

**International System and Technologies of Rebellion:  
How the Cold War Shaped Internal Conflict**

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Recent research on civil wars finds that the end of the Cold War had no impact on internal conflict. By disaggregating civil wars on the basis of the ways in which civil wars are fought (the technology of rebellion: irregular, conventional, and symmetric non-conventional), we reach a different conclusion: we identify a massive decline of irregular wars or insurgencies following the end of the Cold War, something that amounts to a radical transformation of civil war. This decline is striking and very robust to multivariate analysis. Our theoretical account highlights the effect of shifting superpower support for both states and rebels on the residual capacity of states; it brings the international system into the study of internal conflict, underscores the relevance of warfare for the study of civil wars, and demonstrates that rather than being a universal technology of rebellion, the predominance of insurgency is a historically contingent political phenomenon linked to the structural dynamics of the Cold War.

**Key Words:** civil war; Cold War; insurgency; rebellion; irregular war; guerrilla war; warfare

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### **1. Introduction**

In 1975, most ongoing civil wars were located in Asia; all but one, were guerrilla wars—contests entailing an asymmetric rebel challenge launched from the country’s rural periphery. In 1993, by contrast, most ongoing civil wars were located in Sub-Saharan Africa and less than half were guerrilla wars. Much more common were conventional wars using heavy armor and artillery in a landscape dominated by trenches, and “primitive” wars between poorly armed and trained militias. We argue that this dual geographic and military shift is symptomatic of a broader transformation of internal conflict—the result of a major structural shift in the international system: the end of the Cold War. This transformation has been overlooked because the literature on civil wars has tended to neglect the international system and has treated civil wars as a homogeneous phenomenon. We show that bringing the Cold War back into the analysis of civil wars is critical for understanding the evolution and transformation of internal conflict.

We identify the “technology of rebellion” as a key causal pathway in this process of change. A central assumption in the literature is that civil war onset is a function of structural factors that facilitate insurgency, a technology that can be deployed to serve all kinds of political ends (Fearon and Laitin 2003:75). We show that insurgency (or irregular war) is neither the only technology available to rebels, nor is it as time-invariant and plastic as assumed. In contrast, it is contingent on the international system broadly defined. We identify two additional technologies of rebellion: conventional warfare and symmetric-non conventional warfare (SNC). While insurgency is an instance of asymmetric warfare, both conventional and SNC warfare are forms of symmetric warfare—the former entailing higher levels of military technology and the latter lower levels. We find that while irregular warfare is the dominant technology of rebellion between 1944 and 2004, it is just barely so: it is used only in 53% of all civil wars. Furthermore, this conceals a major underlying transformation: 65% of all civil wars fought during the Cold War were irregular wars compared to just 26% of those fought after 1991.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the overlap of civil war and insurgency posited by the literature turns out to be a Cold War phenomenon. Furthermore, insurgency appears to be well past its prime.

How to explain this transformation? The Cold War raised the capacity of both states and rebels worldwide via superpower economic and military aid; yet, it ultimately benefited rebels more than states,

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<sup>1</sup> Like most crossnational research on civil wars, we focus on the post-1944 period. The pre-1944 period includes a significant number of irregular wars, many of which were wars of colonial conquest pitting modern against “primitive armies,” rather than civil wars (Lyall and Wilson 2009; Arreguin-Toft 2005).

a result of the rise and diffusion of a particularly robust version of the technology of insurgency. The end of the Cold War corroded this technology and lowered rebel capacity worldwide, leading to two outcomes. On the one hand, civil peace became more likely in states that had been vulnerable to insurgency during the Cold War and on the other, civil war became more likely in residually weak states that lost superpower support after its end; these states were now likely to experience symmetric non-conventional wars. Aside from these two outcomes which are directly related to the structural shift in the international system, we point to an additional effect of the end of the Cold War: the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, which produced a steep, yet temporary, increase in the likelihood of conventional wars.

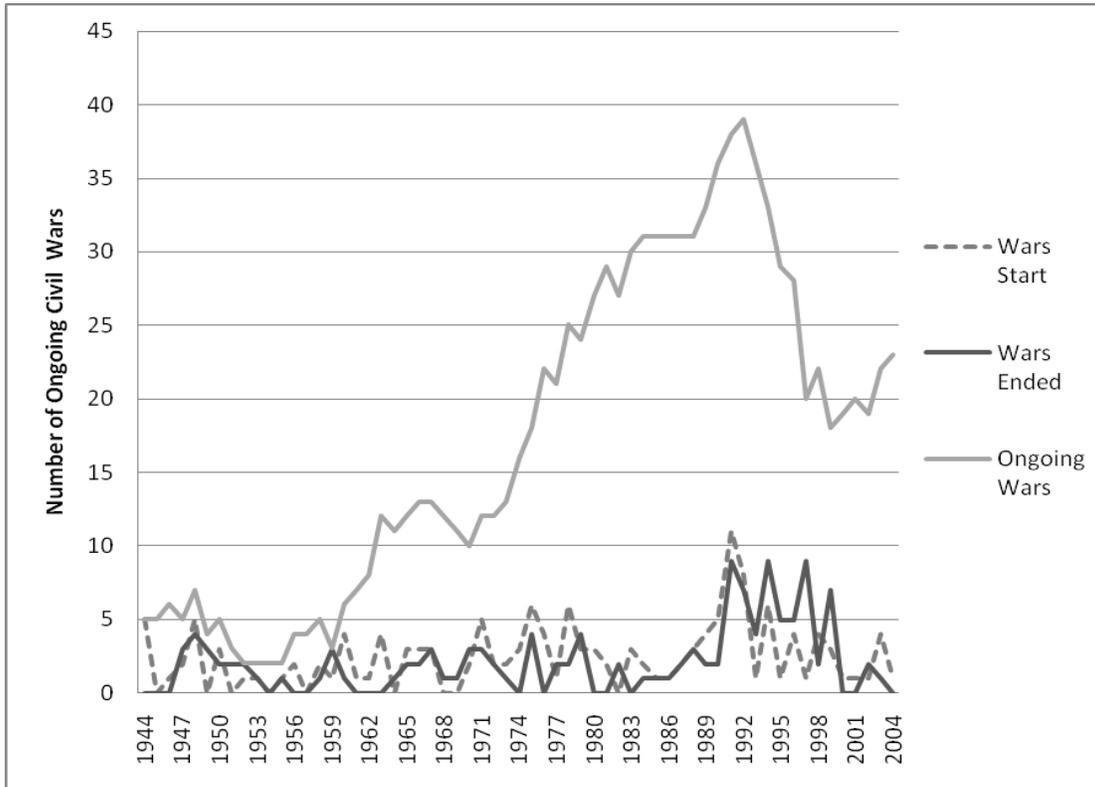
Our contribution is four-fold. First, we specify the impact of the Cold War (and its demise) on civil wars; we specify and isolate a key pathway and adduce additional implications about the temporal and spatial distribution of different types of civil wars. This is the first systematic account of the transformation of internal conflict. Second, we bring the international system back into the study of internal conflict by showing how system polarity impacts internal conflict; we show the relevance of the technology of rebellion and demonstrate that rather than being a plastic and modular technology that can be used by anyone, anywhere, anytime, insurgency is a historically contingent political phenomenon; we suggest that a full understanding of civil war onset requires a focus on both rebel and state capacity, rather than just the latter—and on the type of interaction between the two; and we treat civil war as an evolving and dynamic phenomenon which should be sensitive to historical trends. Third, we join the move toward theoretical and empirical disaggregation as a way of uncovering causal mechanisms and effects likely to be obscured in more aggregate research designs. Lastly, we suggest that policy makers should be aware of the variation in technologies of rebellion and the transformation of internal conflict after the end of the Cold War, especially in planning mediation, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding.

The paper is organized as follows: in the next section, we present the main empirical trends and puzzles and point to the inconclusive and contradictory views about the effect of the end of the Cold War on internal conflict. In section 3, we discuss the technologies of rebellion. In section 4, we show how the Cold War is connected to civil war onset via the pathway of technologies of rebellion. In section 5, we derive empirical predictions about the impact of the end of the Cold War, which we proceed to test in section 6. We conclude with a discussion of theoretical and policy implications.

## **2. Puzzles and Trends**

Figure 1 tracks the total number of civil war onsets, terminations, and ongoing wars per year for the period 1944-2004.

**Figure 1. Civil Wars Starting, Ending and Ongoing (1944-2004)**



Ongoing civil wars increased steadily after the late 1950s and peaked in the early 1990s; civil war onsets peaked as well in 1991.<sup>2</sup> Immediately afterwards, however, the rate of civil war onsets declined,<sup>3</sup> while the rate of terminations went up. These two trends converged to produce a significant decline of ongoing civil wars in the post-Cold War period. Analysts proceeded to interpret these patterns in three

<sup>2</sup> We rely on the standard definition of civil wars and the standard datasets extended up to 2004 (Sambanis 2001, Fearon and Laitin 2003). Civil wars are defined by the following criteria: 1) more than 1,000 war-related deaths during the entire war and in at least one single year of the war, 2) the war challenged the sovereignty of an internationally recognized state, 3) it occurred within the territory of that state, 4) the state was one of the principal combatants, 5) the rebels were able to mount an organized military opposition to the state (Sambanis 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Although our data extend until 2004, the decline in the trend of civil war onsets has not been reversed (Harbom and Wallensteen 2007); in 2007 only four civil wars were active worldwide (Harbom, Melander and Wallensteen 2008).

distinct ways: by extrapolating short-term trends; by developing theoretical conjectures; and by analyzing long-term crossnational data.

