

Emigrants and the Onset of Civil War

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Word Count: 9983

Abstract

We propose that emigrants affect the likelihood of civil war onset in their state of origin by influencing the willingness of individuals to join rebel movements and the probability that the state and rebels will be unable to reach a mutually acceptable bargain to avoid conflict in three ways. First, migrants communicating with actors at home facilitate valid comparisons between the effects of policies in the home state as compared to policies in the host state enacted on a similar group, creating new motivation to join collective challenges against the state. Second, migrants send remittances, providing resources that can be used in collective challenges that are particularly difficult for states to anticipate, making the outbreak of conflict more likely. Finally, migrants publicize information about conditions in their home state while living in the host state, reducing home government uncertainty such that conflict is less likely to occur. We test these hypotheses on an international dataset from 1981-2003 and find support for each of our predicted mechanisms.

A number of studies have focused on how civil conflict leads to refugee movements (Dav-
enport et al., 2003; Moore & Shellman, 2007; Rubin & Moore, 2007), and recently, scholars have
begun to examine the reverse causal arrow, suggesting that refugee flows can impact the like-
lihood of conflict in the host state (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006). Yet refugees make up only
7% of people living outside of their state of origin, with the rest of the world’s migrants usually
moving for economic reasons.¹ Economic migrants can have broad and unique effects on fi-
nancial outcomes in their home state (see, e.g., Leblang, 2010), demonstrating how non-state
actors—individuals even—living as non-citizens abroad can impact outcomes in their native
country. If migrants impact conflict outcomes via their relocation, how might they also affect
the likelihood of civil war in their state of origin?

For civil conflict to occur, two things must happen: (1) individuals overcome personal in-
centives to free-ride and choose to rebel, forming a group that can threaten the state, and (2)
the rebel group and the government fail to reach a mutually acceptable bargain short of war. We
posit three ways by which emigrants can influence the propensity for the mobilization of poten-
tial rebels back home and/or the likelihood of reaching a bargain. First, migrants offer compar-
isons about human rights treatment from abroad that highlight grievances or mistreatment of
like individuals in the state of origin. Migrants have similar characteristics and/or backgrounds
as their relations back home, so those relations can make valid comparisons to the migrants’ ex-
periences and draw conclusions as to their relative mistreatment (Moore & Davis, 1998; Dahan
& Sheffer, 2001). By emphasizing “rights gaps”, migrants exacerbate individuals’ dissatisfac-
tion with the status quo in the home state, increasing their value for the ultimate outcome and

¹214 million people lived outside of their state of origin in 2010 (*International Organization for Migration*
2011:49), and 15.4 million of these were refugees (*Ibid.*: 54).

motivating them to join rebel movements (e.g., Lichbach, 1995). Second, migrants transfer resources to their home state, sending money that kin otherwise lacked and can allocate toward rebellion (Cetinyan, 2002). Remittances also introduce a source of uncertainty, making bargaining with the state more likely to end in conflict. Third, migrants can access international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) abroad to generate awareness and support for the plight of citizens in their home country (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Bercovitch, 2007). International publicity represents a means of bargaining with the home government short of war, making civil conflict less likely to occur.

We assess our theoretical claims using migration data from the World Bank. We find that as a larger proportion of migrants live in states with lower levels of state repression than citizens experience in the home state, the likelihood of civil conflict in the home state increases. We find that increases in remittance inflows lead to an increased likelihood of the onset of civil war in the state of origin. Finally, we find that as more migrants have access to INGOs abroad, civil conflict is less likely to occur in the home state. The estimated results not only lend support to our proposition that migrants have important impacts on civil war onset but also help us to identify more precisely *how* they can have these effects. Migrants impact civil conflict by providing informal connections for information and resource transfers to and from groups at home, through which unique membership characteristics can influence actors' reasons and opportunities to mobilize and rebel.

This study represents a number of contributions. We develop the relationship between migration and civil war, finding new and unexpected effects to suggest that non-state actors can influence the likelihood of civil war in other states. Our theory suggests that informal institutions like diasporas influence domestic politics in their home countries via familiarity, rather

than through power as is common of more formal institutions like non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or inter-governmental organizations (IGOs). We disaggregate the mechanisms by which emigrants can affect civil war back home and assess each of them empirically in a way that allows us to draw conclusions about the causal relationship between emigrants abroad and war at home, as well as to distinguish among the possible causal pathways. Finally, the theory shifts the focus of civil war studies toward identifying informal institutional determinants of conflict that uniquely affect the behavior of state and non-state actors.

Explaining civil war onset

Civil conflict is an interaction between a state government and an organized group of non-state actors that results in a number of battle deaths (usually 25 for *conflict* and 1000 for *war*).² It is a competition for resources between two actors with opposed preferences (cf. Grossman, 1991; Garfinkel & Skaperdas, 2007). Engaging in violent conflict is costly, such that the political outcome of the conflict is worth less after fighting than it would have been under an arrangement without violence. Scholars usually explain civil war onset by highlighting one of two processes, both of which are necessary for conflict to occur. First, there must be a reason for individuals to join a rebel movement, despite the ability to benefit from others' costly efforts without contributing. Second, there must be a reason that a formed group and the state cannot reach a mutually beneficial agreement that avoids costly conflict. A discussion of the scholarly literature on both the collective action problem and the bargaining problem illuminates a general theory of civil conflict onset.

