66
United Kingdom	Catholics In N. Ireland	1971	-4.37
Philippines	Moro	1970	-2.9
Sri Lanka	Sri Lankan Tamils	1983	-2.2
Spain	Basques	1980	-2.9
Bangladesh	Tribal-Buddhists	1974	-4.6
India	Naga	1992	-6.18
Myanmar	Kayin (Karens)	1957	-2.64

India	Assamese (non-SC/ST/OBCs)	1990	-4.24
India	Indigenous Tripuri	1978	-6.88
Turkey	Kurds	1984	-1.77
Nigeria	Ijaw	2004	-2.09
Niger	Toubou	1996	-5.29
Georgia	Ossetians (South)	2004	-3.44
Russia	Azerbaijanis	1990	-4.55
Yugoslavia	Slovenes	1991	-2.45
Georgia	Abkhazians	1992	-4.07
Yugoslavia	Croats	1991	-1.54
Yugoslavia	Albanians	1998	-1.68
Ethiopia	Somali (Ogaden)	1996	-2.81
Myanmar	Kachins	1961	-4.18
Philippines	Moro	1972	-2.9
Azerbaijan	Armenians	1992	-3.73
Ethiopia	Afar	1996	-3.91
Russia	Armenians	1990	-4.55
Moldova	Transnistrians	1992	-1.95
Pakistan	Bengali	1971	-0.82
Georgia	Ossetians (South)	1992	-3.44

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Tables and Figures

Table 1. Effect of elections at the country level

	Model 1.1		Model 1.2	
	ethnic civil war	non-ethnic civil war	ethnic civil war	non-ethnic civil war
	b	b	b	b
	(s.e.)	(s.e.)	(s.e.)	(s.e.)
election [~]	0.796	-0.011		
	(0.321)*	(0.233)		
competitive election [~]			0.564	0.396
			(0.453)	(0.264)
non-competitive election [~]			0.948	-0.766
			(0.376)*	(0.462)
log(GDP/capita) [~]	-0.564	-0.248	-0.542	-0.284
	(0.149)**	(0.119)*	(0.158)**	(0.117)*
log(population) [~]	0.251	0.202	0.254	0.195
	(0.129)	(0.087)*	(0.130)	(0.086)*
excluded population	0.906	0.632	0.872	0.683
	(0.452)*	(0.334)	(0.456)	(0.335)*
peace years	0.103	-0.003	0.102	-0.003
	(0.192)	(0.113)	(0.192)	(0.114)
spline1	0.005	0.001	0.005	0.001
	(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.002)
spline2	-0.004	-0.001	-0.004	-0.001
	(0.002)*	(0.001)	(0.002)*	(0.001)
spline3	0.001	0.000	0.001	0.000
	(0.000)*	(0.000)	(0.000)*	(0.000)
Constant	-6.602	-5.103	-6.640	-5.009
	(1.322)**	(0.783)**	(1.325)**	(0.781)**
Observations		4844		4844
Log pseudolikelihood		-681.31365		-678.1036
Robust standard errors in parentheses				
* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%				
[~] lagged				

Table 2. Explaining group-level onset of ethnic conflict

	Model 2.1	Model 2.2
election [~]	0.524 (0.300)	
competitive election [~]		0.323 (0.357)
non-competitive election [~]		0.643 (0.379)
leaders killed	0.811 (0.280)**	0.804 (0.282)**
group excluded	1.408 (0.308)**	1.397 (0.310)**
log(group size)	0.258 (0.076)**	0.258 (0.077)**
log(GDP/capita) [~]	-0.513 (0.117)**	-0.503 (0.118)**
log(country population) [~]	0.007 (0.107)	0.007 (0.109)
prior conflict	0.376 (0.279)	0.393 (0.277)
peace years	-0.210 (0.086)*	-0.205 (0.086)*
spline1	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
spline2	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
spline3	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Constant	-0.969 (1.131)	-1.064 (1.115)
Observations	19503	19503
Log pseudolikelihood	-617.15309	-616.78752

Robust standard errors in parentheses

* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%

[~] lagged

Table 3. Analyzing onset of ethnic governmental conflicts by comparing conflict types

