

Communicating Strength:

Mass Media, Civil War, and the Production of Domestic Soft Power

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ABSTRACT

Scholars of civil conflict have long recognized the importance of state strength in the production of civil peace. However, previous empirical investigations have generally focused on the material dimensions of state power, obscuring the critical role played by the generation of widespread voluntary compliance with state dictates, i.e. the production of *domestic soft power*. In contrast, in this paper I focus on a factor – mass communication technology – that can only enhance state capacity by strengthening the state's ability to broadly and publicly disseminate political messages. I argue that this allows mass communication technologies to dramatically lower the production cost of such normative influence, while at the same time generating powerful economies of scale in the development of political loyalties. As a result, strong mass media systems should be expected to produce substantial barriers to the mobilization of large-scale anti-state violence. Utilizing newly compiled cross-national data on mass media access in the post-World War II period, I show that this second face of state power — domestic soft power — is a crucial component of internal state effectiveness, producing more than a tenfold decrease in a country's likelihood of experiencing the onset of civil war.

Introduction

Few concepts have been more fundamental to the contemporary literature on civil conflict than the role of "state strength" in the production of civil peace (see Hendrix 2010). Indeed, one of the few points of consensus in modern conflict studies is that domestic warfare is more likely to arise in political contexts characterized by "state weakness" (Sobek 2010; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Collier and Hoeffler 2004). This is understandable, as the observation of large-scale violence between state and anti-state forces represents an undeniable sign that a state's legitimacy and control has failed to extend to significant portions of the population living within its boundaries (Tilly 2003; Kalyvas 2006). Insurgency, rebellion, and other forms of civil violence are thus generally characterized as forms of political action that reflect fundamental weaknesses in a state's ability to project influence over its citizenry (Fjelde and De Soysa 2009).

While this work has revealed many of the foundational mechanisms underlying the production of domestic violence and domestic peace, in this paper I will argue that much of the literature on civil conflict has been characterized by an overly narrow approach to the concept of state strength, which has focused almost exclusively on elements of so-called "hard power." In particular, the empirical operationalizations of state strength utilized in the quantitative literature on civil war have generally relied on measures of economic advancement, such as GDP per capita, as proxies for state effectiveness. Different causal interpretations have been attached to such findings, with some authors focusing on the utilization of these material resources as "sticks" to *coerce* compliance, and with others focusing on their utilization as "carrots" to *purchase* compliance. However, within the confines of this debate, an important point has been missed: states do not rely exclusively on carrots and sticks to produce internal peace. They also rely on emotionally charged messages to *induce* voluntary compliance. That is, state capacity is premised – at least in part – on the normative power of *communication*.

In making this argument for the importance of what could be called "domestic soft power," I draw both on theorists of international politics who have critiqued the field's tendency to equate state power with *material* power (Nye 1990; 2004; Wendt 1999), and on theorists of modern nationalism, who have highlighted the crucial role played by mass communication technologies in the production of unified and stable polities (Anderson 1991; Gellner 1983; Deutsch 1953). These authors correctly note that while force and wealth have always been vital tools of state-building, modern states are also built upon a foundation of *symbolic* capacities: technologies which enable leaders to more effectively communicate normative demands for state loyalty and national unity, and thereby to more reliably maintain domestic peace.

Central to this account are mass media infrastructures that allow political elites to broadly and publicly disseminate political messages to their citizenry; messages which consist of images, narratives, and other symbols designed to characterize state authority as beneficial and just, thereby inducing voluntary compliance with state dictates. I argue that mass media technologies dramatically lower the production cost of such normative influence, while at the same time generating powerful economies of scale in the development of political loyalties. As a result, strong mass media systems should be

expected to produce substantial barriers to the mobilization of large-scale anti-state violence.

In other words, I argue that the mechanisms available to states for producing internal peace are not exhausted by the material tools of force and wealth. Utilizing newly compiled cross-national data on mass media access in the post-World War II period, I show that this second face of state power — domestic soft power — is a crucial component of internal state effectiveness, even in the life-or-death context of large-scale civil warfare. Contrary to much of the conventional wisdom in the field, this statistical evidence demonstrates that broad access to mass media resources represents one of the most powerful forces for internal peace and stability yet observed in the modern world, producing more than a tenfold decrease in a country's likelihood of experiencing the onset of civil war. Moreover, through a combination of standard regression analysis, non-parametric tests of predictive accuracy, Bayesian model averaging, and optimized matching estimators, I show that the pacifying effect of media access cannot be attributed to material capacities, economic development, or social modernization, and in fact is one of the most robust relationships yet identified in the quantitative literature on civil conflict. By demonstrating the uniquely powerful effects of a factor which can only enhance a state's strength by increasing its ability to communicate broadly, I seek to provide new evidence for the fundamental importance of *non-material state capacities* in the production of internal peace; evidence, that is, for a form of state influence which arises not through the dissemination of dollars or bullets, but through the dissemination of *symbols*.

Existing Approaches to State Strength

Many have recognized the importance of state capacity in understanding the emergence of armed conflict between states and non-state actors (Benson and Kugler 1998; Buhaug 2006; Buhaug, Gates, and Lujala 2009; Gleditsch 2007; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Fjelde and De Soysa 2009; Hendrix 2010; Lacina 2006; Thies 2010). While the approaches to conceptualizing state strength have varied widely, most treatments in the quantitative literature on civil conflict have tended to rely on measures of economic development (i.e. GDP per capita).¹ Fearon and Laitin (2003) in particular have argued that GDP per capita is negatively related to the probability of civil war onset because it serves as a useful proxy of a state's capacity to project coercive force. States with greater levels of material resources, they argue, can use their military leverage to deter the mobilization of insurgent forces, and to field more effective counter-insurgency campaigns. This focus on coercive force as the locus of state strength is reflective of a central tradition in international relations scholarship, which highlights the use of material resources to achieve an internal monopoly on the deployment of collective violence, suppressing the emergence of domestic security dilemmas by increasing the expected costs of rebellion (Posen 1993; Kaufman 1996; Fearon 2008). It is also reflective of a major strand of work in political sociology, which highlights the

¹ One important exception is the work that has developed around Arbetman and Kugler's (1998) alternative measures of state fiscal capacities. See for instance, Fjelde and De Soysa (2009) and Thies (2010).

importance of coercive instruments of surveillance, deterrence, and outright force in the development of effective state institutions (Herbst 2000; 2004; Tilly 1992; 2003).²

In contrast to this approach, Collier and Hoeffler (2004) have claimed that GDP per capita is actually capturing, not state coercive capacity, but rather economic capacity to compete for the labor of rebel recruits. Their argument thus mirrors the cost-benefit logic above, but reverses its direction: rather than preventing conflict by increasing the *costs* of rebellion, material resources are said to prevent conflict by increasing the *benefits* of the alternatives to rebellion. This focus on the use of material resources to *purchase* internal peace follows in the footsteps of a large body of work in international relations and comparative politics, which emphasizes the provision of goods by the state to gain support from politically relevant communities (Azam 1995; 2001; Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2003; Buhaug 2006; Gandhi and Przeworski 2006). Thus, while some portions of the field have focused on the state's provision of "bads" (i.e. sanctions), and others have focused on the state's provision of "goods" (i.e. inducements), the conceptualizations of state power which have underpinned our cross-national, quantitative analyses have generally been limited to mechanisms rooted in the deployment of *material* capacities.³

While a number of important insights have been gained through these approaches, such attempts to quantify state capacity have also faced two key difficulties. First, the reliance on aggregate measures of economic advancement creates a problem of observational equivalence between the mechanisms proposed in the literature. The negative relationship between GDP per capita and civil conflict could represent state success in coercing compliance just as easily as it could represent state success in purchasing compliance, or any number of alternative mechanisms. Thus, while such measures can tell us that state capacity is important, they cannot tell us *how* state capacity operates. Second, and more fundamentally, I will argue that previous attempts to quantify state capacity have been rooted in an overly narrow conceptualization of the mechanisms of political influence, a conceptualization which assumes that a state's power is equivalent to its *material* power.