Some analysts interpreted and extrapolated short-term trends—an exercise that is highly sensitive to the timing of observations. The first and most immediate reaction to the initial spike of civil war onsets immediately after the end of the Cold War was that the new era spelled a “coming anarchy,” through the eruption of “new wars” (Kaldor 1999; Kaplan 1994). This interpretation was based on a handful of highly visible cases during the first post-Cold War period and was reinforced by reactions at the other end of the spectrum, when hopes that the end of the Cold War would lead to an outburst of international intervention were dashed and the “euphoria of the early 1990s” gave way to “frustration” and “disillusionment in mid-1990s” (Brown 1996:11). Despite the fact that the trend on which this argument was built proved short-lived, and later reversed itself, this view remains alive in the public sphere.<sup>4</sup>

Following this first wave of doomsday predictions, the emergence of a seemingly more robust downward trend in both civil war onsets and ongoing civil wars led to renewed sensitivity about a possible post-Cold War effect (Cramer 2007:53). Researchers associated with the Human Security Centre argued that this was an “extraordinary and counterintuitive improvement in global security.” They observed that by 2003 there were 40 percent fewer conflicts compared to 1992, and that the deadliest conflicts (those with 1,000 or more battle-deaths) had fallen by some 80 percent. They added that the end of the Cold War was the single most critical factor in this decline: because the two superpowers ended their interest in “proxy wars” in the developing world, the United Nations, along with other international agencies, donor governments and nongovernmental organizations, were free to play a new global security role that entailed active diplomacy, peacekeeping, and peacemaking, thus preventing new conflicts from taking place and brokering peace agreements to end those that had already erupted (Human Security Centre 2005). In other words, “the superpower military advisers moved out, and the Blue Helmets moved in” (Lacina 2004:192). As stated above, the divergence between these two interpretations is largely a function of the timing of their observations; the post-Cold War era appeared to be a disaster in 1992 but struck observers as a clear improvement by 2005.

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<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Kaplan persists. Writing recently about piracy in Somalia, he argued that “like insurgencies on land,” piracy “tends to increase in the lulls between conflicts among great states or empires. With the Soviet Union and its client states in Africa no longer in existence, and American influence in the third world at an ebb, irregular warfare both on land and at sea has erupted, and will probably be with us until the rise of new empires or their equivalents (Kaplan 2009:9).

The theorization of the post-Cold War effect was undertaken primarily by International Relations scholars. In contrast to students of civil wars who focused on domestic structural characteristics,<sup>5</sup> they have been primarily concerned about interstate rather than intrastate conflict—either trying to understand the effects of shifts in system polarity on interstate conflict and global power relations (Goldgeier and McFaul 1992; Mearsheimer 1992), or their implications for theories of international relations (Lebow 1994). At the same time, many scholars turned their attention to domestic ethnic conflict (Brown 1996; Lake and Rothchild 1996); some connected the resurgence of nationalism to the end of the Cold War (Ellingsen 2000; Laidi 1994), while others challenged this connection (Ayres 2000).

There are two priors in the theoretical literature: an optimistic one (the “conflict-suppression” school), arguing that the end of the Cold War heralded a more peaceful world and a pessimistic one (the “conflict-exacerbation” school), predicting mayhem across the globe. Perhaps the single most influential theoretical analysis linking the end of the Cold War to civil war is Huntington’s (1993) “clash of civilization” thesis. Huntington sought to formulate a “post-Cold War paradigm,” one that predicted the intensification of global conflict across “civilizational” lines, including more civil wars in countries straddling those civilizational divides. His theory, undoubtedly influenced by the spike of civil wars at the time of its formulation, provided a theoretical foundation for the alarmist predictions of the immediate post-Cold War. Nevertheless, both optimists and pessimists agreed that the end of the Cold War was bound to have important and uniform effects, though they differed about their direction (Stein and Lobell 1997:102).

Any assessment of the effects of the end of the Cold War requires an understanding of how the Cold War itself shaped internal conflict. This was a global phenomenon that dominated international politics after the end of the Second World War and until the collapse of the Soviet block and the Soviet Union in 1989-1991 (Hironaka 2005; Westad 2005; Gaddis 1997).<sup>6</sup> A common and uncontroversial understanding of the connection between the Cold War and internal conflict links bipolarity and “proxy wars.” Given the stakes of a direct clash, the USA and the Soviet Union turned conflicts in the developing world into “proxy wars” so as to gain an advantage over their rival (Mott 2001; Gaddis 1997; Westad 1992). In other words, civil wars were the frontlines of the Cold War—its “hot wars.” The predictions of this account about the prospects for civil peace after the end of the Cold War are

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<sup>5</sup> A notable, but almost unique exception is Hironaka (2005), who examined the effects of the Cold War on the duration, rather than onset, of civil wars.

<sup>6</sup> In fact, the origins of the Cold War can be located the midst of the Second World War, as mistrust between the USA and Britain on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other, grew while military clashes between communist and anticommunist factions were taking place in several countries.

indeterminate (Stein and Lobell 1997). Civil wars could decrease with the end of the superpower competition that fed them in the first place; but they could also be unaffected by it, or even explode, absent the “disciplining” effect of the two superpowers on the myriad of underlying conflicts.

To complicate matters, the end of the Cold War entailed multiple processes, such as the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and the formation of new states with contested boundaries, the eruption of ethnic conflicts, the inflow of cheap weapons from the former Soviet republics, the end of a global ideological struggle, and the weakening of client states following the reduction or withdrawal of superpower support. Some of these processes were contingent on the way the Cold War ended, while others were structural, related to the end of bipolarity. In fact, the complex and simultaneous occurrence of many, often contradictory, processes (Stein and Lobell 1997; Wallensteen and Axell 1993), led many seasoned observers to recommend caution in predictions. For instance, Huntington (1993:187) noted that global politics had become too complex to be stuffed into the two pigeon-holes of the Cold War era, while Jervis (1994:769-770) remarked that the post-Cold War world would be, structurally and cognitively, more complex than the previous era. Stein and Lobell (1997) highlighted a variable set of possible outcomes across geographical regions depending on the interaction of several factors, including the role of superpowers in stoking or reducing conflict during the Cold War, the depth of the Cold War, and the regional penetration of superpowers. These complexities help explain why despite the multitude of theoretical conjectures, the impact of the end of the Cold War on internal conflict did not become the object of systematic investigation.

Lastly, the crossnational literature on civil war onset was both more systematic and less theoretical: it did include the Cold War in the mix of variables examined, but did not theorize it. Analysts reached the conclusion that the end of the Cold War had no impact on the rate of civil war onsets and left it at that. Collier et al. (2003:96-98) reported no post-Cold War net effect on the overall risk of civil war onset; Fearon and Laitin (2003:77-8) failed to come up with any significant effect and concluded that “the prevalence of civil war in the 1990s was *not* due to the end of the Cold War and associated changes in the international system” and that states “have been subject to a more or less constant risk of violent civil conflict over the period.” Similar results were reported by Sambanis (2004) and Jung, Schlichte, and Seigelberg (2000:171) who concluded that the end of the Cold War was simply “no epochal shift.” Unlike other crossnational findings that generated considerable controversy (e.g. the effect of natural resources or ethnic fragmentation), the Cold War “non-effect” was the object of a broad consensus and generated no discussion.

Yet, this non-effect is puzzling. On the one hand, the end of the Cold War was associated with a regional outbreak of civil wars, especially in Eurasia (Zürcher 2007; Evangelista 1996) and Sub-Saharan Africa (Stedman 1996); at the same time, regional experts noticed a surprising reduction of civil wars in

Latin America (Chernick 1996; Castañeda 1993) and Southeast Asia (Findlay 1996). On the other hand, many seemingly intractable civil wars terminated with the end of the Cold War (Kanet 2006; Hironaka 2005). These developments are hard to explain outside the framework of the Cold War. If anything, the expectation just before the fall of the Berlin Wall was that “active Soviet and surrogate support of terrorist organizations, revolutionary insurgencies, and political destabilization campaigns is likely to continue at existing levels and contribute the LIC [low intensity conflict] challenges to the United States” (Shultz et al. 1989: xiii). Could it be that the high level of aggregation of crossnational studies missed these effects? Would a more explicit theorization of the Cold War uncover different dynamics? We argue that the absence of evidence of a Cold War effect is no evidence of absence. This effect can be best apprehended by identifying a specific pathway: technologies of rebellion.

### **3. Technologies of Rebellion**

We begin by specifying how the Cold War might have affected civil wars. Moving beyond proxy wars, our starting point is that the Cold War raised the capacity of states worldwide—but it also had the same impact on rebel capacity. The two superpowers proceeded to infuse enormous military and economic assistance into allied (or client) states (Westad 2005)—but they also supported a wide range of rebel movements throughout the developing world. Although the United States supported some rebel movements, such as the UNITA in Angola or the contras in Nicaragua, the Soviet Union was much more likely to enter into alliances with Third World revolutionary movements, which were dominated or influenced by Marxist political groups (Westad 1992:461).

Our core argument is that during the Cold War, the rise in rebel capacity outpaced that of state capacity, leading to an eruption of civil wars that relied on the technology of insurgency or irregular war. More specifically, we argue that radical entrepreneurs with the support of the Soviet Union and its allies turned the time-honored guerrilla warfare into a much improved technology of rebellion which we call robust insurgency. Understanding the transformation of guerrilla warfare into robust insurgency and tracing its implications calls for a discussion of technologies of rebellion in civil war.