	Model 3.1		Model 3.2		Model 3.3	
	Terr.	Gov.	Terr.	Gov.	Terr.	Gov.
competitive election [˘]	1.207 (0.405)**	-1.569 (1.083)	1.367 (0.408)**	-1.456 (1.065)	0.400 (0.671)	1.098 (1.166)
non-competitive election [˘]	1.234 (0.518)*	0.168 (0.471)	1.406 (0.497)**	-0.804 (0.538)	1.381 (0.696)*	0.016 (0.853)
group downgraded			2.011 (0.493)**	1.321 (0.908)	1.945 (0.513)**	1.351 (0.902)
competitive election × downgraded			-31.743 (0.825)**	-28.901 (1.256)**	-31.314 (0.860)**	-28.823 (1.277)**
non-competitive election × downgraded			-32.744 (0.780)**	2.798 (0.920)**	-32.673 (0.813)**	2.825 (0.901)**
leaders killed	0.106 (0.415)	1.773 (0.332)**	0.072 (0.422)	1.779 (0.324)**	0.048 (0.412)	1.824 (0.331)**
group excluded	1.800 (0.542)**	1.174 (0.404)**	1.776 (0.536)**	1.066 (0.402)**	1.759 (0.539)**	1.075 (0.410)**
log(group size)	0.168 (0.087)	0.548 (0.119)**	0.160 (0.090)	0.519 (0.117)**	0.217 (0.090)*	0.438 (0.136)**
competitive election × log(group size)					-0.269 (0.143)	2.688 (0.609)**
non-competitive election × log(group size)					-0.005 (0.158)	0.521 (0.337)
log(GDP/capita) [˘]	-0.529 (0.195)**	-0.492 (0.163)**	-0.522 (0.200)**	-0.435 (0.167)**	-0.528 (0.198)**	-0.437 (0.168)**
log(country population) [˘]	0.207 (0.154)	-0.344 (0.142)*	0.225 (0.153)	-0.312 (0.150)*	0.235 (0.146)	-0.316 (0.149)*
prior conflict	0.499 (0.371)	0.262 (0.424)	0.497 (0.387)	0.265 (0.406)	0.505 (0.387)	0.291 (0.409)
peace years	-0.220 (0.116)	-0.182 (0.145)	-0.206 (0.113)	-0.223 (0.151)	-0.203 (0.113)	-0.216 (0.152)
spline1	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
spline2	0.000 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)
spline3	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Constant	-4.165 (1.549)**	1.804 (1.511)	-4.581 (1.504)**	1.126 (1.723)	-4.458 (1.581)**	0.951 (1.728)
Observations		19503		19503		19503
Log pseudolikelihood		-657.31828		-635.33814		-632.17733