Let us define political power quite simply as the capacity to influence the actions of others; that is, the capacity to produce behaviors in others that would not otherwise have been observed (Lukes 1974; 2005; Baldwin 1985). State strength, in the sense intended here, is then simply a state's capacity to influence the behaviors of those living within its territorial boundaries, most basically by preventing their use of violence against the state and against each other (Weber 1948; Waltz 1979). In pursuing this most fundamental of goals, it is quite obvious that one of the most basic tools available to states is the use of material resources to manipulate the expected costs and benefits of particular political actions, especially to raise the costs and lower the benefits of collective violence. However, we would do well to remember the admonition of Barnett and Duvall, that "scholars should be attentive to a range of technologies and mechanisms as they consider how one actor is able to directly control the conditions of behavior of another actor" (2005, 50). In fact, the mechanisms of state power are not exhausted by

² For a trenchant analysis of the dynamics of state coercive repression, see Davenport 2007a; 2007b.

³ An important exception to this trend is recent work by Cederman, Wimmer, and Min (2010) and Wimmer, Cederman, and Min (2009), examining the devastating effects of ethnic exclusion on state stability.

the creation of material costs and material benefits. State influence is exercised, not only through the deployment of force ("sticks") and wealth ("carrots"), but also through the deployment of *symbols*.

It is this fundamental *immateriality* of modern state power which lies at the root of Joseph Nye's (1990; 2004) famous division between "hard power" and "soft power" in the realm of international politics. According to Nye, the co-optive influence of soft power is fundamentally rooted in the generation of "attraction" (Nye 2004, 5); a form of *normative* influence, which is conceptually quite distinct from the application of coercion or payments. Rather than relying on costs and benefits, soft power is derived from an agent's ability to lead others to "develop preferences or define their interests in ways consistent with its own" (Nye 1990, 168). It is, in other words, the capacity to make others "want what you want" (Nye 1990, 167).

This basic distinction between the materiality of "hard power" and the immateriality of "soft power" has a long history in the study of international relations. Indeed, it can be traced at least as far back as E.H. Carr (1964), who argued for a similar distinction between "propaganda power", which is derived from the normative opinions of mass publics, as opposed to "military power" and "economic power", which are derived from the deployment of violent and non-violent sanctions. It is also a close relative of what Steven Lukes (1974; 2005) has called the "third dimension" of power: the ability to secure the compliance of others by shaping their values, preferences, and beliefs. In this sense, Nye's argument is rooted in the constructivist distinction between a "logic of consequences", in which behaviors are chosen according to their expected costs and benefits, and a "logic of appropriateness", in which behaviors are chosen according to their perceived rightfulness and legitimacy (March and Olson 1998).

Although they have utilized different terminologies, each of these thinkers recognized that citizens do not comply with state dictates merely because they fear the consequences of disobedience. They also comply because they believe that disobedience is *wrong*, and believe that many others join them in this feeling. In other words, those living under the auspices of successful states refrain from collective violence because their social roles have been constituted in a symbolic environment which effectively characterizes political violence as normatively unacceptable (Adler and Barnett 1998; Wendt 1999). There is thus enormous political influence to be achieved through the manipulation of normative ideas. As Keohane and Goldstein (1993) argued, to exercise influence over such ideas is to exercise influence over the "road maps" that guide actors towards particular definitions of right and wrong. Influence, in other words, over what *counts* in the normative evaluation of behavior (Keck and Sikkink 1998, Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink 1999).

While these authors discussed the operations of soft power primarily within the context of international affairs, this key point about the dual nature of power can be applied with equal force to the dynamics of internal conflicts between states and non-state actors — dynamics which stand at the very intersection of international and domestic politics. Recall that Max Weber's oft-cited definition of the state referred to the achievement, not of a monopoly on the use of force, but a monopoly on the "legitimate" use of force (1948, 78). Weber recognized that while no state would ever quash all instances of internal violence, successful states could facilitate the production of

collective values that would render physical aggression against state forces unacceptable to large portions of the population, and thus limit the scope of any attempts to fuel the eruption of anti-state violence. Indeed, the domestic operations of political power have long been recognized as possessing a deeply normative character:

"If the members of a political system are deeply attached to a system or its ideals, the likelihood of their participating in either domestic or foreign politics in such a way as to undermine the system is reduced by a large factor" (Easton 1957, 391).

This analysis parallels Krasner's (1999) distinction between mechanisms of "control", those limited forms of influence which can be produced through the application of brute force; and mechanisms of "authority", which achieve greater compliance at lower cost through the generation of "legitimacy." According to this view of state power, legitimacy represents a non-material form of state capacity, which arises when states succeed in inculcating in their citizens a "mutually recognized right" (Krasner 1999, 10) to demand popular compliance with state dictates.⁴ In David Lake's apt terms:

"Legitimacy is the bridge between compulsion and choice, the alchemist's dross through which pure coercion is transformed into rightful rule or authority" (2009, 333).

In other words, Mao was wrong to claim that political power stems exclusively from the "barrel of a gun." Rather, the legitimacy of appeals to state loyalty must be *spoken* into existence, on the basis of images, narratives, and other symbols that at least some portion of the population are willing to accept as valid interpretations of their lived realities. It is through this 'alchemy' that political communication produces, maintains, and transforms prevailing visions of the political regime and the political community. As Rogers Smith argues, such messages

"work essentially as persuasive historical stories that prompt people to embrace the valorized identities, play the stirring roles, and have fulfilling experiences that political leaders strive to evoke for them, whether through arguments, rhetoric, symbols, or 'stories' of a more obvious and familiar sort." (Smith 2003, 44-45)

Indeed, this seems to be the defining feature of soft power, regardless of whether we are concerned with conflict in domestic or international arenas: due precisely to its inherently immaterial character, soft power can only be exercised through mechanisms of *communication*. That is, soft power can only arise when a particular pattern of political communication causes it to be felt.

Herein, then, lies the fundamental difficulty facing researchers who would subject this second face of state power to quantitative empirical scrutiny: because it originates in

⁴ See also Levi (1988; 2006), describing effective state rule as the production of "quasi-voluntary compliance." For a review of the literature surrounding the concept of legitimacy in international relations, see Hurd (1999).

the emotional content of diverse political messages, the operations of domestic soft power are inherently difficult to observe and quantify on a global basis. However, in the following section I argue that such difficulties need not lead us to abandon the pursuit of cross-national research on domestic soft power. Rather, we can study the effects of political ideas by measuring variation in the conditions of their production and dissemination, especially those provided by modern technologies of mass communication. In other words, I will argue that we can move forward effectively, by applying a structural empirical approach to constructivist theoretical concepts.