When most people in the United States speak of “civil war,” they automatically think of the American Civil War. This brings up images of well organized, uniformed armies marching in ordered fashion while artillery shells explode around them. These images are likely to be very different from those recalled by Vietnam, Iraq, or Afghanistan veterans, who are likely to evoke an invisible foe avoiding direct contact while constantly ambushing them or poker-faced civilians with inscrutable loyalties. In fact, these veterans are likely to refer to “insurgencies” rather than civil wars. At the same time, many journalists, development workers, and humanitarian volunteers working in Africa today will probably

point to an altogether different experience of civil conflict, one populated by greedy militias preying on a defenseless civilian population in a context characterized by collapsed or predatory states.

These three vignettes are not mutually exclusive; rather, they suggest that the phenomenon we describe as civil war conceals considerable heterogeneity. Yet, most crossnational studies approach civil war as a homogeneous phenomenon, at least in the post-1945 period. This assumption has been challenged by recent research that disaggregates civil wars, primarily around the dimension of ethnicity (Wimmer, Cederman, and Min 2009; Sambanis 2001; Fearon 2004).<sup>7</sup> Indeed, despite its rich contribution to the study of war (e.g. Bellamy 1990), the analysis of warfare has been surprisingly absent from the civil wars literature.

We conceptualize the technology of rebellion as the joint military capacity of states and rebels engaged in armed conflict. Drawing on a typology by Kalyvas (2005), we distinguish between three technologies of rebellion in civil war, based on two dimensions at the outset of a civil war:<sup>8</sup> the military capacity of states and that of rebels (Table 1). Conventional civil war takes place when the military capacity of states and rebels is matched at a high level; irregular civil war emerges when the military capacity of the rebels is low vis-à-vis the state; symmetric non-conventional war is observed when the capacity of states and rebels is matched at a low level. The fourth cell, where the capacity of the rebels outstrips the state's, effectively describes successful military coups rather than civil wars.

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<sup>7</sup>Sambanis (2001) distinguishes between ethnic and non-ethnic wars; Wimmer, Cederman, and Min (2009) point to three types of ethnic war based on distinct causal mechanisms: a high degree of political exclusion along ethnic lines; competition between ethnic elites in power; and the level of state cohesion; and Fearon (2004) distinguishes five types of civil wars based on duration: three types of brief civil wars (those arising from military coups and popular uprisings, anticolonial wars, and those emerging from the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia) and one type of long civil war (peripheral insurgencies relying on guerrilla warfare, made of two subtypes, “sons of the soil wars,” and conflicts driven by natural resources).

<sup>8</sup> By “outset,” we refer to the point when a civil conflict has reached 1,000 battle-death fatalities per year, a threshold that places it into standard civil war datasets. This implies that by that point a civil conflict has already become a major armed conflict.

**Table 1. Technologies of Rebellion in Civil War**

		Military capacity of the state	
		High	Low
Military capacity of the rebels	High	Conventional	N/A [Successful military coup]
	Low	Irregular	Symmetric non-conventional

Irregular or guerrilla warfare is an expression of relative asymmetry between states and rebels: while rebels have the military capacity to challenge the state, they lack the capacity to confront it in a direct and frontal way.<sup>9</sup> Put otherwise, states have the capacity to mount a devastating response to a direct armed challenge such that the rebels’ only option is to fight asymmetrically. The resulting civil war is characterized by an irregular technology of rebellion, also described as “insurgency.”<sup>10</sup> It is a technology of military conflict characterized by small, lightly armed bands practicing guerrilla warfare from rural base areas (Fearon and Laitin 2003:75). Examples include civil wars in El Salvador (1979-1992), Peru (1980-1996), and Nepal (1996-2006). In those wars, rebels “hover just below the military horizon,” hiding and relying on harassment and surprise, stealth, and raid (Simons 1999), but are frequently able to achieve territorial control in the state’s periphery. The CIA estimated that less than one percent of nearly two million US and allied small unit operations conducted in Vietnam in 1966-68, resulted in contact with the insurgents (Ellsberg 2002:240), while an American officer said “that he had spent the entire year in Vietnam and never seen a single live Vietcong” (Herrington 1997:xv).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Total asymmetry is reflected in the absence (or immediate suppression) of an armed challenge.

<sup>10</sup> There is a close relationship between irregular war and civil war (Kalyvas 2006; Valentino, Huth, and Balch-Lindsay 2004). Irregular warfare is seldom used in interstate wars which are usually fought conventionally (Harkavy and Neuman 2001:18-9).

<sup>11</sup> A US captain who fought in Iraq during the invasion of that country and later during the insurgency, describes the difference between his two deployments in the field in a way that captures the distinction between conventional and irregular technologies: “The difference between the two deployments involved primarily the positioning of the enemy relative to ourselves. In the ground war, we had definitive lines of

When rebels are able to directly and frontally match states that deploy heavy weaponry such as field artillery and armor, we refer to a conventional technology of rebellion. In conventional wars, military confrontation is direct either across well-defined frontlines or in the clash of armed columns; clashes often take the form of set battles. Classic cases include the American Civil War (1861-1865) and the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). More recent examples include the conflict of Biafra in Nigeria (1967-1970), of Abkhazia in Georgia (1992-1994), of Nagorno Karabach in Azerbaijan (1991-1994), and of Croatia and Bosnia in ex-Yugoslavia (1992-1995). These conflicts saw the deployment of artillery and tanks in a landscape often characterized by trenches. The battle of Cuito Cuanavale, which took place in Angola in September 1987 between the pro-Soviet MPLA government and South African backed UNITA rebels, entailed clashes between heavily armored columns and is said to have been the largest conventional land battle in Africa since the Second World War (Chester 1992). Though not a necessary feature, conventional wars frequently entail uniformed armies operating with discipline. The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which won the war in Rwanda in 1994, was renowned for its discipline (Block 1994). In Bosnia “virtually all of the fighting was done by professionally led, relatively well-organized citizen armies, and the contrary view is largely the product of mirror-imaging by Western officers who regularly disparaged the appearance, discipline, and professionalism of the armies involved. The myth of the so-called “paramilitaries” has persisted, although few, if any, major independent paramilitary units operated after 1992 (United States, Central Intelligence Agency 2002 xii-xv).

Lastly, some conflicts do not fit well into the irregular war/conventional war dichotomy. They diverge from irregular wars in that they seem to lack the asymmetry between state and rebels characterizing these conflicts. When states are unable (or, in a few cases, unwilling) to credibly and systematically deploy heavy weaponry and armor against equally ill-equipped insurgents, the two sides are matched at a low level of military capacity. This mutual weakness produces a type of warfare often described as “pre-modern” (Earle 1997:108) or “primitive” (Mueller 2004), lending itself to comparisons with pre-modern conflicts such as the Thirty Years’ War (Münkler 2005:2). The civil wars in Somalia (1991-ongoing) or the Central African Republic (1996-1997) are examples of a technology of rebellion

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battle. Saddam Fedayeen elements did make things tricky, as they were running around in pick-up trucks and taxis wearing civilian clothes, but we still knew generally the enemy’s territory versus our own. Returning in 2004 with the insurgency in full swing, while driving around Mosul, we never were sure when and where we might be attacked. Some neighborhoods were definitively safer than others, but there was no enemy zone versus friendly zone as mentioned earlier. Except for the U.S. bases, where mortar attacks were frequent but largely harmless, there was no place where one might feel completely safe” (Berschinski et al. 2007:136).

that we call “symmetric non-conventional” (SNC), one that is often mistakenly described as guerrilla war. SNC civil wars tend to arise in contexts characterized by very weak or collapsed states. Consider the example of the civil war in Congo-Brazzaville (1993-1997). The elections that followed the collapse of the single-party, Soviet-type regime produced inconclusive and contested results. The military effectively collapsed in 1992 and party militias (bearing names such as Ninjas, Cobras, or Zoulous) emerged to control different areas of the capital city clearly delineated by checkpoints or *bouchons*. Even the president of the country relied on his own militias alongside the remnants of the old state army. By 1997, the armed actors involved in this conflict included the remnants of the old military, a new but very weak, military, several militias with unclear chains of command, foreign mercenaries, the remnants of Mobutu’s presidential guard from neighboring Zaire, and units of the Rwandan *Interhamwe* and the Angolan military. The fighting was primarily low-tech entailing the use of small arms; the various militias exercised limited state-building and made little effort to indoctrinate the population or mobilize it (Yengo 2006).<sup>12</sup>

#### **4. Cold War and Civil Wars: the Emergence of Robust Insurgency**

Although guerrilla war is arguably as old as human history, robust insurgency is intertwined with the Cold War. The term “guerrilla” (small war) emerged during the native resistance to the Napoleonic armies who invaded Spain in 1807, and was later analyzed by Clausewitz in his famous treatise *On War*. Most of what is described as guerrilla warfare in the pre-Second World War period consists of indigenous resistance against colonial encroachment, which often took the form of a frontal clash between vastly unequal armies, thus leading to a high propensity of (crushing) victory for the stronger actor (Lyll and Wilson 2009; Arreguin-Toft 2005).