Robust standard errors in parentheses

* significant at 5%; ** significant at 1%

[˘] lagged

Figure 1. Maximal effect of elections

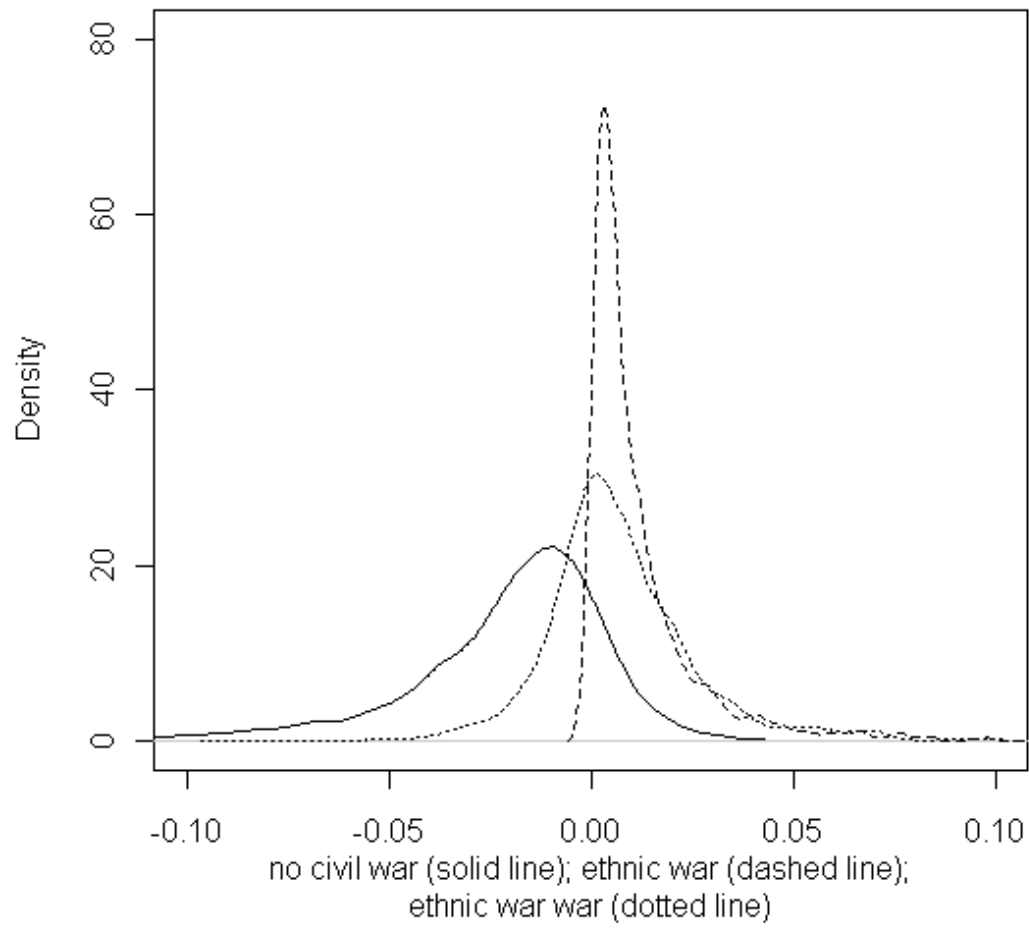