Mass Communication and the Mass Production of Political Loyalties

The theoretical linkage between technologies of mass communication and the production of state loyalty has a long history in the sociological literature on the development of nationalism in modern Europe. One of the most prominent descriptions of this relationship was given by Deutsch (1953), who famously claimed that boundaries between national communities were defined first and foremost by "relative barriers to communication" (22), which function to heighten the social and political relevance of national cleavages, while lowering the salience of sub-national and extra-national commitments. Deutsch (1953; 1966) correctly recognized that the production of compliance in modern states, even in highly authoritarian settings, relied extensively on the use of communication to produce voluntary attachments (see also Mann 1986). In this way, modern, national states — those which arose over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries — represented a fundamental shift in the "technology of statecraft" through which states secured the loyalties of their those living within their boundaries (Cederman, Warren, Sornette 2011). As Snyder (2000) notes, prior to this period "it hardly mattered that monarchs and subjects often spoke different languages and lacked a common national identity" (46), as states and would-be states competed primarily on the grounds of material resource extraction and physical coercion. However, by the late 18th century, states were coming to rely increasingly on the generation of influence through the mass production of political loyalties; that is, through the production of a widespread willingness to fight and die for an imagined 'nation' (Anderson 1991; Mann 1986).⁵

It is no coincidence that this transition began at precisely the same historical moment that the development of cheap commercial printing technologies and long distance trade routes were fundamentally altering the costs of engaging in mass communication on a truly national scale. Snyder claims that the particular bundle of ideas which came to be labeled "nationalism," rose to ascendance at this moment because such fundamental technological shifts led it to become a newly "valuable commodity in the marketplace of ideas" (2000, 46).⁶ That is, he argues that shifts in technology — especially communication technology — were important, not because they altered ideas directly, but because they altered the structural forces operating on the competitive production and dissemination of ideas by political actors.

⁵ As Gould argues, "When someone responds positively to an appeal for to solidarity, then, he or she has acknowledged membership in the group whose boundaries are defined by the terms of the appeal" (1995, 14).

⁶ Along similar lines, see Price (1995; 2002) describing political competition as a "market for loyalties."

Following in the footsteps of this structural logic, I argue that the introduction and expansion of technologies of mass communication — e.g. television, radio, and newsprint — can be expected to inhibit the mobilization of intra-state warfare by increasing the ease with which collective loyalties can be constituted on a national scale. In other words, I propose that mass media technologies facilitate the maintenance of domestic peace by altering the structural forces operating on the production and dissemination of normative appeals to national unity and state loyalty. More specifically, I claim that mass media technologies enhance the production of normative political influence by states in two key ways: (1) by lowering costs of production, and (2) by strengthening economies of scale. I will examine each in turn.

To fix ideas, suppose that domestic state influence, I , is generated through a two-input production function, which combines efforts devoted to mechanisms of material influence, M , and efforts devoted to mechanisms of normative influence, N :

$$I = M^\alpha N^\beta$$

The Cobb-Douglas functional form captures the assumption that these two technologies of influence are mutually reinforcing, and that neither can be effective if the other is completely absent, while the α and β parameters govern the responsiveness of the influence production function to increases in M and N respectively. In economics, it is generally assumed that most production technologies will be characterized by declining marginal returns, i.e. $\alpha, \beta < 1$, meaning that each additional unit of effort devoted to a particular technology will generate less output than the previous unit. Let us suppose further that the state has some finite level of effort, E , that represents the maximum quantity of resources that it can devote to the production of domestic influence. This implies that the state faces a "budget constraint", of the form:

$$E = c_M M + c_N N$$

where c_M and c_N represent respectively the relative "costs" of each additional unit of "effort" devoted to material and normative technologies of influence.

To see how the generation of influence through domestic soft power would be impacted by the introduction of mass media technologies, consider first the effects of expanding mass media accessibility on the production costs of normative influence, c_N . As was noted above, normative influence necessarily occurs through acts of communication; that is, through repeated instances of exposure to images, narratives, and other symbols that highlight particular dimensions of a situation rather than others, and thereby incline actors to define emotion-laden categories — i.e. "right" versus "wrong" or "us" versus "them" — in ways that are congruent with the interests of the influencer. As rates of mass media receivership increase within a society, the most basic political impact thus concerns the sheer reproducibility of political messages and symbols. In the absence of mass media infrastructure, political leaders and would-be leaders must physically travel to numerous small-scale venues to disseminate their political messages. In contrast, with thousands of flickering screens dotting the hinterland, or thousands of

newspapers dotting city corners, each instance of state authority-making can be instantly and effortlessly reproduced for thousands of citizens in far flung corners of the country (Briggs and Burke 2002). Whatever the nature of such communicative influence, there can be little doubt that it would be increased by greater rates of dissemination. With each new television watcher, radio listener, or newspaper reader that is added to the network, the per-unit cost, c_N , of producing each individual-level instance of normative influence is thus necessarily decreased. In other words, we should expect that *mass media technologies will lower the production costs of domestic soft power*.

Taken alone, this principle may at first glance appear to be a sufficient justification for the expectation that mass media technologies would have domestically pacifying effects. If normative influence can be produced at lower cost, then the quantity of normative influence produced by the state should increase. However, it is important to remember that in arenas characterized by political conflict, this process of normative influence is necessarily rife with competition and rivalry:

"Because no political community is simply natural and all are products of contestation and compromises, the politics of people-making, involving both force and stories, is always an ongoing as well as competitive politics, even within apparently well-established and unified political communities. ... Inside and outside every political community, in rival political parties, in civil associations, in ethnic minorities, and in neighboring regimes, there are always rival would-be leaders" (Smith 2003, 53).

As Smith reminds us, political ideas do not arise of their own volition, nor do they do so in isolation. They are deployed strategically by leaders and would-be leaders, who use images, narratives, and other symbols to encourage recipients to jointly imagine themselves as members of an abstract collective, and thereby convince them of the legitimacy of the joint sacrifices they make on that basis. Given this competitive environment, the aggregate effects of a decrease in the cost of normative influence are less clear than they appear at first glance. In principle, such a decrease in cost could benefit the production of anti-state messages just as much as it benefits the production of pro-state messages. Domestic soft power, in this sense, must be considered a relative rather than an absolute quantity. In a competitive context, we would therefore have no reason to expect that a decrease in c_N would increase the "market share" of the state's production of domestic influence.

Why then, would a strong mass media system aid the state more than its competitors? The answer lies in what could be called the "second-order" effects of mass media technologies. Gellner (1983) explains that the expansion of mass communication infrastructure was central to the development of effective modern states, not simply because it allowed new locations to be reached with state messages, but because the structural arrangement of communication induced by such technologies was crucial to the development of national consciousness:

"it is the media themselves, the pervasiveness and importance of abstract, centralized, standardized, one to many communication, which itself automatically

engenders the core idea of nationalism, quite irrespective of what in particular is being put into the specific messages transmitted" (127).

Anderson (1991) develops this point further, arguing that the "unified fields of exchange and communication" which were first constructed on a national basis in the 17th and 18th centuries, were "the embryo of the nationally imagined community" (44). Congruent with Gellner's structural logic, Anderson claims that the invention of mass printing technology facilitated the production of national loyalties, not simply because of an increased ease of message dissemination, but rather because the daily consumption of normative political messages in printed form represented an "extraordinary mass ceremony," in which "each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others" (1991, 35). In other words, the synchronized and public nature of mass communication technologies allow leaders to convert nationalist images, narratives, and symbols into elements of "common knowledge," which are known by all to have been seen by all (Chwe 2001). Mass communication technologies thus make it possible for a mass audience to be addressed *collectively*, thereby offering the nation "an image of itself ... as a knowable community" (Morley 1995, 66).⁷

Anderson recognized that because the national community is composed of thousands or millions of members whom a given individual will never have the opportunity to meet face-to-face, it is only through the collective nature of such mass rituals that widely dispersed individuals could be brought to congruent notions of their shared identities and values. In other words, as has been shown repeatedly in experimental work in social psychology, we should expect the degree of normative influence experienced upon hearing a political message to be higher when the messages is perceived to have been more widely disseminated (Mutz 2001; Chwe 1998). Indeed, this is precisely why mass media technologies represent such powerful vehicles for normative influence (Zaller 1992). This positive interdependence in the reception of normative appeals implies that the symbolic capacities generated by mass media technologies will be subject to increasing marginal returns, as every additional recipient added to the network increases the medium's potential impactfulness for all other recipients.⁸ That is, we should expect that *mass media technologies will strengthen economies of scale in the production of normative influence*.

