

Simplified Complexity: Analytical Strategies for Conflict Event Research

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Abstract:

Scholars that have sought to identify the triggers of rare political events have met with limited success. With respect to civil war, studies teach us to expect conflict where it is feasible. However, though we understand *where* civil conflict occurs, we do not quite understand *when* it occurs. Focusing on civil conflict, I argue that time-variant and time-invariant explanations relate to the outcome by means of two distinct causal processes, which has implications for the identification of triggers of rare events. I provide an easily implementable approach to improve rare event estimation that uses matching to leverage constant attributes to estimate the effects of rare predictors. I demonstrate the utility of this procedure by providing an aggregate and disaggregate example of civil conflict onset estimation.