²As defined by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) (Gleditsch et al., 2002; Themnér & Wallensteen, 2013).

Conflict can only occur if a group of non-state actors is willing to work together to challenge the state, but individuals face incentives that discourage their participation. Unlike governments, rebel leaders rarely have a group of people on which they can rely to be ready to engage in conflict. Rebel leaders can coerce individuals into participating with pecuniary incentives or by threatening their lives or well-being (e.g., Beber & Blattman, 2013), but this is costly to the group, requiring organization and enforcement (Beardsley & McQuinn, 2009). More commonly, individuals join the cause in the interest of material incentives, either for private gain (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Ross, 2004; Fearon, 2007) or to alter a dissatisfying status quo (Gurr, 1970; Walter, 2004). Rebellion is more common, for instance, when there is inequality across groups within the state (Sambanis, 2005; Stewart, 2008), such that individuals desire improvements that they believe to be attainable.³ In other words, grievances and discriminatory treatment can be a motivating factor for dissent. Furthermore, experiencing state repression helps bind groups together in the cause of altering the status quo (Young, 2013).

Dissatisfaction with the status quo may incentivize individuals to join a rebel group, but it alone is insufficient for action. Lichbach (1995) argues that circumstances must enable actors to overcome the individual incentives to stay at home, expecting others to bear the costs of rebellion while they reap the non-excludable benefits. The 'rebel's dilemma' can be solved when the cost of rebellion is sufficiently low (perhaps because others bear the burden of resource provision) that the individual will value the change enough to join the movement (*Ibid.*: 38-47).

Having overcome the collective action problem, a non-state group can credibly threaten the state with a challenge, but this still does not necessarily lead to war. Engaging in reciprocated

³There is evidence that groups compare their economic and political positions to other groups in the state (Sambanis, 2005; Stewart, 2008). Groups excluded from the political scene are much more likely to rebel against the state (Cederman et al., 2010), and social inequality across groups predicts civil war onset (Østby, 2008; Østby et al., 2009).

violence costs resources, damages valuable infrastructure, and results in loss of life. The costs of fighting make conflict *ex post* inefficient, creating a range of possible settlements both actors would prefer to war. To explain onset, one must address why this bargaining range is not available to the disputants, and most scholarly explanations for civil war onset reduce to either asymmetric information or commitment problems.⁴

Uncertainty about the limits of the bargaining range coupled with some reason why the information cannot be credibly revealed outside of war can lead a disputant to make demands outside of that range, causing conflict (Blattman & Miguel, 2010: 11-12). Governments seeking to maximize their own benefits would prefer to negotiate bargains only with those groups who can inflict heavy costs on the state in the context of violent conflict, but they do not know which groups have such capacity (Walter, 2004). Rebel groups may not know what resources they have at their disposal themselves, particularly if those resources are decentralized, difficult to obtain, and/or connected to individual households who may or may not participate in the collective action (e.g., Beardsley & McQuinn, 2009). Even if they do know their own strength, rebels (and states, for that matter) have incentives to misrepresent their true capabilities to extract more favorable deals (Walter, 2009). As a consequence of either true uncertainty or deliberate misrepresentation (or both), governments can underestimate a group's resolve and offer insufficient concessions in the bargaining stage, leading to conflict.⁵

To understand the conditions that influence the onset of civil war, we look for explanations that impact whether individuals will overcome the rebels' collective action problem and why

⁴For the canonical application of a bargaining framework to conflict, see Fearon (1995). For excellent summaries of the variety of sources for these problems and their effects on civil war onset, duration, and termination, see Walter (2009) and Blattman & Miguel (2010).

⁵Conflict can also arise if there are reasons a disputant expects the opponent to be unable or unwilling to adhere to the current settlement in the future, shifting incentives so that commitment in the present is not viable (see, e.g., Fearon, 2004; Walter, 2004; Skaperdas, 2008).

a rebel group or government would fight rather than accept a bargain. In the next section, we examine an entity that affects both of these aspects of domestic conflict: migrant networks.

Emigrants and domestic conflict

Migrant networks (sometimes called diasporas) consist of people living outside of the state of their birth who remain connected in some way to the same home state.⁶ Over two hundred million people are living outside of their place of birth, or about one in 33 people in the world.⁷ Emigrants write letters home, communicate with friends and family on the phone and the internet, send money to family members, and stay involved in and informed about the political and economic life of their home state (Sheffer, 2003). Migrants transfer information and resources voluntarily and reciprocally, sending news and money from abroad to friends and family in their state of origin and receiving information about conditions in their homeland. Through these repeated, two-way interactions, migrant groups shape the expectations and incentives of those remaining at home—and thus their behavior.

While other organizations—NGOs, for instance—can also be tied to a particular state of origin and engage in global communication and resource transfers, the *membership* of migrant groups is critical to their influence. Emigrants are tightly connected to their home state by the nature of familial ties and similar cultural backgrounds. A common reason for migration is the hope of economic prosperity abroad to help one's kin back home; family members remain in the state of origin while migrants work abroad and maintain their familial ties. The

⁶Many also consider the descendants of migrants, now citizens of the host countries, to be members of diasporas. For purposes of observability, we focus in this project on migrants who are considered visitors abroad and use data collected by the World Bank.