Figure 2. Maximal effect of competitive elections

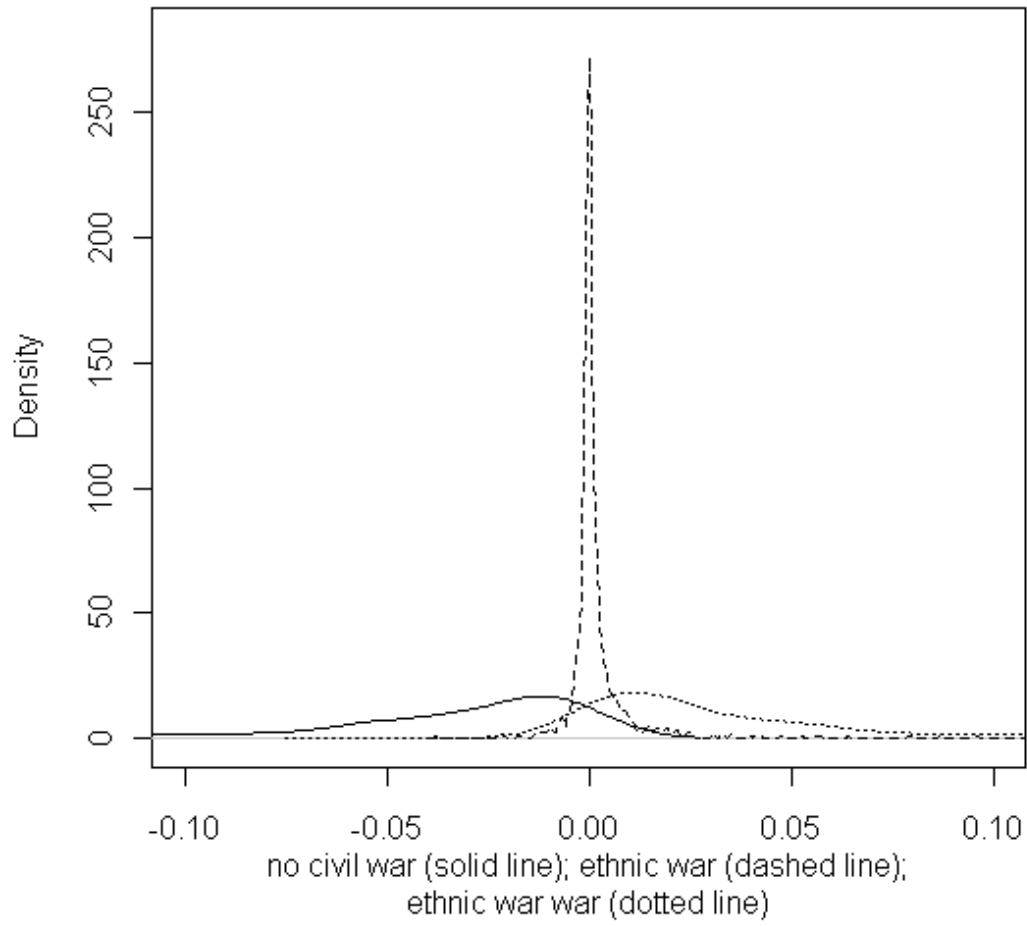


Figure 3. Maximal effect of non-competitive elections

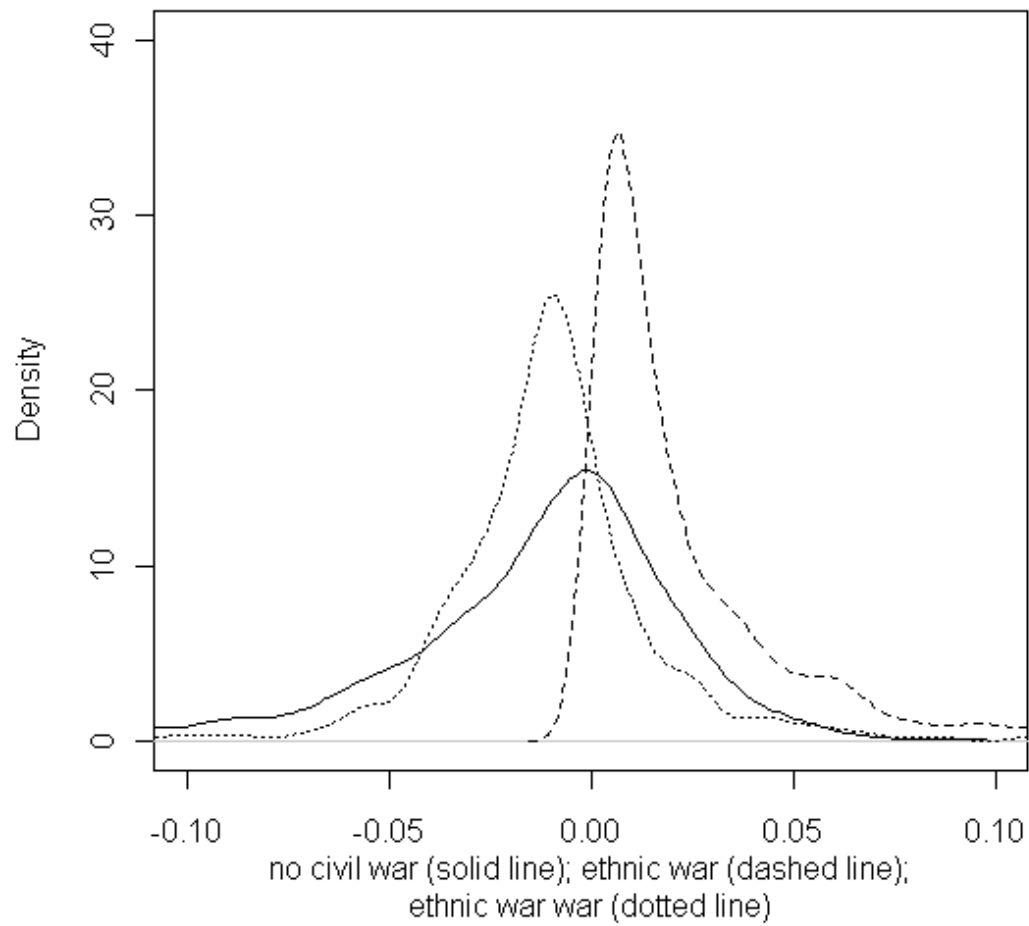