In contrast, what became known as “people’s war” or revolutionary guerrilla warfare first 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 (Leites and Wolf 1970), a fact fully recognized by the (then) emerging “discipline” of counterinsurgency (Trinquier 1964; Galula 1964). As Beckett (2001:viii) explains, traditional guerrilla warfare was generally understood as a purely military form of fighting using

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<sup>12</sup> It is possible to reduce this threefold distinction into a dichotomy between asymmetric and symmetric civil war, with the latter category containing both conventional and SNC wars. Nevertheless, we believe that the two categories of conventional and SNC war capture real and important differences. As we explain, whether the distinction is dichotomous or threefold does not affect our results.

classic tactics of ‘hit and run’ and employed by indigenous groups where a conventional army either had been defeated or had never existed. Rarely, he argues, did its primarily unsophisticated practitioners display any wider comprehension of the potential of irregular models of conflict in the way that became commonplace after 1945, when guerrilla warfare became “revolutionary” and was “termed insurgency.” In fact, this period coincides with a remarkable reversal in the outcomes of irregular wars: whereas roughly before the Second World War, states, “strong actors” and “great powers” routinely defeated irregular armies, this pattern reversed itself following the Second World War, with insurgents increasingly more likely to force a “draw” or defeat their stronger foes (Lyll and Wilson 2009; Arreguin-Toft 2005). We argue that robust insurgency is linked to the Cold War via three reinforcing components: material support, beliefs, and organizational doctrine.

First, whereas traditional guerrilla warfare depended on the mobilization of local resources with the occasional support of a neighboring state, robust insurgency benefited from extensive and multifaceted superpower support. It is well known that a central aim of Soviet foreign policy was to train and motivate, directly or through surrogates, budding insurgents throughout the developing world (Westad 2005; Mott 2001). The Soviet Union provided weapons and training to leftist insurgencies immediately following the start of the Cold War (the initial beneficiaries included the Chinese and Greek Communists) and turned the Third World into a foreign policy priority from the early 1950s on (Kanet 2006:334). Once China turned communist, it entered the fray as well, while various surrogates (most notably Cuba, Libya, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization) played an important role in both training and support.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, material assistance exploded after the mid-fifties (Mott 2001).

Nevertheless, the concept of “proxy wars” is a poor description of Soviet policy, as it only stresses the mechanical infusion of material resources into rebel movements; often, it even implies a purely instrumental relationship between opportunistic rebels who pretended to believe in socialism in order to receive Soviet weapons. Although opportunism was certainly present, it did not exhaust the range of motivations; and although material support typically included weapons, it extended to multiple forms of assistance, training, and in many cases the provision of on-the-ground advisers.<sup>14</sup> Most

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<sup>13</sup> For example, the civil war in South Yemen entailed the participation of “Cubans, Syrians, PLO units, and some personnel from Eastern Europe.” (Kirkpatrick 1989:8).

<sup>14</sup> “For the Soviet Union, supplying arms is not necessarily the best tool for aiding and controlling an NLM [National Liberation Movement]. The most effective policy consists of political training and indoctrination. The Soviet Union therefore concentrates on educating the leaders of NLMs how to take power and hold it by means of Leninist tactics. It instructs and trains them outside their country so that Soviet officers are not involved in political scandals. Between 1965 and 1972, members of the MPLA,

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.<sup>15</sup> The centrality of social movements helps differentiate 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.<sup>16</sup>

Beliefs constitute the second critical component of robust insurgency.<sup>17</sup> After all, the Cold War was also an ideological competition on a global level (Stein and Lobell 1997:109) whose cognitive frames and ideologies “aroused passionate ideological commitments among combatants, both domestically and internationally (Hironaka 2005:123). The power of beliefs was well understood by counterinsurgents (Kirkpatrick 1989:7; Olson 1989:19) and is worth stressing, as recent research has tended to systematically “recode” Che Guevaras into Charles Taylors.<sup>18</sup>

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ANC, and SWAPO, among others, trained in the Soviet Union. These leaders included Sam Nujoma of SWAPO and Oliver Tambo of the ANC” (Dzhirkvelov 1989:271).

<sup>15</sup> The University’s first vice-rector and a number of its staff were KGB officers whose objective was to recruit revolutionaries from the student body (Andrew and Mitrokhin 2005:432). The Higher Party School for foreigners also played a key role in educating radical leaders from around the world, in programs ranging two years to two months (Dzhirkvelov 1989:271).

<sup>16</sup> This is a point stressed by Carl Schmitt (2007:30) who distinguishes between two ideal types of irregular fighters: the traditional “defensive-autochthonous defenders of home” and the “aggressive international revolutionary activist.” Modern revolutionary guerrilla war, he argues, reached its fullest expression when it connected these two (Schmitt 2007:30).

<sup>17</sup> We are referring to the beliefs of rebel leaders, cadres, and activists. Rank-and-file fighters and sympathizers were typically motivated by a variety of heterogeneous concerns, of which ideology may have been among the least important (Kalyvas 2006). Also, while some rebel entrepreneurs were keen to disguise narrow or opportunistic goals under the cloak of socialist revolution in order to gain access to external support, many were genuinely inspired and empowered by these beliefs. This was the case with several “national liberation” movements which blended nationalism with both Marxist ideology and revolutionary guerrilla principles—such as the Eritrean EPLF (Eritrean Popular Liberation Front) and the Kurdish PKK (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan or Kurdistan Workers’ Party).

<sup>18</sup> Hirshleifer (2001) and Collier (2007), among others, have stressed the predatory character of civil war and have castigated their description as an enterprise that could possibly be motivated by justice-seeking.

Beliefs mattered in three ways. First, as ideas: the perception that a credible counter-hegemonic model of political and social organization was available and could be attained captured the imagination of millions. The specific ideas, as well the labels used, varied but usually included concepts such as national liberation, decolonization, developmentalism, “third-worldism,” and Marxism. Second, beliefs were important as a source of motivation: they mobilized the energy of many “first movers” who were willing to invest tremendous effort, significant risk, and enormous deprivation for the cause of revolution. Lastly, beliefs mattered as perceptions about the feasibility of radical change via armed struggle: subordinate or weak actors could successfully take on stronger actors if they learned exactly how to deploy the technology of robust insurgency. Radical change became a matter of training which, in turn, required the right doctrine.

The last component of robust insurgency was organizational doctrine. The equation of revolutionary theory with the organizational principles of irregular war was an important innovation whose global breakthrough came with the Cuban Revolution “which put the guerrilla strategy on the world’s front pages” (Hobsbawm 1996:438). Writing in 1973, Wolin (1973:354) remarked how “the military mode of thinking has all but supplanted the political mode in revolutionary circles. Whenever one turns... one finds sophisticated discussions of tactic, firepower, guerrilla warfare, and combat techniques.” The writings of Mao Zedong, Che Guevara, Régis Debray, and Amilcar Cabral, among others, were widely disseminated and read by thousands of activists and sympathizers in the developing world, especially among the educated urban youth. They all pointed to the possibility of global, radical political change that would begin in the periphery and take the form of a revolution waged via guerrilla warfare.<sup>19</sup> The examples of China, Cuba, and Vietnam suggested that, despite occasional setbacks,

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Ironically, and a testament to the power of radical beliefs during the 1960s, is the fact that Collier himself was tempted by the revolutionary winds of his youth—however briefly. “I was a student at Oxford in 1968,” he recounts (2007:ix); “I remember joining something called the Oxford Revolutionary Socialist Students, a name now beyond parody. But it all seemed simple then.”

<sup>19</sup> Around these principles grew a rich global discussion about the best way to organize, fight, and win. Proponents of Che Guevara’s *foco* theory emphasized the voluntaristic action of a party vanguard that would catalyze popular discontent through highly visible actions from the periphery; supporters of Carlos Marighela’s theories argued in favor of urban guerrilla that would strike directly at the center; the readers of Võ Nguyên Giáp pointed to the long term process of building a proficient insurgent military force; and so on. It would be, perhaps, only a slight exaggeration to say that the organizational principles of revolutionary guerrilla warfare achieved in their temporal context a functional equivalence with that of present-day corporate management principles: they were a thriving intellectual enterprise on a global

guerrilla warfare was both a feasible and successful path to political and social change. Leftist guerrilla movements made it a point to invite hundreds of journalists and activists from across the world, thus socializing them in the ways of armed struggle.<sup>20</sup>

Despite its emphasis on action, irregular war was never a simple military tactic, 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 disciplined armed wing. The objective was to acquire and govern territory. On the one hand, organization guaranteed discipline in the absence of which rebels could never hope to withstand, even more defeat, the state’s military superiority. On the other hand, territory constituted a key resource for armed struggle. Effective administration and mass mobilization in liberated areas were essential foundations 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.

In sum, the Cold War combined material support, beliefs, and organizational principles to turn robust insurgency into a credible and effective technology of rebellion. Beliefs were sustained and reproduced by examples of successful irregular wars that were based on these organizational principles; in turn, both the dissemination of beliefs and the implementation of organizational principles required training, assistance, and weapons. Although it was possible for each of these factors to operate alone (some leftist insurgencies were able to emerge and even succeed in the absence of external support, while some rightist insurgencies relied more on external support and less on beliefs), the combination of all three was critical at the aggregate level and explains how rebel capacity was raised decisively during the Cold War.

The United States responded to this challenge by supporting rebels fighting against pro-Soviet regimes; much more common was its support for governments professing anticommunism. US military assistance to friendly regimes boomed and the US invested in the development of a technology of counterinsurgency tailored to match revolutionary guerrilla war (e.g. Leites and Wolf 1970). Military

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scale with its gurus, global best sellers, universities, summer schools (or camps), and practical applications.