In terms of the expressions given above, this means that expanded access to mass media infrastructure will be associated, not only with a reduction in the per-unit cost of normative influence, c_N , but also with an increase in the returns-to-scale of normative influence, such that $\beta > 1$. In other words, mass media technologies make it possible for each additional unit of effort devoted to normative influence to generate *greater* output than the previous unit, to a degree that increases with the density of mass media reception. This means that as mass media access expands within a society, large-scale producers of normative influence (i.e. states) will be increasingly favored in their

⁷ Chayko refers to this as a "community of the mind" (2002, 60-63). Many others have also argued for the nationally unifying effects of mass media technology, including Schlesinger (1991), Calhoun (1991), and Servaes (1997). On this point, see also Meyrowitz (1985, 1997).

⁸ In economic terms, we might say that normative influence through mass media technologies is subject to "positive consumption externalities" (Katz and Shapiro 1985, 424).

competition with small-scale producers (i.e. would-be states).⁹ This second-order strengthening of the technologies of normative influence also implies that strong mass media systems, because they can reach a greater proportion of the population, will generate more powerful incentives for the production of normative appeals that are capable of achieving widespread popular acceptance. Mass media technologies thus function to tilt the normative playing field in favor of broad claims to national unity and state loyalty. As a result, even in a competitive context characterized numerous potential challengers to state authority, states will be increasingly be favored over their competitors in the production of domestic influence.

Taken together, these two principles — decreased costs of production and increased economies of scale — thus imply that basic patterns of political conflict will be strongly conditioned by cross-national variation in the strength of mass media systems. In particular, because mass media systems which reach a greater proportion of the population can be expected to lower production costs and strengthen economies of scale in the generation of normative influence by the state, I argue that we should also expect such systems to facilitate the maintenance of internal peace and stability. By focusing attention on the causal effects of variation in mass communication infrastructure, I seek to show that state power can be enhanced by a factor whose presence is easily measurable and quantifiable, but whose effects could only originate in non-material mechanisms.¹⁰ TV screens cannot transmit bullets, and they cannot transmit dollars; they can only transmit symbols. Mass media technologies thus offer an opportunity cleanly isolate the generation of domestic soft power through voluntary communication.

Moreover, by focusing on civil war as the outcome of interest, I seek to position the analysis in what many would consider a 'difficult' arena for the demonstration of the causal effects of 'mere' communication. In doing so, I seek to show that the effects of domestic soft power are not simply a matter of cultural window dressing, and that patterns of communication exercise enormously powerful effects even in the context of a life-or-death struggle for state existence. Patterns of communication are, in other words, central to patterns of human security. Furthermore, the focus on civil war allows me to side-step what would otherwise be a thorny empirical issue: the problem of identifying what counts as "success" in production of state influence. Because the desire to not be challenged militarily is universal to all states, the outbreak of civil war represents an unambiguous signal that a state lacks the capacity to satisfy even its most basic desires for domestic compliance. It is therefore an ideal empirical indicator of the failure of state power.

The theoretical discussion above implies that states with high levels of mass media access will be more effective producers of normative influence — i.e. domestic soft power — and will therefore be less likely to experience the outbreak of large-scale anti-state violence. Civil warfare should, in other words, be seen as a form of collective action which is structurally facilitated not only by material weakness on the part of the state, but also by *symbolic* weakness. This leads directly to our main hypothesis:

⁹ See Katz and Shapiro (1985) for an analysis of the competitive equilibria that arise in the context of the increasing returns-to-scale of mass media technologies. See Norton and Norton (1986) for empirical evidence that newspaper production is characterized by positive economies of scale. For an analysis of the importance of increasing returns in political competition, see Pierson (2000).

¹⁰ For an incisive analysis of "social" influence processes in civil conflict, see Wood (2003; 2008).

H1: *Ceteris paribus*, states with high levels of media accessibility will be less likely to experience the onset of civil war.

Of course, it will not have escaped the notice of some readers that the perspective advanced here stands at odds with the claims generally found in recent qualitative work on the relationship between mass communication and collective violence. Examinations of hateful and inflammatory mass media messages in Rwanda, Yugoslavia, and elsewhere have repeatedly found that discourses of ethnification fanned the flames of divisive nationalist sentiments that became the rallying cries for all variety of barbarous massacres and the bloody deaths of thousands of civilians (Des Forges 1999; Metzl 1997; Milošević, 1997; Gagnon 1994/95; Thompson 1994; Brass 1997; Tambiah 1997). Such analyses have convinced many that the mass media should be viewed as one of the primary culprits in fomenting inter-group divisions and animosities.¹¹ The problem is that these conclusions have generally rested on questionable evidentiary foundations. Because they have essentially selected their cases on the dependent variable, these studies of the relationship between mass media and mass violence only observe mass communication behavior in those countries which are experiencing the outbreak of large-scale civil conflict. It should hardly be surprising that in the midst of brutal civil wars the mass media have frequently been observed to transmit inflammatory messages. However, this observation does not constitute evidence that mass media systems are generally inclined to the promotion of collective violence, nor does it give us any insight into the factors which allow some countries to avoid the outbreak of such conflict in the first place. In the following section, I will show that expanding our focus to the full universe of cases reveals quite a different picture. In fact, consistent with the theory of domestic soft power presented above, this macro-level evidence demonstrates that mass media technologies represent some of the most powerful forces for domestic peace and stability yet observed in the modern world.

Data & Methods

To subject this conjecture to empirical scrutiny, I compiled data on mass media transmission capabilities in 170 countries for the period 1945-1999. To capture the concept of variability in rates of mass media accessibility across societies, I construct the *Media Density Index* (MDI) on a country-year basis as follows:

$$MDI_{it} = \frac{TV_{it} + Radio_{it} + Newspaper_{it}}{Population_{it}} \times 100$$

¹¹ Important exceptions to this general trend include work by Kern and Hainmueller (2009) showing that spill-over transmissions from West Germany into East Germany tended to bolster approval of the East German regime, Straus' (2007) showing that radio signals in Rwanda were too weak to be a likely cause of the majority of the violence, and Paluck's (2009) field experiments in Rwanda showing that mass media messages can act to reduce intergroup prejudice.

where TV_{it} is equal to the number of television receivers in use for broadcasts to the general public in each country-year, $Radio_{it}$ is equal to the number of radio receivers in use for broadcasts to the general public, $Newspaper_{it}$ is equal to the circulation of daily newspapers (those published at least four times a week), and $Population_{it}$ is equal to the country's total population.¹² These three technologies represent the most powerful vehicles for the mass production of political messages available to states in the post-World War II period (Briggs and Burke 2002; Mughan and Gunther 2000), and thus together serve as the ideal measure of variation in state capacities to produce domestic soft power.

By examining cross-national variation in this quantity on a global basis, it becomes possible to observe the tremendously unrepresentative nature of the cases that have been referenced most frequently in the literature on mass media and mass violence. Figure 1 shows a kernel density plot of the cross-national distribution of the *Media Density Index* as of 1989, shortly before the outbreak of civil war in Yugoslavia. As can clearly be seen, Yugoslavia's value of 40.2 is well below the global average of 61.3 (shown by the dashed line) for this period. Rwanda's value of 6.7 is even lower, placing it amongst the very weakest states in the system. We should therefore not be surprised that these countries were unable to maintain internal peace and stability, and we should also not be surprised that the normative messages which came to dominate under these circumstances trended strongly towards vitriol and division. Indeed, this is precisely the pattern of political communication that the theory articulated above would lead us to expect in contexts characterized by the weakness of mass media technologies.¹³

Such observations clearly demonstrate the need for a global analysis of the relationship between variation in mass media strength and the probability of experiencing large-scale civil conflict. The results reported below are based on logistic regressions, using Huber/White robust standard errors adjusted for clustering by country. The dependent variable, *Civil War Onset*, equals 1 for all country-years in which a civil war started and 0 for all others. Following Sambanis (2004), a civil war is defined as an armed conflict in which state forces are a principal combatant, the parties have publicly stated political objectives, recruits are drawn from the local population, and the fighting causes at least 500 deaths in the first year or 1,000 deaths in the first three years. This yields a list of 138 civil war onsets for the period 1945-1999.