Figure 4: Maximal effect of competitive elections

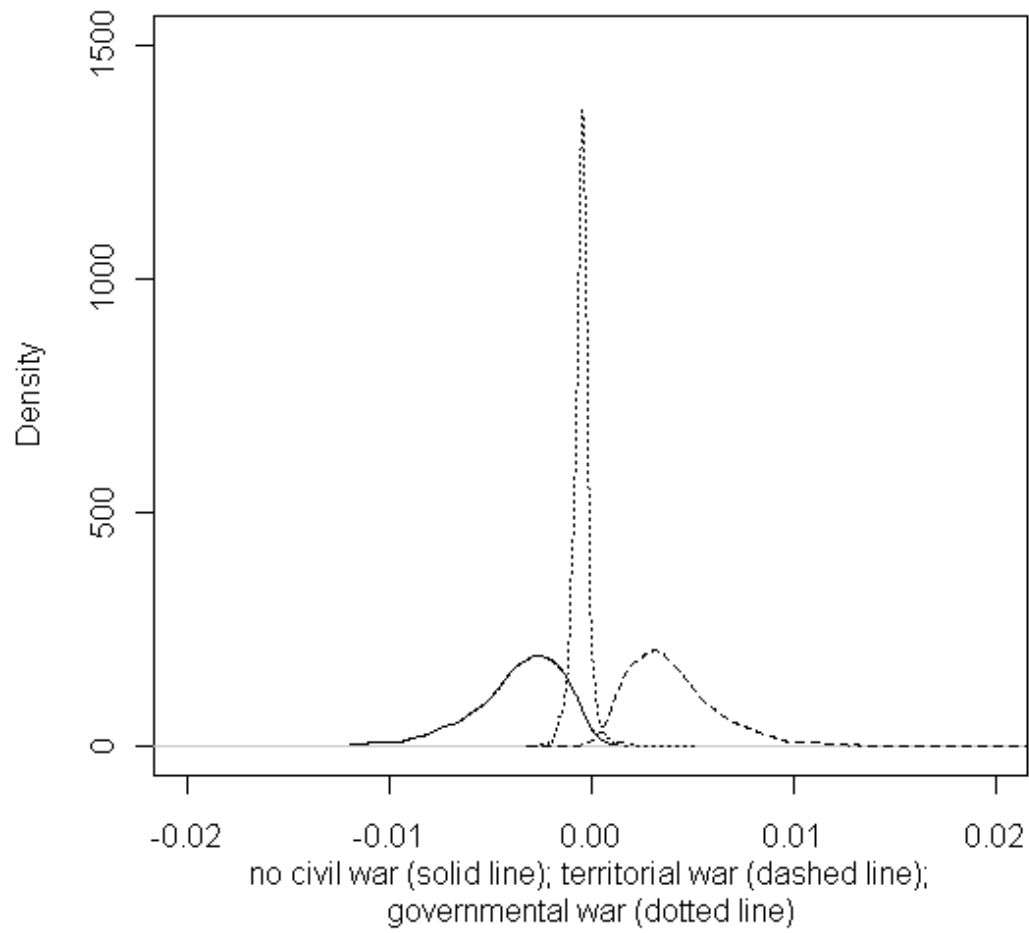


Figure 5: Maximal effect of non-competitive elections

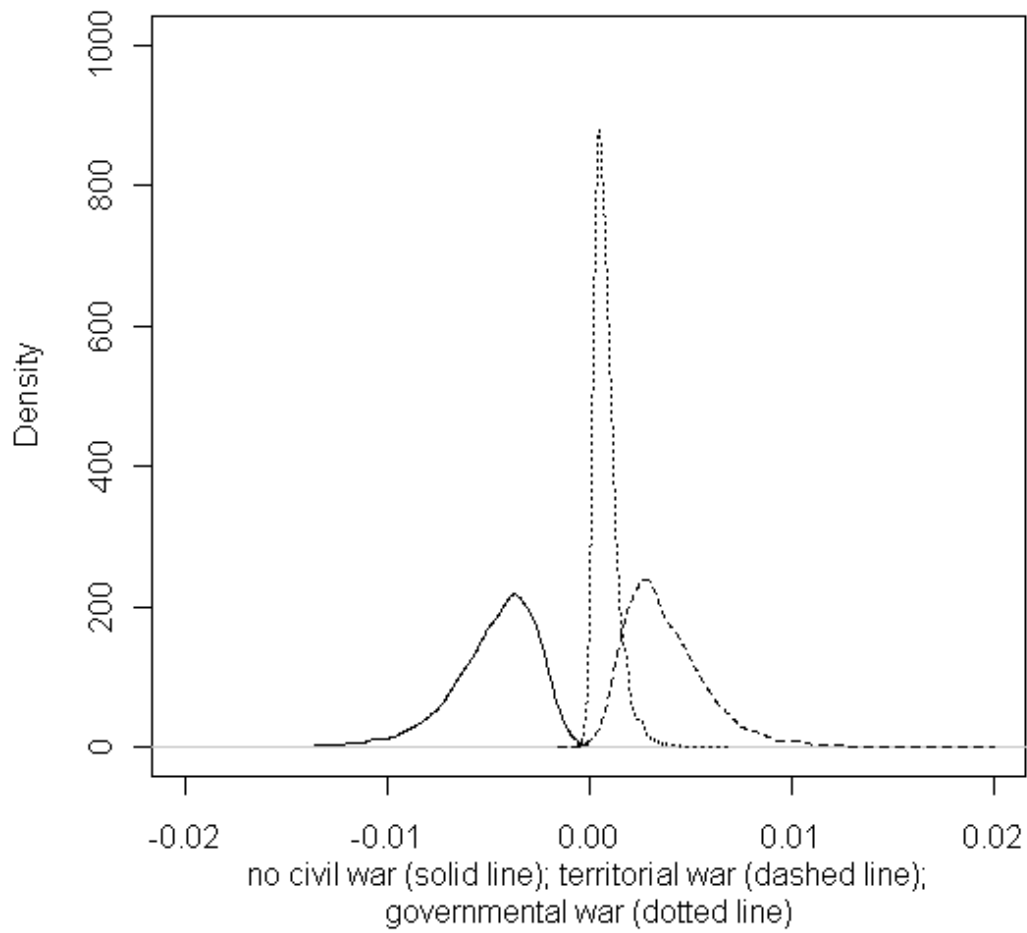