⁷International Organization for Migration (2011: 49).

tight relationship of ‘familyhood’ (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002: 3) even across national borders makes communication and transfers between groups more common than between international groups without such fundamental connections. Further, emigrants, even if not related by blood, are similar in background, culture, and experience to the groups remaining at home, making the ties between groups stronger, comparisons more valid and reliable, and resources more forthcoming than in other types of transnational organizations. To put a finer point on our argument, the connections between friends and family in the state of origin and emigrants abroad enable information and resource transfers, but these transfers are both more salient and more likely than in networks of less similar members because of the strong ties associated with kinship and familiarity.

We argue that emigrants have an important influence on the likelihood of civil war onset in their state of origin. The familiarity between migrants and individuals in their home state and the connections between them can affect both the likelihood that individuals will join rebel movements and the likelihood that a rebel group will be unable to reach a settlement to avoid war with the government in the state of origin. In this section, we posit three ways by which migrants can affect the likelihood of civil war onset in the home state, namely by highlighting differences in rights protection, transferring resources to enable conflict action, and increasing the amount of information available for bargaining.

Migrants form a type of social network through which information can be shared with members back home and influence those individuals considering collective action against the state. An actor can gather more information from sources in a social network than she could on her own, being otherwise limited by resource constraints. The more sources of information there are, and the more actors interact and communicate with one another, the more information be-

comes available for use in an individual's decision-making, thereby facilitating political activity (McClurg, 2003) such as challenging the government (Lohmann, 1994). Emigrants frequently communicate with friends and family in the home state, sharing information about their experiences abroad. The personal communications include more than mere facts, as would be reported in the media, extending to testimony—'stories told by people whose lives have been affected' (Keck & Sikkink, 1998: 19). In this way, individuals who remain at home are tied to sources of information abroad, allowing them to access more information than would be otherwise available to them about differences in policies and treatment elsewhere.

Information from migrants allows kin to make a more valid comparison of conditions abroad to their own situation than they would with information from, say, a newspaper or NGO report from the host state. Emigrants are very similar to those who remain behind, in most cases sharing a language, religion, ethnicity, experiences, etc. If people in the state of origin learn that others with the same characteristics make more money, receive better rights protection, or participate in governance more than themselves, this new and uniquely valid knowledge can emphasize grievances they may feel or draw attention to new ones. Information about better outcomes for individuals like themselves living elsewhere can make people in the state of origin (increasingly) dissatisfied with the status quo. The more dissatisfied individuals are, the more they can gain by joining groups aiming to challenge the status quo (Gurr, 1970). Thus, information from migrants living in states who experience more rights protections, democratic institutions, higher income, etc., can lead individuals in the state of origin to overcome the collective action problem that might otherwise prevent rebel group formation.⁸

⁸Why don't they leave rather than fight in light of this new information? Most of those family and friends who remain behind do so for a reason, often because of immigration restrictions, the risks of travel and new lives, or resource limitations. If they could leave to join their friends and family, they would. Yet those who remain in the state of origin still have a vested interest in improving their treatment and thus have incentives to fight rather than

Here, we focus on rights gaps, such that communication with emigrants who experience more human rights protections than people living in the state of origin should increase individual citizens' motivation to form or join groups and rebel. People living under a particular status quo may not be dissatisfied with their treatment until they learn that they could be living under more favorable conditions, perhaps ones they did not realize existed (Gurr, 1970). When actors who remain at home learn through normal interactions with emigrants that the rights of similar actors living abroad are better protected, they are likely to conclude the status quo of their own treatment is unsatisfactory, leading them to join rebel causes.

Hypothesis 1. *As a larger proportion of emigrants from a given state of origin live in states with higher rights protections than the state of origin, civil war will be more likely to occur in the state of origin.*

Migrants transfer tangible resources to groups at home that can affect the bargaining aspect of civil conflict and enable political activity that would otherwise not be possible. Resources can include expertise, arms, money, etc. The most prominent resources migrants transfer back home are remittances: emigrants sent more than \$440 billion dollars to their states of origin in 2010 (\$325 billion to developing states), a low estimate as it does not include informal or unreported remittances (International Organization for Migration 2011: 56).

Remittances can make it increasingly possible for individuals to mount a challenge against the government. This inflow of money makes it possible to fund a rebellion when household incomes alone would be insufficient or when income from work would have to be forfeited to participate in an organized challenge. Furthermore, remittances require little investment from recipients, such that the return on their investment is much higher than, for instance, leave.

their incomes from employment (Beardsley & McQuinn, 2009). Migrants have even been known to specifically send resources in support of violent challenges against the home government (Bercovitch, 2007: 26), as has been the case during the Troubles in Ireland or the civil war in Sri Lanka (Angoustures & Pascal, 1996). However, resources need not be targeted toward a rebel effort to be used in that way; the simple influx of additional resources into a group's economy makes it easier to choose to fund a rebellion. These additionally available resources make war-fighting more attractive as compared to bargaining than it otherwise would be.