In addition our main independent variable, the *Media Density Index*, several control variables are included in the analysis, all of which have figured prominently in the literature on civil war.¹⁴ *GDP per capita* measures a country's level of economic development and wealth. *Land Area*¹⁵, *Population*, and *%Mountainous* are included as measures of the difficulties faced by governments seeking to control large populations

¹² The data for the MDI, in addition to the data on telephones, literacy, and education discussed below, are taken from the Banks (2002) Cross-National Times Series database and the World Bank's (2004) World Development Indicators database. In the case of disagreements between the two sources, the Banks data was generally prioritized, except for a small number of obvious typos. Missing values were linearly interpolated (but not extrapolated) within a given time series. The interpolated values represent less than 2% of the observations, and excluding them from the estimations reported below does not substantively alter the results. Note that while mass media reception rates in individual countries would more ideally be captured through nationally representative individual or household surveys, such data is not available on a global basis for the time period covered in this study. Moreover, the data sources used to construct the MDI have the added advantage of relying on physically observable quantities rather than subjective reports.

¹³ See Snyder (2000) and Snyder and Ballentine (1996) for trenchant analyses of such dynamics in democratizing states.

¹⁴ Unless otherwise noted, data for the control variables were taken from Fearon and Laitin (2003) and Sambanis (2004).

¹⁵ Data taken from Banks (2002).

across broad and difficult terrain. As in most previously reported models, these variables are log-transformed because they are expected to have diminishing effects as they grow larger.¹⁶ *Oil Exporter* is a dichotomous indicator which equals 1 if a country derives at least one-third of its export revenues from fossil fuels. *Democracy* is measured using the standard 21-point scale derived from the Polity IV data set¹⁷, and *Democracy*² is included to capture the "inverted-U" relationship found in some previous studies. Finally, *Ethnic Fractionalization* and *Religious Fractionalization* are included to control for the presence of pre-existing identity cleavages in the society. As a check against the potential bias produced by duration dependence I also include *Peace Years*, which measures the number of years since the last civil war onset in a particular country, along with a natural cubic spline of peace years, as per the recommendations of Beck, Katz, and Tucker (1998). To guard against spurious results due to reverse causation, all independent variables are lagged by one year.

Main Results

The results from the main models are reported in Table 1. Model 1 is a baseline specification with control variables, including *GDP per capita*, drawn from the previous literature. Model 2 removes the *GDP* variable while adding the *Media Density Index* to the baseline specification. Model 3 presents the combined specification, with both *GDP per capita* and the *Media Density Index* included in a single model. The evidence drawn from these models is strongly supportive of Hypothesis 1. The coefficient for the *Media Density Index* is negative and statistically significant ($p = 0.004$), indicating that higher levels of mass media accessibility are generally associated with lower probabilities of civil war onset. In addition to being statistically significant, the *Media Density Index* is also quite significant in substantive terms. Holding all other variables constant at their means, a shift from the 5th percentile to the 95th percentile of the *Media Density Index* results in more than a tenfold decrease in the probability that a country will experience a civil war, moving from a yearly onset probability of 3.1% to a probability of 0.13%.¹⁸ As can be seen more clearly in Figure 2, the magnitude of this effect outstrips the substantive impacts of every other statistically significant variable in the model.

It is also interesting to note that once we add the *Media Density Index* to the combined model specification, the apparent impact of *GDP per capita* is reduced so dramatically that it ceases to be statistically significant. This is quite surprising, as the finding that wealthy countries — those with strong material capabilities — are less likely to experience civil war is one of the few results that has been consistent across multiple authors and specifications throughout the civil conflict literature (Sambanis 2004; Hegre and Sambanis 2006). At first glance, it seems plausible that this finding is simply an artifact of multicollinearity, but there are several reasons to reject that explanation. First, while *GDP per capita* is certainly correlated with the *Media Density Index* ($r = 0.57$), if

¹⁶ See Fearon and Laitin (2003) and Sambanis (2004).

¹⁷ The scale results from subtracting the Polity IV *Autocracy* score from the *Democracy* score. The scale is transformed to range from 1 to 21 (rather than -10 to 10) to ease interpretation of the coefficients.

¹⁸ All predicted probabilities were calculated using Tomz, Wittenberg, and King's *Clarify* software. For details, see Tomz, Wittenberg, and King (2001) and King, Tomz, and Wittenberg (2000).

we compare Model 1 to Model 3 we see that the standard error of the *GDP per capita* coefficient actually shrinks when the *Media Density Index* is added to the model, rather than expanding as we would expect if multicollinearity were the culprit.¹⁹

Second, if mass media accessibility is simply serving as a (presumably noisy) proxy for the material capabilities produced by high levels of economic development, then the information contained in the *Media Density Index* should provide no additional predictive leverage in selecting country-years which are likely to experience the onset of civil war. To test this conjecture, I generate Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curves for Models 1, 2, and 3 (see Figure 3). The area under each curve, the AUC statistic, represents a measure of the overall predictive accuracy of each model. Hence the difference between two AUC statistics can be used as a non-parametric test of the difference in predictive accuracy between competing models. Comparing Model 1 to Model 2 reveals that the *Media Density Index* strongly outperforms *GDP per capita* as a predictor of civil war onset ($p = 0.013$). Moreover, comparing Model 2 to Model 3 reveals that once the information contained in the *Media Density Index* is known, no statistically significant increase in predictive accuracy can be gained by adding *GDP per capita* to the specification ($p = 0.778$). Finally, comparing Model 1 to Model 3 reveals that the reverse is not the case: even once the information contained in the *GDP per capita* variable is known, statistically significant increases in predictive accuracy *can* be gained by adding the *Media Density Index* to the specification ($p < 0.03$). In other words, if on purely instrumentalist grounds one cared only about accurately predicting which country-years were likely to experience the onset of civil war, then one should always prefer to make such predictions on the basis of mass media density rather than material wealth.

Alternative Explanations

However, given such correlations, one might still suspect that the *Media Density Index* is simply serving as a proxy for the aggregate effects of modernization, whether through the provision of greater levels of personal wealth and life satisfaction (Inglehart 1997; Thyne 2006), or through the creation of an informed citizenry that can hold its government accountable (Gentzkow and Shapiro. 2006; Hallin and Mancini 2004; Iyengar and Kinder 1987; Mullainathan and Shleifer 2005; Slantchev 2006). In contrast, the theoretical framework advanced here explicitly claims that the unifying effects of mass media strength are due not to the forces of material wealth, or to the production of accurate knowledge amongst the citizenry, but rather to reduced costs and increased economies of scale in the production of normative influence. To examine this claim more closely, Models 4-7 add measures for aspects of modernization which are associated with broader advances in material well-being and knowledge, but which, unlike mass media technologies, do not generate economies of scale in the production of normative influence. Model 4 adds a count of the number of telephone lines per capita; Model 5 adds a measure of per capita adult literacy rates; and Model 6 adds the per capita

¹⁹ Moreover, a Variance Inflation Factor of 3.41 indicates that this result is not likely to be driven by multicollinearity.

enrollment in secondary schools.²⁰ Finally, Model 7 adds a dichotomous indicator of *Media Freedom* coded as 1 for any country-year in which the mass media were free from content restrictions or censorship on the part of the state.²¹ The results are again reported in Table 1. None of newly added variables reach conventional levels of statistical significance, and their addition to Model 3 does nothing to reduce the statistical or substantive significance of the *Media Density Index*. In addition to demonstrating that mere increases in wealth and knowledge have no discernable effect on the probability of civil warfare, these results also provide additional confirmation that the *Media Density Index* is not simply serving as a proxy for the presence of a more educated or more technologically advanced society, nor is it serving as a proxy for the freedom of information. Rather, this evidence indicates that it is specifically mass media technologies, and their ability to generate economies of scale in the production of normative influence, that are responsible for the observed decrease in the probability of civil war onset.