Figure 6: maximal effect of non-competitive elections for downgraded groups

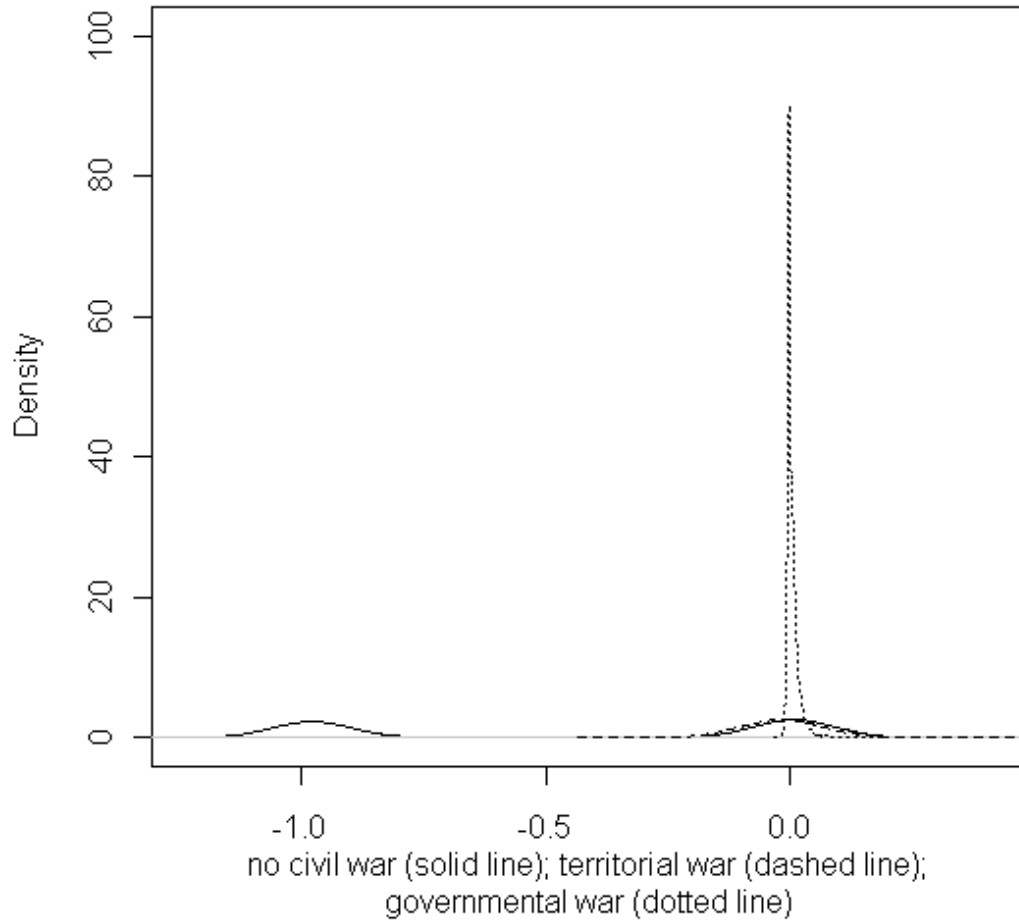


Figure 7: Density of maximal effect of competitive elections for large groups ($l_{size}=0$)