Remittances as a source of war-fighting resources can create uncertainty for the home government. Though there have been known instances of migrants funding rebel groups directly, most remittances are sent to households. Since the government cannot know which households are likely to contribute to the cause, resources like these that offer a high return on investment can be difficult to anticipate. Further, migrants can send resources to kin via *informal* channels that are particularly difficult to track and thus anticipate. For example, the *hawala* transaction system facilitates transfers of money between migrants abroad and their families at home through a clearing system of credits and debits without physically transferring money. The system operates outside of the purview of government institutions, using reputational mechanisms and the shared values of migrants and individuals in the home state to supplant formal transaction systems (Schaeffer, 2008). Schaeffer (2008: 4) notes that similar methods of remittances are presently in use around the world and are particularly valuable in states like Somalia with weak or corrupt economic institutions. Since these informal channels exist outside of government control, the extent of these transactions is difficult to gauge (Ratha & Shaw, 2007).⁹

⁹We assume that informal transfers correlate with observable ones, though they may be more likely in cases of closed or censoring recipient states. Thus, states where grievances are particularly high may see more informal resource transfers, leading to higher levels of uncertainty on the part of the government.

With more resources available from which to fund a rebellion, if the state cannot accurately know what resources a rebel group has—and the group has incentives to misrepresent that information—the disputants become more likely to engage in civil conflict rather than bargaining. We posit that a group in the state of origin will be more likely to rebel as individuals receive more remittances from emigrants abroad.

Hypothesis 2. *As remittance inflows from abroad increase, the likelihood of civil war onset in the state of origin will increase.*

In contrast to the ways migrants can contribute to an increased likelihood of conflict, migrants can also share knowledge of their home state with outside actors and cultivate a *decrease* in the likelihood of civil war. Emigrants can convey information about conditions in their state of origin to actors in their host state, who can promote the interests of those back home. Leblang (2010) highlights this type of interaction: emigrants provide potential investors with information about markets, workers, and other economic conditions in their home state, increasing the likelihood that economic actors will invest in that state of origin. Such a transfer of information can lead to diplomatic interactions between host and home states as well. For example, a host state may apply political pressure on a home state to remedy grievances, or it may confer international legitimacy on a migrant group's cause by recognizing the plight of citizens in the home state. Keck & Sikkink (1998) named this type of interaction the 'Boomerang Pattern' of international pressure. In this model, groups experiencing grievances in state A can send information to connected groups in state B, who put political pressure on state B to take international action against state A. Though the model describes the transfer of information through transnational advocacy networks consisting of domestic and international NGOs, its implications apply sim-

ilarly to the connections between migrants and groups in their native country.

Emigrants receive information about conditions in their homeland from relations remaining there and use it to promote the interests of the home country while in the host state (e.g., Leblang, 2010; Bercovitch, 2007). Migrant groups are frequently willing to pressure their host governments to impose sanctions or lend diplomatic or military support to their kin in the state of origin, as the Jewish diaspora has on behalf of kin in Israel (Sheffer, 2007), the Armenian diaspora has to influence outcomes in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan (Tölölyan, 2007), and Cuban emigrants have to maintain US pressure on Castro (Grugel & Kippin, 2007). Emigrants lobby their host governments, use transnational or intergovernmental groups to pressure the home government for change, raise media attention to the situation in their home state, and attempt to create or structure the portrayal of the home group in the public eye (Tölölyan, 2007:107-108). Such activity is particularly likely in states where organization and lobbying is easier, such as in democratic societies (Shain, 2002:120) or in states where civil society is active.

Even absent pressure from a host country, the *information* accumulated from migrants living abroad is likely to impact decision-making in the home state. Testimonial accounts shared by emigrants living around the globe can increase what government actors in the home state know about potential rebel groups. Migrants can signal their kinsmen's discontent through political or social outlets available to them in their host countries and direct international attention toward particular grievances. As more migrants share their stories abroad and generate an international interest in homeland problems, actors within the home state learn once-private information that is valuable in the bargaining process. As Walter (2004) notes, civil wars will only occur when individuals are both dissatisfied with the status quo and perceive vio-

lence as the only way to change it. If individuals can find alternative means of addressing their grievances, they will prefer these options and avoid costly conflict. However, if government actors lack knowledge of these grievances and their opponents' interests, conflict may occur despite the existence of peaceful alternatives. The information migrants can provide to civil society and the media while abroad can alleviate this uncertainty. Importantly, because learning this information from media or NGOs or even diplomatic interactions impacts the state's international reputation, the government is likely to see this information as more credible when compared to similar information of dissatisfaction from domestic groups alone.

Emigrants' testimonies abroad serve to mitigate incomplete information problems, thereby increasing the likelihood that a mutually beneficial bargain will be reached among actors in the home state. Of course, this transfer of information can only occur if migrants have a way of spreading the information about circumstances in their state of origin while abroad. We argue that the presence of a vibrant civil society (i.e. international non-governmental organizations or INGOs) in the host state approximates the opportunities migrants will have to spread information to others. We thus posit the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. *As increasing numbers of migrants have access to INGOs in their host states, the likelihood of civil war onset in the state of origin will decrease.*