Still, many have argued that the effects of mass media lie primarily in the provision of information, and that mass media's influence will therefore be felt most strongly in the presence of high levels of media freedom (Djankov et al. 2003; Van Belle 1996). In other words, it could be the case that while media freedom has no direct impact on the probability of civil war, it nevertheless conditions the effectiveness of mass media density. To investigate this possibility, I split the observed country-years into two categories: those where *Media Freedom* = 0, and those where *Media Freedom* = 1, and then ran separate regressions on each sub-sample with the full set of control variables from Model 3. The results indicate that the *Media Density Index* exercises significant and substantial effects under *both* conditions ($p = 0.02$ and $p = 0.04$, respectively), and that there is no statistically significant difference in the magnitude of effects across the conditions ($p = 0.742$). In other words, the results indicate that mass media density continues to generate domestically pacifying effects, even in the face of state censorship. To ensure that this result is not an artifact of the coding procedure used to generate the *Media Freedom* variable, I conduct the same split-sample exercise by dividing the observations into those that are above and below the global median level of *Democracy*. The results are unchanged: the *Media Density Index* exercises significant and substantial effects under both conditions ($p = 0.01$ and $p = 0.02$, respectively), and there is no statistically significant difference in the magnitude of effects across the conditions ($p = 0.893$).

Hence, whatever mechanism is responsible for the pacifying effects of mass media density must be operating in both democratic and authoritarian contexts. While at first glance this may seem surprising, it is precisely the pattern we would expect to see if the effects of mass media technology occur through the generation of economies of scale in the production of normative influence. As Snyder reminds us,

²⁰ Data for Models 4-6 are taken from Banks (2002) and World Bank (2004). See fn. 10.

²¹ Coded by the author using the Freedom House Press Freedom Survey (2005) and Van Belle's (1997) press freedom data. The variable equals one when the state is coded in the top category of press freedom in either source. Disagreements between these two sources were resolved by privileging whichever indicator represented a greater level of censorship, as errors of omission (i.e. failing to see censorship that actually exists) were thought to be more likely than errors of commission (i.e. seeing censorship when none actually exists).

"Not all successful modern states are democracies, but with very few exceptions, all have had to find some way to attract the active loyalty of the majority of their people" (2000, 46).

It is thus important to remember that politics of normative influence are not confined to liberal, democratic settings. While states have adopted widely varying "idioms" of statehood (Scott 2009) — that is, the categories and principles through which the right to rule is constituted — nearly all rely on the generation of voluntary compliance through the production of some form of normative influence, and therefore benefit from an increase in the ease with which such influence can be produced. As a result, the basic dynamics of competition, cost, and scale described above can be expected to arise under both democratic and authoritarian institutional structures.

A similar split-sample exercise also allows us to investigate the claims referenced above, concerning the apparent role of mass media in stoking the flames of ethnic hatred. That is, perhaps the broadly pacifying effects of mass media technology have a tendency to break down in the face of divisive demographic cleavages. To investigate this possibility, I first form sub-samples above and below the median level of *Ethnic Fractionalization*, then form sub-samples above and below the median level of *Religious Fractionalization*, and then run separate regressions on each sub-sample as before. Regardless of which index of demographic diversity is used, the results are the same: the *Media Density Index* exercises significant and substantial pacifying effects under both conditions (p -values ranging from 0.01 to 0.03), and there is no statistically significant difference in the magnitude of effects across the conditions ($p = 0.681$ and $p = 0.452$, respectively). In other words, when viewed from a global perspective, there is no evidence that mass media systems are generally inclined to the promotion of collective violence, even in the face of preexisting ethnic divisions. The apparent relationship between mass media and ethnic violence noted in previous studies thus appears to be spurious; a flawed inference arising from a tendency to focus on a small number of unrepresentative cases — Yugoslavia and Rwanda, in particular — characterized by unusual levels of mass media weakness.

Robustness Checks

To ensure that these results are robust to alternative statistical specifications Model 3 was re-estimated, first using a rare events logit estimator, second using a population-averaged GEE estimator with an AR(1) error correlation structure, and finally using a fixed-effects specification. In each case, the results are substantively identical to those reported in Model 3, so I omit them here in the interest of space. I also tested the individual components of the *Media Density Index* in separate models, and found them to each be statistically significant: *Television Density* ($p = 0.03$), *Radio Density* ($p = 0.002$), and *Newspaper Density* ($p = 0.001$), with similar substantive effect magnitudes to those found for each unit increase of the *Media Density Index*. Additional models utilized alternative indicators of democracy from Vreeland (2008) and Gates et al. (2006). These models reproduce the apparent absence of a direct effect of regime type on the probability

of civil war found by these authors, but otherwise are substantively equivalent to the models reported in Table 1.²²

Nevertheless, it is well-known that such statistical results can change dramatically when different combinations of independent variables are included in the model. Unfortunately, if there are a total of n independent variables, then there are 2^n possible model configurations. Traditional regression analysis leaves the reader with no means for determining whether the presented models are actually reflective of this universe of potential model specifications, or whether they were cherry-picked to reflect the analyst's theoretical expectations. A recently developed solution to this difficulty, known as Bayesian model averaging (BMA), averages over a variety of potential model specifications to generate a posterior distribution of the likelihood that each parameter will be non-zero in the best model specifications (Bartels 1997; for a comprehensive review, see Clyde and George 2004). Here, model probabilities are judged using the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) prior. Following the advice of Montgomery and Nyhan (2010), I allow the BMA algorithm to search the entire space of potential model configurations using the full set of independent variables from Table 1, with the only restriction being that the three cubic splines must enter or leave the specification as a group. This generates a search space of 65,536 potential model specifications.

The results, presented graphically in Figure 4, show the posterior probability of inclusion – i.e. $Pr(\beta \neq 0)$ – for each independent variable. The differences between the *Media Density Index* and the other indicators of material wealth and modernization could not be more stark. The *Media Density Index* achieves one of the highest inclusion probabilities of any of the variables considered, 99.9%, with only *Population* scoring higher. In contrast, *GDP per capita* fails to even cross the 50% threshold. The other information and modernization indicators, *Telephones*, *Secondary Education*, *Literacy*, and *Media Freedom* do not fare much better, with posterior inclusion probabilities ranging from 32.3% to 55.1%. This indicates that the statistical and substantive significance of the *Media Density Index* in the models reported above is neither a result of convenient specification choices, nor a simple artifact of collinearity between various indicators of modernization, but rather a result of the *Media Density Index*'s remarkably robust ability to predict the onset of civil war.

Still, the framework of Bayesian model averaging, as with all regression-based techniques, necessarily incorporates a number of functional form assumptions, particularly assumptions of linear and independent effects, which could easily be violated in our sample. As a final check of the robustness of the relationship, I therefore use an optimized matching estimator, which due to its nonparametric form, avoids the need for functional form assumptions altogether, while ensuring that any observable factors which might have caused certain countries to be selected into high levels of mass media density are accounted for in the estimation of causal effects of mass media technologies. To estimate this causal effect, I first dichotomize the *Media Density Index* by assigning a 1 to all observations greater than the global mean, and a 0 to all others. To achieve optimal balance amongst the covariates, I then rely on an evolutionary search algorithm known as "genetic matching," which produces optimally balanced samples by searching over a

²² Results available from the author upon request. See web appendix at <http://www.camberwarren.net>.

vector of parameterized weights that are applied to each of the covariates and to aggregate propensity score, and finding the set of weights that, when used to draw treatment and control groups, minimizes the maximum imbalance amongst the full set of covariates (Diamond and Sekhon 2010).²³ This procedure estimates an average treatment effect on the treated (ATT) of -0.424 for the high-density treatment condition, which is strongly statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). In contrast, the same procedure yields small (-0.031) and insignificant ($p = 0.759$) estimate of the effect of *GDP per capita*. The clear implication is that mass media strength is the proximate cause of the reduction in civil war likelihood that in previous analyses had been attributed to the material effects of aggregate levels of economic development.