<sup>20</sup> One example out of many: as a young man, the leader of the National Resistance Army (NRA) in Uganda Yoweri Museveni, along with several future leaders of this organization, spent time in the liberated zones of Mozambique where he was directly exposed to the philosophy and practice of the guerrilla movement FRELIMO [Frente de Libertação de Moçambique]. This exposure is acknowledged as having shaped his approach to irregular war (Kasfir 2002:2-3).

personnel from many countries were trained in the United States, and the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia became notorious.<sup>21</sup> The end result was also the rise of state capacity during that period.

Because capacity was raised for both states and rebels, the asymmetry characterizing the relation of governments and rebels remained fundamentally in place: states were still military superior to rebels. Our claim, therefore, is that the Cold War turned the “deep weakness” of rebels, which either prevented a rebellion from reaching the stage of civil war or kept it at the low levels of traditional, peripheral warfare, into a “relative weakness:” one that allowed the most skilled rebels to mount effective military challenges against stronger states using robust insurgency—and not infrequently, with success.

## **5. The Impact of the End of the Cold War**

The end of the Cold War put an end to superpower competition, the Soviet Union itself, and the abundant provision of material support to rebel forces across the world. Byman et al. (2001) document a dramatic shift in the sources of insurgent support during the post-Cold War era toward diasporas, refugees, and neighboring states, most of which were as poor as the states facing insurgencies and certainly could not contribute training—a poor substitute for superpower support. Clearly, the end of the Cold War hurt rebels in a decisive way; among them, it hurt disproportionately the revolutionary types. For, the end of the Soviet Union also signaled the collapse of the belief in radical social and political change (Przeworski 1991:100) as well as its possible achievement through revolutionary war. Suddenly, radical activists across the developing world awoke in a world without Marxism. If our analysis is correct, the end of the Cold War should have led to a decline in irregular war.

The end of the Cold War also hurt states. With the Soviet threat gone, the United States lost interest in propping up client states in the developing world and divested itself from many weak states, thus weakening them further (Hale and Kienle 1997:5); things were even worse for Soviet client states

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<sup>21</sup> The Soviet Union helped primarily rebels and the US was behind governments, but in a few cases these roles were reversed. In countries such as Angola, Nicaragua or Afghanistan, the Soviets supported friendly governments (typically victorious former rebels) while the United States worked with rebels—many of whom were former Marxists. By 1989, the United States was contributing over \$50 million in aid to UNITA (nearly 10% of the entire Angolan economy), while in 1986-87 the Soviet Union gave close to \$1 billion in military support to the government, and a total of \$4 billion in the previous decade (Hironaka 2005:24).

(Kanet 2006:343).<sup>22</sup> With superpower support reduced or gone, states had to rely primarily on their own domestic, or residual, capacity. Such capacity was notoriously wanting in Sub-Saharan Africa (Herbst 2004; 2000; Reno 1999; Clapham 1996; Stedman 1996) and had required enormous efforts to prop-up in the first place.<sup>23</sup> States with low residual capacity faced daunting prospects as they became vulnerable to low capacity rebels who could challenge them directly—rather than through the painstaking process of organization, indoctrination, and peripheral state-building required by the technology of robust insurgency. Thus, our analysis suggests that states whose residual capacity was low should experience a higher likelihood of symmetric non-conventional civil war following the end of the Cold War.

Along with these two structural effects, namely the decline in rebel and state capacity, an additional effect of the Cold War was the dissolution of states such as the USSR and Yugoslavia and the division of existing armies into competing factions that could fight against each other conventionally. Hence the expectation of a higher likelihood of conventional civil wars in the post-Cold War era, associated with the formation of new states.

Table 2 illustrates how the three processes activated by end of the Cold War resulted in different outcomes.<sup>24</sup> Consider three capacity thresholds affecting both states and rebels. The first threshold  $\alpha$

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<sup>22</sup> Data from USAID (2009) shows a decrease in total US Military Assistance to third countries since the early 1980s. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute estimates that world military expenditures dropped from \$1.1 trillion in the late 1980s to \$740 billion in 1997. There was also a drastic reduction in international arms sales: from 1986 to 1995, they plummeted 55 percent (SIPRI 2008).

<sup>23</sup> The Soviet Union became actively involved in Sub-Saharan Africa which came second after the Middle East in the volume of Soviet Assistance it received; during the 1956-1988 period, it received 23 billion dollars (Mott 2001:52). In 1974 there were approximately 3,600 Soviet advisers only in Somalia (Andrew and Mitrokhin 2005:449). Such aid may have been militarily effective in the short term but did not strengthen weak states in the long term. In fact, Clapham (1996) argues the opposite for African states. An exasperated KGB agent reported how he found DISA, the Angolan version of the KGB, to be in “primitive” condition: “One could sense poverty and scarcity everywhere, even in the external appearance of senior heads. The level of education of the leaders, too, was then extremely low. ... After the ceremonial introductions, I began, at the request of the Minister, to outline some of our assessments of current problems of the international situation. I had barely spoken two words before the leading personnel of the ministry began to sink into a sweet sleep” (in Andrew and Mitrokhin 2005:467).

<sup>24</sup> We are grateful to Referee 1 for his/her suggestions in that respect.

defines the level beyond which civil peace is robust: call it the robust peace threshold ( $A$ ).<sup>25</sup> The Cold War made no difference for this countries. The second threshold  $\beta$  defines the level above which either states or rebels are able to field a conventional army with heavy artillery and armor: call it the conventional capacity threshold. Lastly, threshold  $\gamma$  defines the level below which rebels cannot mount a challenge against an organized state: call it the rebel capacity threshold.

As discussed above, we argue that the Cold War lifted rebel capacity above  $\gamma$  in some states, thus increasing the probability of irregular war (B). In contrast, the end of the Cold War and the decline of robust insurgency pushed many potential rebels below the rebel capacity threshold  $\gamma$ , thus reducing the number of states that would have been vulnerable to irregular war (C). Note that irregular civil war erupts in B rather than C even though the level of state capacity remains the same for both: this variation is driven exclusively by rebel capacity. At the same time, the end of the Cold War caused a collapse of state capacity below  $\gamma$  in states whose residual capacity was low. In those states, rebels with low capacity such that it would have prevented a credible challenge beforehand, now became able to take on these weakened states by means of a symmetric non-conventional war (D). Lastly, the emergence of new states following the end of the Cold War allowed rebels to rise to the level of conventional organization above  $\alpha$  and face off state forces on a level field by means of a conventional war (E).

**Table 2. Cold War and Technologies of Rebellion**

	<b>A</b> Robust Peace	<b>B</b> Irregular War	<b>C</b> Peace	<b>D</b> SNC	<b>E</b> Conventional War
State					
$\alpha$					↓
$\beta$		State ↑	State		State & Rebels ↑
$\gamma$		Rebels ↑			
			Rebels ↓	State & Rebels ↓	

-----> Cold War effect

<sup>25</sup> If state capacity is operationalized with GDP per capita, this threshold would take the value of \$6,243 per capita income: no country in our sample above this level experiences a civil war no matter what technology of rebellion is available.

—————→ Post Cold War effect

To summarize: according our analysis, civil peace and civil war can be function of state capacity alone (A, D), of rebel capacity alone (B, C), or of both state and rebel capacity (E). Our analysis produces clear empirical predictions while acknowledging multiple pathways. We incorporate these theoretical insights into crossnational analysis to uncover the hitherto concealed Cold War effect.

## 6. Empirics

Our first task is to ascertain whether there has been a significant shift in the technologies of rebellion following the end of the Cold War. In line with our theoretical conceptualization of technologies of rebellion as military tactics that optimize the ability of rebels to face the state, we proxy these technologies with the type of weaponry used by each of the armed actors during the first two years of the conflict.<sup>26</sup> We code as conventional wars those conflicts where both incumbents and insurgents use heavy weaponry (artillery and armor); as irregular wars, the conflicts were incumbents deploy heavy weaponry but insurgents rely on light weapons; and as symmetric non-conventional (SNC) wars, the conflicts were neither incumbents nor insurgents use heavy weaponry.

We begin with simple, descriptive statistics on the civil wars of the 1944-2004 period (Table 3).<sup>27</sup> Irregular war turns out to be the dominant technology of rebellion, thus justifying the attention it has received so far. Yet, irregular wars accounts for just over half of all civil wars (53.06%): we observe that conventional wars are much more common than generally thought (33.33%) and that SNC wars account for slightly over 13% of the total. When we partition the data in two distinct periods, the Cold War (1944-1990) and the post-Cold War (1991-2004),<sup>28</sup> we find that the end of the Cold War is associated

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<sup>26</sup> The coding protocol is described in detail in the Appendix.

<sup>27</sup> Our dataset includes 147 civil wars between 1944 and 2001. Our focus argument applies to conflicts that have already reached a considerable level of intensity; as a result, we use as templates datasets with a 1,000 battle-deaths threshold rather than those with a much lower threshold (e.g. PRIO-Uppsala). Consistent with current practice, we do not include “coups” as part of the analysis because they do not reach the threshold of civil war. Specifically, our dataset is based on the list of 151 civil wars in Sambanis (2004), to which we have made some modifications. First, we have added 7 cases of civil wars that started after 2001. Second, 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 did not fit into any of the three technologies and that tend to be 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. (We have run our analysis with these 8 cases coded as irregular war with no significant changes in our results.)

