

Young Researchers Workshops (YRW)

The Standing Group of International Relations (SGIR) of the ECPR

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“Bridge over Troubled Water”:

Bridging Methodological Innovations with Theory Progress on Civil War

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Civil wars are the most common form of conflict in the contemporary world. The study of civil war has made a great progress in theory building, data collection and methods over the recent years.

Researchers have provided a number of important findings. However, even if these findings are statistically robust, they remain ambiguous as there are multiple competing theories that may account for the observed relationship. Hence, one of the major shortcomings in existing work is the failure to distinguish between plausible rival theories for the same findings. The research agenda on civil wars needs further specification of explanatory mechanisms and testing of causal pathways.

We need to focus less on crude proxies and country characteristics and more on the *interactions* that underlie violence in civil wars. Studies opening the black box of civil war have just begun, and new methods and data can allow us to make progress in understanding civil war.

Scholars studying civil wars are challenged both by elaborating theories and methodological advances. Whole previous work has provided important contributions; however fostering synergies between innovative methods and theory development can help new scholars advance our understanding of civil wars.

In this workshop we will approach the mechanisms of civil war with innovative methods and new and more fine-grained data sources. This workshop aims to contribute to this research stream by gathering young scholars working on these lines of research. Furthermore, we will invite established scholars of the study of civil wars to serve as discussants and comment on the research presented. We aim for the workshop to produce not only short-term collaboration at this meeting but to pave the way for more successful long-term intellectual collaboration between the participants and new scholars.

The papers presented at the workshop will be submitted to international peer-reviewed academic journals such as the *European Journal of International Relations*, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, and *Journal of Peace Research*.