Conclusion

Taken together, the results presented here represent strong evidence that the domestically pacifying effect of mass media accessibility is one of the most robust empirical relationships yet discovered in the quantitative study of civil war. This evidence shows unequivocally that the mechanisms available to states for the production of domestic influence extend far beyond the material forces of coercion and payment. They also rely on the normative influence of mass communication to induce voluntary compliance with state dictates. In making this demonstration, I hope to have shown that there is no necessary opposition between constructivist theory and quantitative methods (see Fearon and Wendt 2002; Farrell and Finnemore 2009). To the contrary, by demonstrating the utility of a structural empirical approach to the analysis of the effects of political ideas, these results show that the divisions between these schools of thought have long since outlived their usefulness.

Moreover, the policy implications of these results could not be more stark. Mass media accessibility is not only a more proximate cause of civil peace than economic development; it is also a more a far more readily manipulable causal factor. Compared to the difficulty of converting an impoverished country into an economically advanced country, or the difficulty of converting a non-democratic regime into a democratic regime, the prospect of merely attempting to increase the structural density of relatively inexpensive items like radios, televisions, and newspapers, appears remarkably plausible. Mass media technologies thus represent a rare combination of power and flexibility. Given the robustness of the empirical evidence detailed above, academics and policymakers alike should begin to consider whether the ever-growing list of internal conflicts which have been deemed unavoidable and intractable, have been characterized as such because the wrong tools have been applied to their suppression and resolution.

²³ The algorithm assesses balance between treatment and control groups using paired t-tests for the dichotomous covariates and univariate bootstrap Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests for the continuous covariates. After the matching procedure, these same tests indicated that none of the covariates had statistically significant differences in their distributions between the treatment and control groups.

Table 1: Logit Regressions - Civil War Onset

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Media Density Index		-0.0206*** (0.0048)	-0.0215*** (0.0067)	-0.0222*** (0.0082)	-0.0223*** (0.0072)	-0.0307*** (0.0074)	-0.0247*** (0.0064)
GDP per capita	-0.2354*** (0.0642)		-0.0349 (0.0572)	-0.0417 (0.0685)	-0.0178 (0.0472)	-0.0001 (0.0396)	-0.0119 (0.0469)
Area	-0.0753 (0.0755)	-0.1210 (0.0785)	-0.1061 (0.0814)	-0.1056 (0.0815)	-0.1305 (0.0875)	-0.0766 (0.0866)	-0.1310 (0.0925)
Mountainous Terrain	0.1711*** (0.0657)	0.1397** (0.0674)	0.1362** (0.0684)	0.1351* (0.0690)	0.1265* (0.0690)	0.1840*** (0.0690)	0.1419** (0.0724)
Population	0.2428*** (0.0648)	0.3186*** (0.0665)	0.3050*** (0.0679)	0.3044*** (0.0681)	0.3180*** (0.0756)	0.2921*** (0.0762)	0.3169*** (0.0754)
Oil Exporter	0.9272*** (0.2102)	0.6962*** (0.2031)	0.7825*** (0.2191)	0.7978*** (0.2248)	0.7400*** (0.2201)	0.6791*** (0.2257)	0.7579*** (0.2348)
Democracy	0.1908*** (0.0665)	0.2361*** (0.0694)	0.2054*** (0.0686)	0.2053*** (0.0698)	0.1921*** (0.0724)	0.1562** (0.0726)	0.2107*** (0.0776)
Democracy²	-0.0081*** (0.0029)	-0.0101*** (0.0030)	-0.0085*** (0.0030)	-0.0086*** (0.0030)	-0.0078** (0.0031)	-0.0062** (0.0031)	-0.0085** (0.0036)
Ethnic Fract.	0.3703 (0.3021)	0.3156 (0.2998)	0.2072 (0.3102)	0.2015 (0.3133)	0.2794 (0.3346)	0.0323 (0.3304)	0.3427 (0.3425)
Religious Fract.	1.0155** (0.4352)	1.4549*** (0.4445)	1.3760*** (0.4760)	1.3689*** (0.4748)	1.3703*** (0.4994)	1.4953*** (0.5124)	1.3854*** (0.5270)
Telephones				0.0058 (0.0253)			
Literacy					-0.0026 (0.0039)		
Secondary Education						0.0247 (0.0410)	
Media Freedom							-0.3136 (0.5112)
Constant	-8.3837*** (1.2137)	-10.0744*** (1.2218)	-9.5613*** (1.2472)	-9.5308*** (1.2488)	-9.8884*** (1.3341)	-9.4400*** (1.3986)	-10.1899*** (1.3782)
Peace Years	-0.1616*** (0.0596)	-0.1147** (0.0580)	-0.1372** (0.0599)	-0.1372** (0.0604)	-0.0856 (0.0631)	-0.1167* (0.0705)	-0.0714 (0.0667)
Splines(1-3)	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S	N/S
N	6,275	6,407	6,248	6,238	6,094	6,039	5,896

Note: All independent variables lagged by one year. Robust standard errors in parentheses.
 * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Figure 1: Kernel Density Plot