It is possible that each of these characteristics affecting civil war outcomes are actually the results of emigrant selection processes. If emigrants seek host states with more rights protections or higher INGO membership than their state of origin, then our assumptions that the processes of transfer are similar or equal across host states can bias the likelihood of finding that these effects are taking place. We proceed under the assumption that migrants have some,

but actually quite limited, options when it comes to their choice of host state. The vast majority of migrants are economic migrants, following the possibility of employment and economic gain rather than political concerns (International Organization for Migration 2011). More important than their preferences are the opportunities available to them: migrants frequently have limited resources for travel and relocation, keeping them within a short distance of their state of origin. Most migrants tend to move no farther than a bordering state (Moore & Shellman, 2007) or region (cf. *World Migration Report 2011*: 62). Thus, while some migrants have the resources to choose to move to Switzerland or Finland, have been lucky enough to be from a state already near such a state, and receive visas from such places, most do not.¹⁰

In combination, these ideas suggest that migrants have an important and multi-faceted influence on the likelihood of civil war onset. The likeness within their membership makes information and resource transfers easier and more credible between groups at home and migrants abroad than is possible with other organizations, raising grievances and resources that increase the likelihood of rebellion. Transnational connections can also provide access to alternative means of communicating valuable information that can alleviate information asymmetries for actors within the home state, thereby increasing the chance that a non-violent bargain will be reached. To be clear, we do not mean to suggest that emigrants are necessarily sending specific positive or negative incentives to friends and family that they should or should not rebel against the home state. Emigrants do all of these things—they reveal information about relatively lower repression abroad, they send money that would otherwise not be available in the state of origin, and they spread information about conditions in their home state to actors in their host state.

¹⁰It is reasonable that it is more likely that migrants are selecting host states based on rights practices and the potential to send remittances than based on the INGO membership of the local population, making the former more subject to the concern of selection bias than the latter.

The presence of these effects then increase (or decrease) the underlying propensity of actors in the state of origin to engage in a rebellion. Thus, we suggest that migrants represent an important addition to our understanding of civil conflict, in that they impact both the collective action and bargaining processes that contribute to the likelihood of civil conflict onset.

Empirical analysis

In this section, we analyze the effects of relative levels of repression, remittances, and access to INGOs on the likelihood of civil war onset at the origin state-year level of analysis, using data from 1981 to (at least) 2003 on all states for which data is available, which varies slightly depending on the independent variable of interest—the years and number of states under study for each estimated model are listed in Table 1. We describe our data and empirical assumptions before proceeding to an analysis of the results.

Operationalization

The dependent variable for all of our empirical models is the onset of civil conflict as indicated in the *UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset* (2011). To be considered a civil conflict, cases must involve the use of armed force between at least two parties (one of which is the state government) that results in at least 25 battle-related deaths per year (Gleditsch et al., 2002; Themnér & Wallensteen, 2013). We code *Civil conflict onset* as 1 in the year in which the civil war first reached 25 battle deaths and all other years as 0. Because this indicator is dichotomous, we use a probit likelihood estimator, with the errors clustered by state of origin, for the analyses reported below.

We first argue that emigrants can provide information about the existence of better rights protections abroad than in their state of origin; individuals in the home state use this information to identify new or intensify existing grievances related to their treatment and join rebel movements against the state, making civil war more likely to occur. To test this proposition, we created a variable of *Relative repression*. The World Bank recently released the new Global Bilateral Migration Database (GBMD), which publishes the number of migrants from a given state of origin living in each possible host state around the world in each decade from 1960 to 2000 for 232 states (World Bank, 2011). We paired this data with the Cingranelli & Richards (2010) index of physical integrity rights protection, in that each host state and each state of origin has a rating on the CIRI scale from 0-8, with higher scores indicating better rights protection (or fewer physical integrity violations) for the years 1981 to 2008. We coded a dichotomous indicator equalling 1 if a given host state has a higher rights protections score than the state of origin and 0 otherwise.¹¹ Multiplying this indicator by the proportion of the origin state's total emigrant stock residing in that host state tells us the relative weight the host state's rights practices are likely to have on decision-making by groups back home—the more migrants living in a host state, the more information should be received in the origin state about the relatively better rights protections there.¹² Finally, these proportions are summed across all host states for each state of origin in each year, yielding *the proportion of all migrants from a given home state living in host states with better human rights practices than the home state* from 1981 to 2008.¹³

This represents the amount of information actors in the state of origin are likely to receive that

¹¹41.96% of host state-years have better rights protections than the state of origin in our data.

¹²Though human rights scores vary in both home and host states, we only have bilateral migration data for each decade. We assume the migration data to be slow-moving over time (and indeed it exhibits that property), and so use the 1980 migration data to weight the indicator of better protections in host states as it does (or does not) change in each year from 1980 to 1989 and so forth to 2008.

¹³The construction of this indicator is akin to a spatial weighting system.

many (or few) other states have better (or worse) rights protections than those they experience at home.

We next contend that migrant networks provide resources that groups in the state of origin may use to engage in rebellion, making civil conflict more likely (H2). Data on annual remittance inflows from migrants abroad to their state of origin is available for 213 states from 1970 to 2012 from the [World Bank \(2013\)](#); for consistency across our analyses, all of our estimated models utilize data beginning in 1981. *Remittances* are reported in millions of current US dollars. We expect that an increase in monetary resources available to the population in the home state will increase the likelihood that a group may use those resources to rebel against the state.

