Abstract of: Persistent Fighting to Forestall Adverse Shifts in the Distribution of Power.

Three striking features or stylized facts about both interstate and civil war are that (i) there are often periods of persistent fighting, (ii) fighting commonly ends in negotiated settlements as well as militarily decisive outcomes, and (iii) fighting sometimes recurs. We have few if any models that exhibit all of these features along an essentially unique equilibrium path. This paper presents a simple model of state consolidation in which fighting results from an effort to forestall adverse shifts in the distribution of power. The equilibrium path of the model displays these features, and the analysis links the pattern of fighting to the way that the distribution of power shifts during the consolidation process. Fighting occurs when the distribution of power is shifting rapidly and stops when the shift in the distribution of power slows or stops. Fighting resumes if the distribution of power again begins to shift rapidly. The analysis also shows that consolidation can occur without fighting if the process is sufficiently slow.