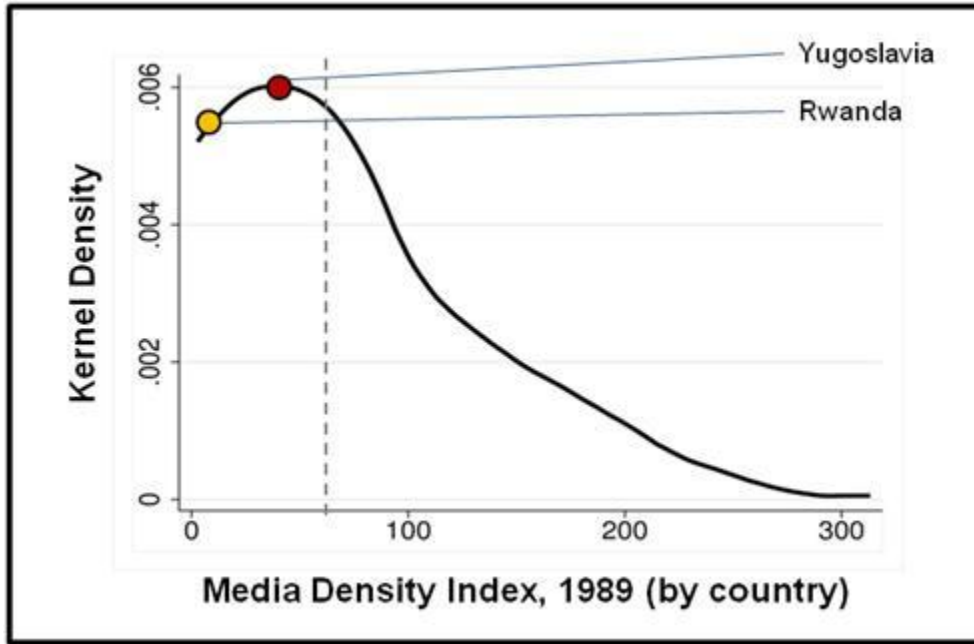
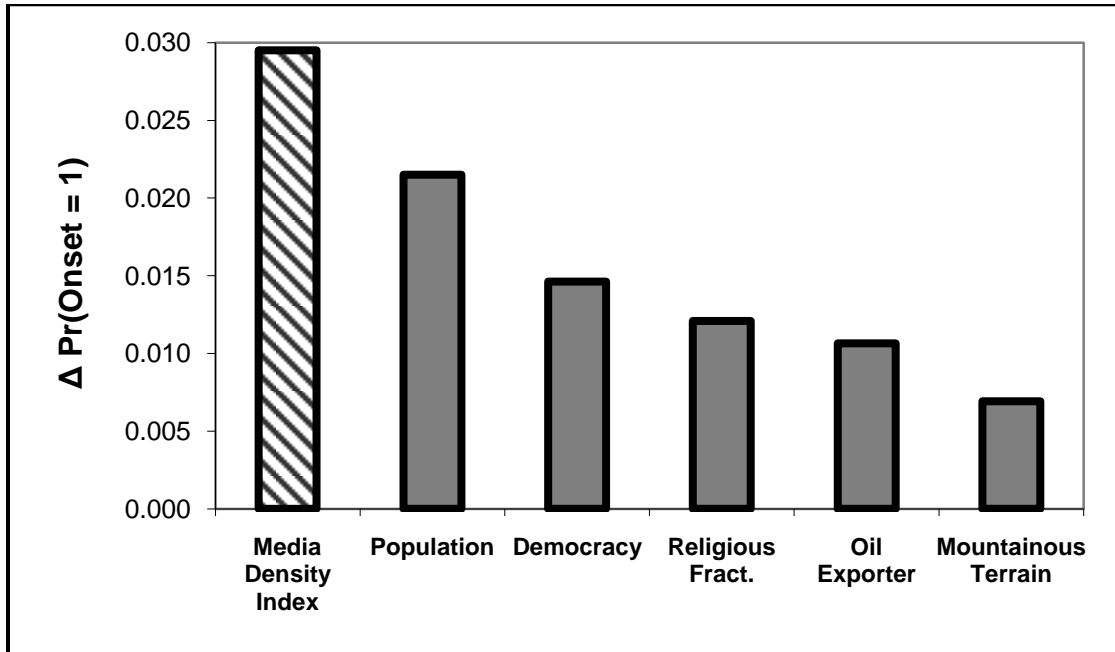
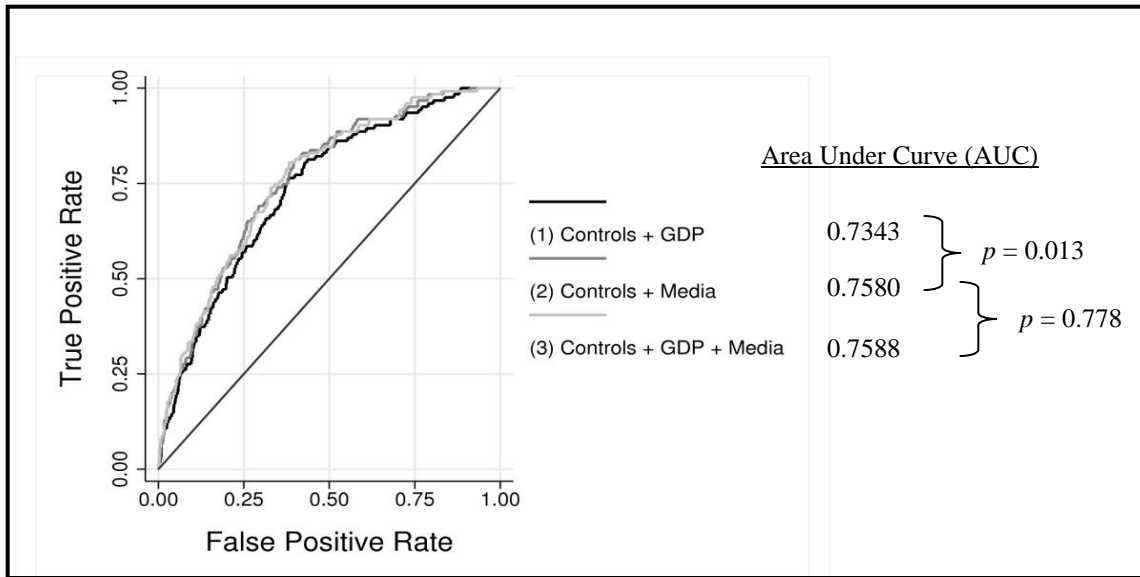


Figure 2: Substantive Effects



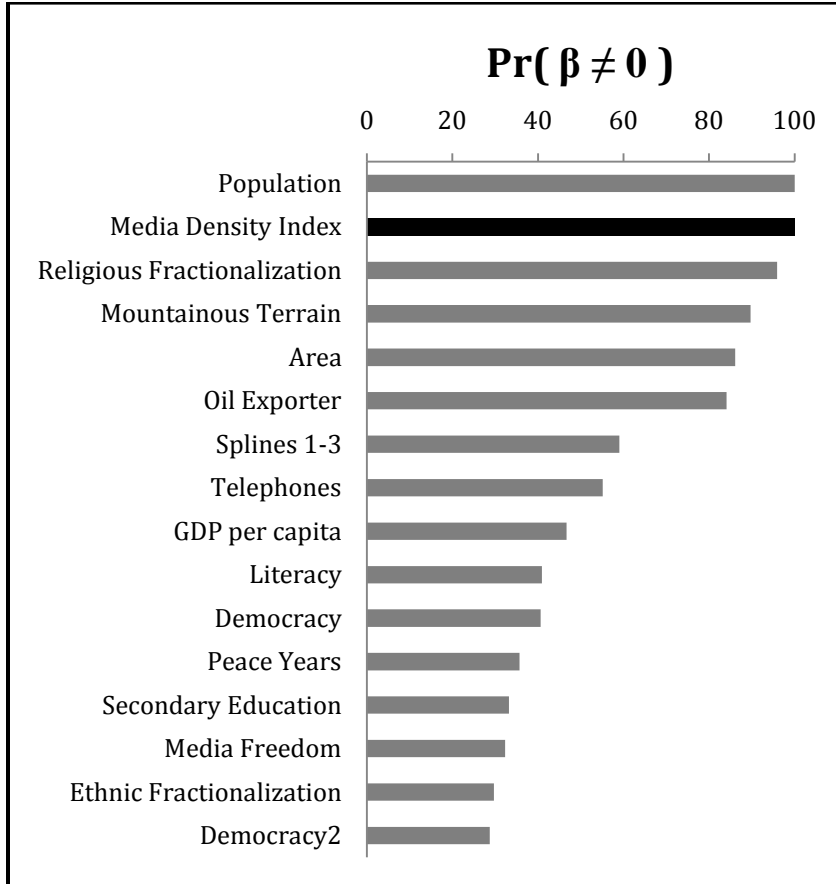
Note: Based on coefficients and standard errors from Model 3. First differences are calculated by holding all other variables at their means while shifting the variable of interest from its 5th percentile to its 95th percentile. The only exception is for *Democracy*, which is shifted from a value of 1 (pure authoritarianism, which produces the lowest probability of civil war onset) to a value of 12 (the type of mixed regime which maximizes the probability of civil war onset). Note that while the effect of the *Media Density Index* is negative, whereas the other effects are positive, effect magnitudes are presented on a common axis to ease comparison.

Figure 3: ROC Curves



Note: Numbers in parentheses refer to Models 1-3 from Table 1. AUC statistics are calculated for each corresponding model. The p -values test likelihood that two AUC statistics are equal, that is, $H_0: AUC_i - AUC_j = 0$.

Figure 4: Bayesian Model Averaging



Note: Dependent variable is *Civil War Onset*. Bars represent posterior inclusion probabilities for each independent variable, using the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) prior, and the full search space of 65,536 potential model specifications.

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