Finally, we argue that migrants can provide information to audiences abroad about the grievances and likelihood of rebellion in their home state, making this information public so that the home state will be more likely to reach a bargain with a dissatisfied group. H3 predicts that migrants with greater access to outlets that can spread information internationally—namely, INGOs—will *decrease* the likelihood of civil conflict onset in the home country. To approximate the opportunities that migrants would be able to spread information about grievances and conditions in their state of origin while abroad, we create a weighted indicator of *INGO membership*, which accounts for the possibility that emigrants will be able to access INGOs and publicize conditions of their home state while living in the host state. [Smith & Wiest \(2012\)](#) provide data on the number of human rights INGOs that reported membership in a given state in the *Yearbook of International Organizations* from 1953 to 2003. The data was coded at 2- to 3- year intervals; like [Murdie & Bhasin \(2011\)](#), we use linear interpolation for the intervening years not coded. The greater the number of INGOs that have members in a given state, the more likely it is that diaspora members will have opportunities to speak on behalf of their kin

while residing there. As we do for our indicator for *Relative repression*, we weight the (logged)¹⁴ number of INGOs with citizens in a given host state by the proportion of migrants from a given state of origin living in that host state, collapsing this number to give us an indicator as to how much information there is about the home state's grievances in the international community.¹⁵

Our theory could suggest a dyadic (host-home) data structure, tying each state of origin with almost 200 possible host states for each year. However, we believe the effects of migrants on their home state work in the aggregate. For instance, some migrants from a given state of origin *A* will live in a host state *B* and experience more rights protections than their kin in state *A* do, but other migrants living in a host state *C* may experience more rights violations. To pair the migrant groups from each of these host states with the home state for individual analysis would cloud the fact that the groups in the state of origin receive information about experiences in both *B* and *C*. Indeed, treating each host-home pair as a separate entity is to suggest that information and resource transfers between each can function differently in their impacts on civil war. Instead, we argue that these efforts operate in the aggregate, such that citizens receive information from all host states, weighted by the number of migrants living in different places, and determine what to do with it once received. Thus, we use the origin state-year unit of analysis.

We control for country-specific variables that may affect the relationship between emigrants and civil conflict in the home state. *Former colony* equals 1 if the country was a former colony of a Western power and 0 if not (Hadenius & Teorell, 2005). Moore & Shellman (2007) argue

¹⁴We take the natural log of the number of INGOs with membership in the host state because this data is highly skewed. Importantly, we also believe that lower numbers of INGOs carry a higher conceptual importance in terms of their likely effect of spreading information than additional INGOs to an already large group, so the impact of a log-likelihood function is appropriate for our expectations.

¹⁵This indicator ranges above 1; though the proportion of migrants living in all host states cannot sum above 1, this proportion is weighted by the number of INGOs in each host state, which ranges from 0 to 230.

that former colonies of Western powers are more likely to experience significant emigration, and civil war is also more likely in these states due to the relative youth of political institutions (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). An indicator of *Prior civil war* equals 1 if the state of origin experienced ongoing civil war in any of the previous five years, approximating an increased propensity for relapse (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Fearon, 2005) and emigration. The natural log of *GDP per capita* accounts for the impact of socioeconomic factors on both migration and conflict onset, using data from the World Bank's (2012) World Development Indicators.

Results

Table 1 reports the results of probit estimates for each Hypothesis 1 through 3 (Models 1 through 6), as well as models that include all three of our independent variables of interest in the same estimates (Models 7 and 8). Models 1, 3, 5, and 7 use the value of the independent variable to predict the likelihood of civil war onset in the concurrent year of observation, whereas Models 2, 4, 6, and 8 lag each of the independent variables of interest by two years (discussed below). The relevant number of observations and years of analysis are listed underneath each estimated model. For each variable, the coefficients representing estimated effects on the likelihood of civil war onset are reported above 95% confidence intervals.

[Table 1 About Here]

With Model 1, we want to determine if individuals in the state of origin are more likely to rebel against the state as migrants living abroad experience more rights protection in the aggregate than they experience at home. We estimate the effect of the proportion of migrants living in states with better human rights practices than the home state on the likelihood of civil war

onset in the state of origin.¹⁶ The estimated effect of *Relative rights* on *Civil war onset* is positive and statistically distinguishable from zero effect with 95% confidence, and the substantive effect of a shift from the value of *Relative rights* from the 25th percentile to the 75th percentile leads to a statistically significant increase in the predicted probability of civil war onset from 4% to 12%.¹⁷ As a reference, this is a larger increase in the predicted probability of civil war onset than arise from similar shifts in the values of *Prior civil war* and *GDP per capita*, which scholars agree have consistent and strong effects on the likelihood of civil conflict. This lends empirical support to the proposition that actors considering rebellion can garner information from migrants about the treatment of people very much like them living in other states. Citizens at home compare themselves to their kin and find themselves in a situation of relative deprivation, and their desire for treatment or benefits that people very similar to themselves enjoy elsewhere in turn provides a reason to join rebel groups.

We argue that flows of resources from migrant networks can make conflict more likely; when there are significant inflows of income, there are more resources available to citizens in the aggregate, making the choice to rebel an easier one for those on the fence. We test this premise in Model 3 of Table 1, estimating the effect of remittance inflows on the likelihood of civil war onset in the state of origin. As predicted, we estimate a positive, statistically significant effect of the level of remittances on the likelihood of conflict. As migrants send increasing amounts of money back to their state of origin, the state becomes increasingly likely to experience a civil war. However, moving from the 5th percentile to the 95th percentile of remittances to the state of origin has a largely negligible impact on the likelihood of civil war onset; the predicted prob-

¹⁶We do not control for the state of origin's physical integrity score on its own because it is included in our coding of the key independent variable, making them, by design, highly collinear.