<sup>28</sup> We establish 1991 as the cutoff year since it corresponds to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the emergence of several new states. We have estimated the regression models below with different dummies

with an important shift: although irregular war completely dominates the Cold War period (65.35%), it is much less frequent in the 1991-1994 period (26.09%). Conventional war becomes the dominant type after 1990 (47.83%) and SNC wars go up as well, rising to the level of irregular wars (26.09%).<sup>29</sup> The decline of irregular wars following the end of the Cold War is striking (Figure 2), a trend that is robust to normalization (i.e. onsets by year) (Figure 3).

**Table 3. Civil War Onsets by Technologies of Rebellion, and by Periods (1944-2004)**

Technology of Rebellion	Cold War		Post Cold War		All Periods	
	N (1944-1990)	% (1944-1990)	N (1991-2004)	% (1991-2004)	N (1944-2004)	% (1944-2004)
<b>Conventional</b>	27	26.73%	22	47.83%	49	33.33%
<b>Irregular</b>	66	65.35%	12	26.09%	78	53.06%
<b>Symmetric non-conventional</b>	8	7.92%	12	26.09%	20	13.61%
<b>Total</b>	101	100%	46	100%	147	100%

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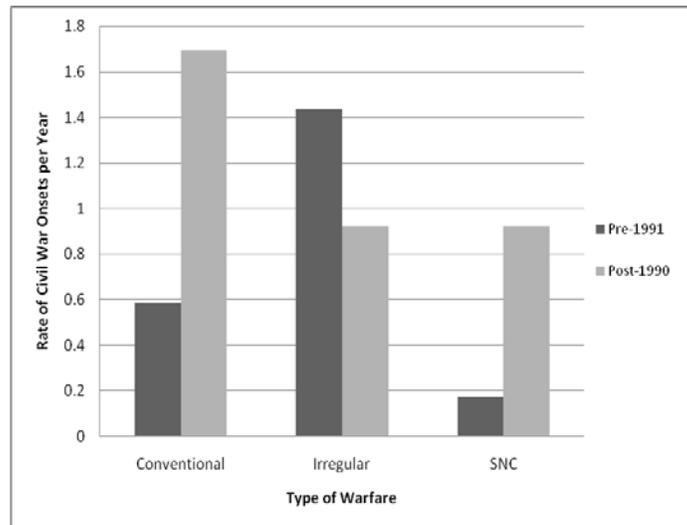
for Cold War (exploring cutoff points from 1985 to 2000) and found that the critical year for conventional and irregular war is 1991, and the critical year for SNC is 1989. (These are the years for which their dummy has the greatest relative effect on the occurrence of these types of wars).

<sup>29</sup> Setting the cutoff year in 1989 does not change the picture. Before 1989, 65.22 % of all civil wars were irregular, 28.26% were conventional and 6.52 % were SNC. After 1989, 32.73% were irregular, 41.82% were conventional and 25.45% were SNC.

**Figure 2. Irregular Civil Wars as a Proportion of All Civil Wars, by Decade**

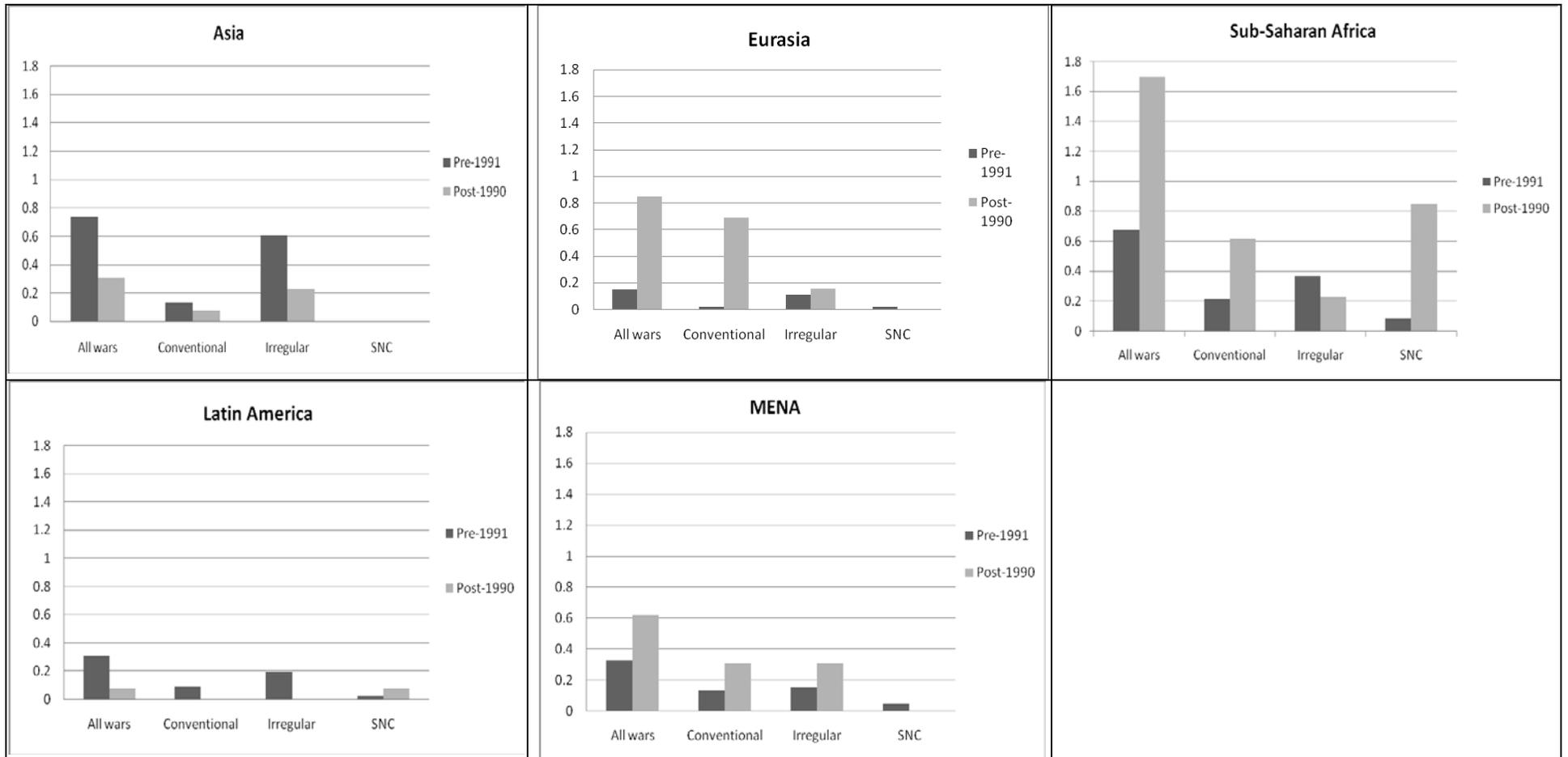


**Figure 3. Normalized Occurrence of Warfare Type, Pre- and Post-1990**



The geographic distribution of these technologies, as well as the post-Cold war trends, roughly reflects the residual capacity of states and the patterns of new state emergence. The normalized pre- and post-Cold War trends for each world region (Figure 4) suggest systematic patterns of geographic variation that are consistent with our theoretical expectations and supported by the case study literature. Overall, with the end of the Cold War, civil wars shifted away from Asia and Latin America and toward Eurasia, Sub-Saharan Africa and, to a lesser degree, the Middle-East and North Africa (MENA).

**Figure 4: Civil War Onsets by World Region, Pre- and Post-1991 (Normalized by Year)**



In both Asia and Latin America, the decline of irregular wars after 1990 is steep. Castañeda (1993) notes that in Latin America the era of armed politics and guerrilla insurgencies ended with the Cold War. The decline in irregular wars echoes the overall decline of civil wars in these regions and can be ascribed to the demise of robust insurgency and the presence of states with the ability to deter low capacity rebels. In contrast, Eurasia experienced a rise of conventional civil wars linked to processes of new state formation, the split of the Soviet military arsenal, and frequent Russian military intervention (Evangelista 1996). Sub-Saharan Africa experienced an increase of conventional civil wars, probably linked with third party intervention, a typical example of which is provided by the role of Rwanda and Angola in the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Prunier 2009). However, the most remarkable trend in that region is the explosion of SNC wars, a trend that corresponds to the abrupt interruption of superpower assistance for low capacity states which made them unable to deter low capacity rebels.<sup>30</sup> Lastly, MENA appears exceptional in that both conventional and irregular wars went up in the post-Cold War period despite a relatively high state capacity in the region. The resilience of irregular war, in particular, could be traced to the emergence of militant Islamism as a transnational revolutionary movement.

Having established the main trends indicating a divergence in the technologies of rebellion used before and after the Cold War, as well as a geographic differentiation that corresponds to our theoretical priors, we analyze the determinants of each of the three technologies of rebellion in a regression framework. We estimate the probability that a specific technology of rebellion is used in a civil war given its onset, by using a multinomial logit model. Specifically, the dependent variable is a categorical variable (*Technology of Rebellion*) that takes the value of 1 for conventional wars, 2 for irregular wars, and lastly, 3 for SNC wars. Our main explanatory variable in the model is a dummy differentiating the two periods under consideration (*Post 1990*) which we expect to be positively associated with conventional and SNC civil wars, and negatively associated with irregular civil wars.<sup>31</sup> We also use two additional specifications of the explanatory variable to better capture the underlying mechanism at work: the first is a dummy variable marking new countries issuing from a communist state (*New Post Communist*), which we expect to be positively associated with conventional civil wars –given that processes of state partition in the end of the Cold War tended to leave behind them large military arsenals.<sup>32</sup> The second one is a dummy

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<sup>30</sup> According to Stedman (1996:236), these conflicts are closely connected with the end of the Cold War which “undermined the external sources of support for Africa’s patrimonial regimes and left some with no legs to stand on.”

