

MASTER'S THESIS REVIEW

Kamil Klosek:

Causes of Civil Wars: The Influence of Natural Resources Extractive Technologies on the Probability of Civil War Outbreak

The study of the impact of natural resources on armed conflicts constitutes an important element in the field of conflict studies in the post-Cold War period. The idea of their influence has been incorporated into competing 'greed' and 'grievance' hypotheses that see a different (but in both cases relevant) role of material sources in fomenting, supporting, as well as ending civil wars and other types of internal armed conflicts. Collier and Hoeffler entered and heavily influenced the academic debate with their own 'feasibility' hypothesis which strongly underlines the link between mere presence of natural resources and armed conflict.

Properly conceived master's thesis should be constructed in an effort to incorporate and build on the existing academic knowledge of a particular phenomenon, with an intention of furthering, enriching or criticizing it. This is exactly what Kamil Klosek does in his study. He concentrated his effort on the specific sub-concepts of the feasibility hypothesis which focus on the 'lootability' of natural resources and the property which indicates how easy or hard it is for the government to prevent the rebels from reaching them ('obstructability'). He merges these two variables into a new one he names 'extractability' which basically determines how easy or difficult it is for the rebels to obtain the given resource, both concerning its physical properties and the social-political context. The new variable is in fact a composite of seven specific variables describing in detail the properties of 'lootability' and 'obstructability'. When statistically tested on the logically and persuasively selected most-likely case of civil wars in Sub-Saharan Africa, the analysis disconfirms any strong link between the mere presence of obtainable natural resources and the onset of an armed conflict.

The author must be commended for his effort at several levels. First of all, through a thorough and neatly conducted literature review, he not only maps in great complexity and detail the debate on the role of natural resources in internal armed conflicts, but also persuasively establishes his specific research niche. That includes not only his newly conceived 'extractability' variable but also the decision to test the hypothesis not on a specific selected resource but on a wide variety thereof. Confirming the findings of previous researchers adds to the persuasiveness of his own model, underlines its contribution to the ongoing debate and casts further doubt on the feasibility hypothesis. The thesis also features a clearly conceived methodological and analytical plan which is then systematically pursued and convincingly presented. Confronting the results of his analysis with relevant sources of academic writing, the author also offers an array of possible directions of further research based on his analytical findings. The thesis also succeeds effortlessly in conforming to the formal requirements.

In conclusion, Kamil Klosek's thesis presents a mature piece of originally conceived, ably conducted and convincingly presented quantitative research that has the added quality of contributing in a relevant manner to the ongoing academic debate. Based on this assessment, I gladly **recommend the thesis for defence** and propose to assess it as **excellent**.



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