¹⁷Predicted probabilities are estimated using the Clarify program by Tomz et al. (2003), with *Former colony* and *Prior civil war* set at their maximum and *GDPpc* set at the 25th percentile.

ability of conflict increases from 0.087 to 0.121, but the increase is not statistically distinguishable from no real effect. These results lend tentative support to our claim that migrants can lead to civil war at home through the provision of tangible resources, though their predictive ability seems to be significantly lower than the impact of information provided from migrants receiving relatively better treatment in host states.

To assess Hypothesis 3, we estimate the effects of political activism and publicity in the host state on the likelihood of civil war at home. We contend that emigrants can use their connections to INGO members in their host state to spread information about their home state, drawing international attention to political circumstances back home. This publicity provides information to the home state, making bargaining with probable rebels more likely. Using data on the strength of international civil society in host states weighted by the proportion of migrants living there, we estimate the effect of probable emigrant activism on civil war onset (Model 5). As predicted, we find a *negative* effect of international civil society in states hosting migrants on the likelihood of civil war onset in the state of origin. As more migrants reside in states with large numbers of INGOs with members in that state, the migrants' state of origin becomes *less* likely to experience civil war onset. This estimated effect confirms H3, in that increased opportunities to share information about one's home state while abroad may reduce the likelihood of civil war onset in the state of origin. The evidence thus suggests that migrants spread information about not only economic conditions in their home state (e.g., [Leblang, 2010](#)) but also political conditions, and this information can impact civil war outcomes in their state of origin.

We assess the impacts of these different pathways for emigrants to influence civil wars in a single model, reported in Model 7. Our variables of interest, despite being weighted by migrants

living around the world, are not strongly correlated with one another.¹⁸ Even when combined into a single model, all three variables of interest perform as predicted with statistically significant estimates, with *Relative rights* and *Remittances* having a positive impact on the likelihood of civil war onset in the state of origin and *INGO membership* having a negative one.

We expect there should be some lag of time required for information and resources to travel between host and home state (or vice versa) via migrants and thus impact civil war outcomes. It is also likely that the expectation of civil war may lead to increases in emigration, raising issues of potential endogeneity in our estimates of concurrent effects. Lagging the independent variables of interest such that the likelihood of civil war onset is estimated as a function of *prior* numbers of emigrants living abroad helps to alleviate this concern.¹⁹ Nevertheless, we have no *a priori* expectation as to how long the process of information and/or resource transfer should take before influencing the likelihood of onset. In the even-numbered models of Table 1, we report estimates in which each respective independent variable of interest is lagged two years.²⁰ Each of these lagged models yields statistically significant results in the predicted directions, lending further support to our claims that emigrants can influence the likelihood of civil war onset in their state of origin in a variety of ways.

¹⁸None of the correlation statistics cross 0.2.

¹⁹Notably, even if conflict and diaspora size are endogenous, they are only endogenous in the temporally local sense. That is, a large portion of the migrants living in host states would have been determined in the previous years or even decades, and that portion of these measures is exogenous to the conflict, contributing significantly to the estimated effects shown here. Thanks to Nathan Danneman for pointing this out.

²⁰Notably, models using 1-year and 3-year lags yield similarly strong results.

Conclusion

Our theory and attendant findings advance the study of both migrant groups and civil conflict in important ways. Migrants interact with family, friends, and acquaintances remaining at home in ways made possible through advancing technology and the rise of global organizations, requiring new analysis of how they impact individual behavior, group dynamics, and political outcomes (see, e.g., Leblang, 2010). We add to the new understandings of the impacts of migrants by examining the possibility that they can affect the likelihood of civil conflict occurring in their state of origin. We propose that migrant groups offer a solution to both pieces of the civil war puzzle: they impact the willingness of citizens to join rebel movements, and they affect the probability that state and rebel groups will fight rather than bargain non-violently.

Though there have been both scientific and policy-centered studies of how conflict causes migration (see, e.g., Moore & Shellman, 2007; Rubin & Moore, 2007; Davenport et al., 2003), less attention has been paid to how migrants might impact the onset of conflict, particularly in the emigrants' state of origin. Salehyan & Gleditsch (2006) and Salehyan (2007) assess how refugees and other migrants can spread the likelihood of rebellion to host states, arguing that sudden inflows of refugees can destabilize host states and migrant flows can bring rebellious actors with them to the new state. We argue that migrants of all stripes—economic and political—can not only have an impact on their host states but also on their states of origin.

To precisely identify the processes by which emigrants affect civil war in their state of origin, we disaggregate three possible mechanisms of influence and assess each of them empirically in a way that allows us to distinguish among them. Migrants provide information, particularly as a source of comparison for those at home to realize that their situation could improve. We

find that as a larger proportion of emigrants experience better human rights practices than their kin back home, civil war is more likely to occur. This finding extends the premise that relative deprivation prompts individuals to rebel (Gurr, 1970), identifying a specific and reliable source of comparative information.