<sup>31</sup> Post 1990 takes value 1 for all years between 1991 and 2004 (including both these years) and value 0 otherwise.

<sup>32</sup> The corollary here is that these new states result from processes of partition of old states that entail the partition of their armed forces. The list of cases is included in table A4 of the Appendix.

variable indicating whether the main rebel actor in a civil war claimed to be guided by Marxist Leninist principles (*Marxist Insurgency*); these were naturally more common during the Cold War period. This variable should be associated with irregular war given the posited link between a Marxist outlook and robust insurgency. We use these three variables in different models both to avoid collinearity issues,<sup>33</sup> as well as to separately capture the different pathways or mechanisms underlying the relationship between the end of the Cold War and type of technology of rebellion.

Our regression models incorporate an additional set of independent and control variables, some of which are commonly used in the civil war onset literature, allowing us to test a number of competing hypotheses on the determinants of technology of rebellion, as well as to avoid omitted variable bias. First, *GDP per capita*, as a general proxy of state capacity, should be positively associated with conventional and irregular wars, and negatively associated with SNC wars.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, we remain skeptical about the usefulness of this variable. Given the well-known correlation between GDP per capita and civil war onset, our sample contains primarily poor states; in addition, this variable is a problematic proxy for state capacity and, indeed, it has been used primarily as a proxy for development and an indicator of poverty in most civil war studies (Collier et al. 2003; Hegre et al. 2001). Second, *Rough Terrain*, should have a positive effect on irregular war –compared to the other two types– since mountainous terrain favors this technology of warfare (Fearon and Laitin 2003).<sup>35</sup> Third, *Ethnic civil war*, is included to account for potential differences in warfare driven by the presence or absence of an ethnic cleavage, following Kaufmann’s (1996) argument that ethnic civil wars are more likely to be fought conventionally compared to non-ethnic civil wars.<sup>36</sup> Our prior is, however, that ethnic cleavages should not drive the technology of rebellion used. Fourth, *Oil exporter*, should have a positive effect on state capacity and, therefore, increase the likelihood of irregular vis-à-vis the other types of civil wars.<sup>37</sup> Table 4 shows the

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<sup>33</sup> The Pearson’s correlation coefficient between Post 1990 and New Post Communist is 0.44; between Post 1990 and Marxist Insurgency is -0.33; between New Post Communist and Marxist Insurgency is -0.16.

<sup>34</sup> We include Fearon and Laitin’s (2003) lagged measure of GDP (Log of GDP per capita in thousands of 1985 U.S. dollars, in World Bank data), but we also run a set of robustness test with alternative measures: a) constant 2000 U.S. dollars, also from the World Bank (2006); b) current data in current international dollar, from Penn World Table 6.1 (Heston et al. 2002).

<sup>35</sup> We include Fearon and Laitin’s (2003) measure of Rough Terrain, which is the log of estimated % mountainous terrain in a country.

<sup>36</sup> We include it as a dummy variable: 1 if the civil war is ethnic, 0 if not, as coded by Sambanis (2001). He defines ethnic war as that taking place between communities (ethnicities) who are in conflict over the power relationship that exists between those communities and the state. He codes as ethnic civil war “episodes of violent conflict between governments and national, ethnic, religious, or other communal minorities (ethnic challengers) in which the challengers seek major changes in their status... Rioting and warfare between rival communal groups is not coded as ethnic warfare unless it involves conflict over political power or government policy.” (6-7).

<sup>37</sup> We use Fearon and Laitin’s (2003) dummy variable: 1 if the country is an oil exporter, 0 if not.

estimated coefficients for conventional and SNC wars; irregular warfare is the reference category in these multinomial logit regressions.

**Table 4. Multinomial Logit Analyses of Determinants of Type of War (1944-2004)**

	M1	M2	M3
<b>Conventional</b>			
<b>Rough Terrain</b>	0.003 (0.01)	0.003 (0.00)	0.007 (0.01)
<b>Oil Exporter</b>	0.072 (0.58)	0.372 (0.53)	-0.024 (0.58)
<b>Ethnic War</b>	0.199 (0.45)	0.083 (0.43)	-0.443 (0.52)
<b>GDP capita</b>	0.003 (0.16)	-0.109 0.18	0.220 0.16
<b>Post 1990</b>	1.469** (0.49)	-----	-----
<b>New Post Communist</b>	-----	2.769** (1.21)	-----
<b>Marxist Insurgency</b>	-----	-----	-1.843*** (0.68)
<b>Constant</b>	-1.090** (0.45)	-0.705 (0.42)	-0.305 (0.48)
<b>SNC</b>			
<b>Rough Terrain</b>	-0.022 (0.01)	-0.025 (0.02)	-0.023 (0.02)
<b>Oil Exporter</b>	-1.248 (0.82)	-0.883 (0.87)	-1.275 (0.79)
<b>Ethnic War</b>	-0.021 (0.58)	0.006 (0.57)	-0.846 (0.67)
<b>GDP capita</b>	-0.248 (0.26)	-0.077 0.22	0.049 0.22
<b>Post 1990</b>	2.539*** (0.63)	-----	-----
<b>New Post Communist</b>	-----	-32.637*** (1.23)	-----
<b>Marxist Insurgency</b>	-----	-----	-2.856** (1.23)
<b>Constant</b>	-1.207** (0.51)	-0.647 (0.66)	0.243 (0.78)
Observations (N)	137	137	137
chi2	27.285	4230.232	18.978

*Sig \* .1 \*\* .05 \*\*\* .01*  
*Robust Standard Errors in Brackets*

The results in model 1 reveal a strong and significant robust effect of the end of the Cold War (Post 1990) on the technology of rebellion, in the expected direction – indicating that the descriptive patterns we discussed above are robust to a multivariate regression specification.<sup>38</sup> *Ceteris paribus*, the probability that a civil war will be fought conventionally goes from 29.02% (during the Cold War) to 59.6% (after the Cold War); the probability that a civil war will be fought irregularly decreases from 66.09% to 26.01%; and the probability of a war being symmetric but not conventional increase from 4.9% (during the Cold War) to 24.4% (after it).

In model 2, and consistent with our theory, the variable New Post Communist is highly substantive and statistically significant in accounting for the likelihood of conventional wars vis-à-vis irregular civil wars, but it does not have a significant impact on SNC wars. *Ceteris paribus*, the odds of a civil war being fought conventionally are 89.3% if that civil war takes place in a post communist new state; these odds are 58.3% lower (i.e. 31%) if the civil war takes place in any other country. .

In model 3, the variable Marxist Insurgency has a negative effect on both conventional and SNC wars, as expected. *Ceteris paribus*, the odds of a civil war being irregular if the insurgents have a Marxist platform are 85.34%; this is almost twice as high compared to insurgents who lack a Marxist platform (44.27%). This result suggests that the mechanism linking the Cold War with robust insurgency is related with the Marxist outlook of insurgencies.<sup>39</sup>

We also find that GDP per capita, Rough Terrain, Oil Exporter, and Ethnic War are not significant across all three models. Irregular civil wars do not necessarily take place in wealthier or more mountainous countries; oil exporters are no more likely to suffer irregular civil wars, as compared to others; and ethnic civil wars are not fought with a specific technology of rebellion. GDP per capita is, as noted, a problematic variable while the other variables are not crucial in our theoretical framework. More

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<sup>38</sup> If instead of three technologies of rebellion we pooled together the two symmetric types (SNC and conventional), we would again observe that the end of the Cold War has a positive effect on symmetric civil wars. Note, also, that we lose 10 observations due to 10 missing cases for GDP per capita. These missing cases are distributed by as follows: 4 conventional; 5 irregular; 1 SNC. Two of them are in the Cold War period; 8 in the Post Cold War period. We ran the analyses without GDP per capita and the coefficients for the key variables remain consistent with those in Table 4. Without GDP per capita, the following variables become significant for SNC: rough terrain (which takes a negative sign, consistent with our hypothesis), and oil (which also takes a negative sign).

<sup>39</sup> Of course, it can be argued that Marxist agendas were necessary for claiming Soviet assistance. At the same time, as our theoretical discussion points out, the importance of these agendas cannot be reduced to Soviet assistance.

importantly, our results challenge the association of rough terrain with irregular war and ethnic war with conventional war.

