Political Economy of Civil Wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Abstract

This essay analyzes the causes of civil wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) by testing several hypotheses at the national, regional, and systemic levels. Particular emphasis is given to the current debate over the prevalence of the grievance and greed approaches in spurring civil wars. The analysis employs either robust probit or instrumental variable probit to deal with endogeneity and to estimate time series data from 1959 to 1998. The grievance approach contending that civil war emerges from the politics of exclusion and a lack of state penetration holds in the case of the DRC. The greed approach, which argues that intra-state or civil wars are usually carried out by self-interested bandits or greedy rebels, does not explain the Congolese case well. The essay also demonstrates other factors that have impacted the occurrence of intra-state or civil wars in the DRC, including the presence of hostile neighbors and the amount of financial and diplomatic support western states gave to state managers. These results have important implications for preventing civil wars in environmentally rich developing lands such as the DRC.