Evidence suggests that the more resources migrants send home—specifically money—the more likely the state of origin will be to experience war. Remittance transfers, conducted inside or outside of legal channels, are difficult for governments to monitor. Furthermore, it is not always clear whether the recipients of remittances will use them to feed their families or rebel against the state. Thus, remittances create uncertainty for state leaders as to the strength of the rebel movement. This uncertainty can cause state leaders to underestimate a rebel group's capacity and offer unsatisfactory concessions to the group, thus leading to conflict. The identification of emigrants as a likely source of funding for rebellions has primarily been studied in single cases (cf. Angoustures & Pascal, 1996; Beardsley & McQuinn, 2009) rather than using a large-N analysis as we have here.

We further find support for the hypothesis that emigrants can *prevent* civil war at home by circulating information to actors in their host state who are in a position to make noise. By working through non-governmental organizations in the host state to generate publicity for their fellow groups' causes, migrant groups can *reduce* the incentive to rebel as home governments gain information about the credibility of threats. Migrants can use their access to host and international audiences to provide a political voice for disaffected groups in the home state, as well as an option for realizing change other than through violent means.

This study contributes to a growing body of literature on migration for home and host states, as well as to our understanding of civil war onset. We contend that migrant groups have an

important and unique role to play in the possibility of civil conflict by the nature of their connections and likeness to those they left in the state of origin. Because members are often connected by blood, marriage, or cultural ties, they are more likely to interact and share information and resources than members of other types of transnational organizations. The similarity of these individuals makes comparisons more likely and more valid than comparisons with other groups. These groups, then, have an influence on the likelihood of civil conflict that is quite different from that of institutions with a more diverse membership. Migrant networks harness the power of their connections and familiarity to transmit credible and valuable information between members, and in doing so, affect individual and group behavior among members in the homeland in ways that uniquely influence the onset of civil conflict.

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Replication data

The dataset and Stata 11 do-files necessary for replication of the empirical analysis can be found at <http://www.prio.no/jpr/datasets> and <http://faculty.ucmerced.edu/eritter/Ritter/emigrants.html>.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Nicole Baerg, Nathan Danneman, Doug Gibler, Will Moore and members of his Political Violence graduate seminar, Amanda Murdie, Scott Wolford, and the editor and referees for helpful comments and suggestions. The authors' names are listed in alphabetical order.

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Table 1: Analysis of hypotheses 1-3

	(1) Hypothesis 1 2 year lags	(2) Hypothesis 1 2 year lags	(3) Hypothesis 2	(4) Hypothesis 2 2 year lags	(5) Hypothesis 3	(6) Hypothesis 3 2 year lags	(7) Hypotheses 1-3	(8) Hypotheses 1-3 2 year lags
<i>Relative rights</i>	0.773* [0.493,1.053]						0.759* [0.403,1.116]	
<i>Relative rights lagged 2 years</i>		0.351* [0.076,0.627]						0.354* [0.039,0.668]
<i>Remittances</i>			0.0000402* [0.000,0.000]				0.0000961* [0.000,0.000]	
<i>Remittances lagged 2 years</i>				0.0000597* [0.000,0.000]				0.0000957* [0.000,0.000]
<i>INGO membership</i>					-0.149* [-0.267,-0.031]		-0.298* [-0.440,-0.156]	
<i>INGO membership lagged 2 years</i>						-0.132* [-0.239,-0.025]		-0.202* [-0.329,-0.075]
<i>Former colony</i>	-0.287* [-0.484,-0.089]	-0.208 [-0.423,0.008]	-0.192 [-0.435,0.050]	-0.194 [-0.426,0.038]	-0.169 [-0.385,0.046]	-0.241* [-0.463,-0.020]	-0.350* [-0.618,-0.083]	-0.293* [-0.552,-0.034]
<i>Prior civil war</i>	0.525* [0.296,0.755]	0.611* [0.380,0.841]	0.646* [0.407,0.885]	0.576* [0.337,0.814]	0.647* [0.415,0.879]	0.673* [0.442,0.904]	0.489* [0.239,0.740]	0.463* [0.226,0.700]
<i>GDP per capita (ln)</i>	-0.182* [-0.248,-0.115]	-0.181* [-0.245,-0.116]	-0.202* [-0.283,-0.122]	-0.220* [-0.303,-0.137]	-0.162* [-0.220,-0.104]	-0.164* [-0.221,-0.106]	-0.191* [-0.285,-0.097]	-0.190*** [-0.272,-0.108]
Constant	-0.934* [-1.467,-0.402]	-0.789* [-1.316,-0.262]	-0.528 [-1.173,0.117]	-0.361 [-1.010,0.288]	-0.187 [-0.724,0.349]	-0.208 [-0.748,0.332]	0.290 [-0.526,1.106]	0.163 [-0.599,0.924]
N	3887	3560	3280	3164	3661	3728	2250	2252
Years	1981-2008	1983-2008	1981-2008	1983-2008	1981-2003	1983-2003	1981-2003	1983-2003
# of states	174	173	158	158	173	174	150	149
Log likelihood	-545.909	-506.448	-445.381	-439.178	-524.816	-531.445	-318.990	-342.466
χ -squared	117.304	89.919	65.017	62.865	74.664	88.287	88.515	74.018

95% confidence intervals in brackets below estimated coefficients: * $p \leq 0.05$. Dependent variable is *Civil war onset*.