To check for robustness (Table 5), we include two additional variables in the models displayed in table 3 above: First, *Military Personnel* (taken from COW 3.02, Singer et al 1972), in thousands, lagged one year), a proxy for the strength of the military of a state, which we would expect to increase the likelihood of conventional and irregular civil wars vis-à-vis SNC wars.<sup>40</sup> Second, *Trade*, a measure of the magnitude of trade flows (imports plus exports) as a percentage of GDP. This is a standard proxy for globalization,<sup>41</sup> which we include in order to test for the competing hypothesis that the change in type of warfare is determined by economic integration, and not by the end of the Cold War.<sup>42</sup>

Table 5. Multinomial Logit with Military Personnel and Trade

	M1	M2	M3
<b>Conventional</b>			
<b>Rough Terrain</b>	0.002 (0.00)	0.003 (0.00)	0.004 (0.01)
<b>Oil Exporter</b>	0.071 (0.76)	0.083 (0.89)	0.057 (0.76)
<b>Ethnic War</b>	0.696 (0.76)	0.494 (0.78)	0.216 (0.87)
<b>GDP capita</b>	-0.344 (0.36)	-0.759 (0.52)	-0.179 (0.39)
<b>Trade</b>	-0.004 (0.02)	0.012 (0.02)	0.006 (0.01)
<b>Military Personnel</b>	-0.001 (0.00)	-0.002 (0.00)	-0.001 (0.00)
<b>Post 1990</b>	1.527** (0.74)		

<sup>40</sup> We decided not to include this measure in the main empirical test because the number of missing cases (a total of 18). Also, military personnel is a controversial variable because it could have an endogenous relationship with risk of civil war onset.

<sup>41</sup> Sachs and Warner (1995); Garret (2000); Dutt and Devashish (2002). We use the World Bank (2007) indicator.

<sup>42</sup> Sachs and Warner (1995) show that the share of open economies in the world increased in the early 1990s, especially because of the opening of the post-Communist and developing economies. Garret argues that world trade as a percentage of world's GDP "increased from around one-third of world output in the early 1970s to almost 45 percent in 1995" (Garret 2001:7-8). Thus, it could be argued that the end of the Cold War is in fact capturing the effect of the growing economic integration in the post-Cold War period, e.g. Kaldor's (1999) connects the rise of "new wars" to globalization. That is the case despite there is very weak empirical evidence supporting the idea that globalization (i.e. increased commercial and financial openness of states) has any effect on the likelihood of internal conflict (Hegre et al. 2003; Fearon and Laitin 2003).

<b>New Post Communist</b>		5.262*	
		(3.10)	
<b>Marxist Insurgency</b>			-1.312
			(1.13)
<b>Constant</b>	-1.148	-0.839	-0.788
	(1.05)	(1.18)	(1.15)
<hr/>			
<b>SNC</b>			
<hr/>			
<b>Rough Terrain</b>	-0.046***	-0.034**	-0.031**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
<b>Oil Exporter</b>	0.409	0.694	0.031
	(0.90)	(1.02)	(0.80)
<b>Ethnic War</b>	0.229	-0.572	-1.090
	(0.76)	(0.77)	(0.75)
<b>GDP capita</b>	0.361	-0.673	0.167
	(0.56)	(0.65)	(0.59)
<b>Trade</b>	-0.030*	0.003	-0.004
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
<b>Military Personnel</b>	-0.021**	-0.010*	-0.010**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)
<b>Post 1990</b>	4.019***		
	(1.10)		
<b>New Post Communist</b>		-23.478***	
		(6.32)	
<b>Marxist Insurgency</b>			-36.257***
			(0.78)
<b>Constant</b>	-0.628	0.633	0.936
	(1.07)	(0.92)	(0.85)
<hr/>			
Observations (N)	78	78	78
chi2	34.188	3176.507	5897.789
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<i>Sig * .1 ** .05 *** .01</i>			
<i>Robust Standard Errors in Brackets</i>			
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The results of these regressions indicate that the globalization hypothesis can be rejected: trade has no significant effect on the technology of rebellion (the only exception is the coefficient for SNC wars in model 1, which is significant at the 10% level, suggesting that SNC wars take place in countries that are less connected to global trade). Military Personnel has a significant effect only on SNC wars, supporting the hypothesis that they take place against states with lower military capacity. The non significance of this variable for conventional civil wars is consistent with our conjecture that, like irregular wars, conventional ones take involve states with greater military capacity.

The inclusion of these two variables in the regression makes the variable Marxist Insurgency no longer statistically significant in explaining conventional civil wars (Model 3). This result is likely driven by the unavailability of data on military personnel for 44% of the cases coded as having Marxist insurgencies. The remaining variables in the models take similar values and signs as in Table 4. The only divergence is that the variable rough terrain is now statistically significant for SNC wars. Assuming that

rough terrain favors rebels taking on stronger states, the negative sign here is consistent with our understanding of SNC wars as taking place in weak states. In short, the results of the models in Table 5 indicate that the effect the three variables measuring the end of the Cold War is not driven by an effect of a change in the degree of trade openness of states, contemporary to this change in the international system. Also, they indicate that, as hypothesized, the military capacity of states is a crucial variable explaining technology of rebellion, and this is independent of the time period under consideration.

Overall, our empirical analysis supports our theoretical arguments. The main descriptive trends suggest that 1990 was a key turning point for civil wars: it is then that the dominant technology of rebellion shifted away from irregular war. In turn, this shift is associated with clear geographical trends.

Our interpretation of these trends stresses the degree to which states were able to withstand the shock of the end of the Cold War by drawing on their own resources. Sub-Saharan African states were clearly the most affected in this respect, as indicated by the rise of SNC wars in that region. We have used three different ways (Post 1990, New Post Communist and Marxist Insurgency) to capture the changes triggered by the end of the Cold War, which we hypothesized had an impact on the way civil wars were fought. The overall significance coefficients of these three variables in the multinomial logit regressions indicate that the pathways by which the end of the Cold War affected warfare are multiple and complementary, as hypothesized. The multivariate regression specification allows us to confirm that the results are robust to the inclusion of control variables, as well as to variables capturing competing mechanisms (i.e. the ethnic war and globalization hypotheses). In a set of additional analyses, we have used panel data and find that our results are also robust to a country/year specification; we also find that our hypotheses account for the type of civil war onset.<sup>43</sup>

In sum, we show that a structural change in the international system is associated with the way in which the civil wars are fought: the end of the Cold War is clearly and strongly associated with a decisive shift in technologies of rebellion.

## **6. Conclusion**

In contrast to current beliefs, we have shown that the end of the Cold War transformed civil wars. The predominance of irregular war was the result of a structural feature of the international system during the Cold War: bipolar competition. Our empirical analysis provides no support for alternative hypotheses and suggests that the causal mechanisms we posit, namely the combination of shifting superpower support for states and rebels and the residual capacity of states are key factors in this transformation. It

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<sup>43</sup> For this analysis, not included here but available upon request, we have used Fearon and Laitin's (2003) dataset as a template. We have inserted our typology of wars in their database, and run a number of estimations which produce consistent results and support the hypothesis that the decline in civil wars after 1990 is driven by a shift in the technology of warfare.

also suggests that robust insurgency is a phenomenon associated with a distinct historical period. Like its revolutionary predecessor in history, the mass urban insurrection modeled after the French Revolution, robust insurgency was historically dependent on an international context characterized by bipolarity and global ideological competition.

Although irregular war is no longer dominant, it has not disappeared. An examination of post-Cold War irregular conflicts suggests that they come in two major types. The first one consists of minor, peripheral wars, akin to what Fearon (2004) describes as “sons of the soil” insurgencies (e.g. Aceh, Thailand, Cabinda in Angola); they do not threaten power at the center and can be contained or resolved without major international repercussions. The second type consists of insurgencies that display a radical Islamist outlook (e.g. Egypt, Algeria, Iraq, Chechnya, Tajikistan, Afghanistan). These cluster in the Middle East and North Africa, the region we found in our analysis to be the most resistant to post-Cold War dynamics. Because of present US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, these insurgencies have justifiably received considerable attention. Like the Marxist movements of the Cold War era, a radical Islamist movement is associated with irregular war in the post-Cold War era. It combines, uniquely so far, a transnational social movement (along with the obligatory training camps), revolutionary beliefs both in the sense of a global counter-hegemonic ideology and the willingness to take up arms in order to implement it, and an organizational doctrine of revolutionary guerrilla warfare, formulated by Abu Mus’ab al-Suri, the Che Guevara of jihad.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, the appeal of radical Islamism, which is limited to Muslim populations, and its lack of an external sponsor matching the Soviet Union, limits to its capacity.

While research on civil wars has recently turned its sight to the international *dimension* of civil wars, including the role of neighborhood contagion (Hegre and Sambanis 2006, Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008), refugees (Salehyan and Gleditsch 2006), and diasporas (Collier and Hoeffler 2004), it has surprisingly neglected the international *system*. By identifying an important and overlooked transformation of civil wars, we are able to reconcile the theoretical link of system polarity and internal conflict with the empirical findings of the recent crossnational literature.

Lastly, our analysis question the central assumption of a major theory of civil war onset, namely the equation of civil war with insurgency (Fearon and Laitin 2003)—implying a corresponding questioning of the interpretation of GDP per capita as an indicator of state capacity. Our findings place

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<sup>44</sup> His magnum opus, *The Global Islamic Resistance Call* has widened the appeal of jihadism to new audiences, “especially among young, well-educated Westernised Muslims who seem to be motivated more by a mixture of leftist radicalism and militant pan-Islamic nationalism than by religiosity” (Lia 2008:27).

natural scope-conditions on existing theories of rebellion that are based primarily on state weakness and redirects the theoretical focus on the role of multidimensional external support (as opposed to mere financing), beliefs, and war doctrines. We suggest that a full understanding of civil war onset requires a clear understanding of the complex relationship between state and rebel capacity. Our analysis also implies that policy makers should be aware of the variation in technologies of rebellion and the transformation of internal conflict after the end of the Cold War, particularly as they plan international mediation, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding.

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