

One- to Two-Page Article Summary Template (Defense Analysis, Dr. Kalev Sepp)

Citation

- [Full bibliographic information]

Executive summary

- [Brief (2-3 sentence) summary of the article “at a glance.” Write this after you’ve completed the rest of this template]

Research question

- [What is the core question the author is asking?]

Logical argument

- [How do the authors “tell the story” that leads to their conclusions? What assumptions are made?]

Evidence and methodology

- [What evidence do the authors use?]

Big ideas that the author uses

- [What are larger topics, theories, models, and concepts, if any?]

Key finding(s)

- [What do the authors come away with after their analysis? What causes are believed to generate or contribute to the outcome being explained?]

How this relates to my research project

- [How can this help you in your own research? Can you build off these findings, perhaps by testing them against other cases or exploring other contributors to the outcome being explained?]

Outgoing questions

- [What questions does this article leave you with? Are there concepts or ideas they use that you’re unfamiliar with? Are there holes in their logic or evidence?]

Useful new sources

- [I like to grab at least one new source from an article’s bibliography, especially one that may answer questions the article leaves me with. This can help you build a chain of research that explores concepts in more depth.]

EXAMPLE:
A Slippery Slope: The Domestic Diffusion of Ethnic Civil War

Citation

- Bormann, Nils-Christian, and Jesse Hammond. "A Slippery Slope: The Domestic Diffusion of Ethnic Civil War." *International Studies Quarterly* 60:4 (Dec. 2016) 587–598. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqw031>.

Executive summary

- One of the main reasons ethnic civil conflict tends to re-occur in the same set of instable states is that conflict is a self-replicating system. The authors use GIS and statistical analysis to show that the longer a conflict drags on, and when fighting happens near (currently) peaceful ethnic minority groups, the more likely a new conflict is to break out in that state.

Research question

- Why do most civil wars occur in a small number of states?

Logical argument

- As conflict breaks out, ethnic groups that were previously peaceful toward the government become more likely to mobilize and fight. First, they mobilize for self-defense as the government uses large-scale repressive violence that affects their communities. Second, they mobilize for political gain, as they perceive the government is weak and hope to gain concessions by fighting.

Hypotheses (if applicable)

- Motivation argument: ethnic groups are more likely to rebel when an ongoing civil war directly affects them than when it is far away.
- Opportunity argument: ethnic groups are more likely to rebel when they perceive the government is unable to decisively win its fight against an ongoing rebellion.

Evidence and methodology

- Data: 127 ethnic civil wars across 49 states (mostly African and Asian) over a 63-year period.
- Method: Statistical analysis – is there a correlation between civil war location/duration and new groups deciding to rebel?

Big ideas the authors use

- Conflict trap: once a state has a civil war, it tends to have more in the future.
- Opportunity vs. motivation: Do rebel groups mobilize to fight because they have grievances (i.e., state repression/violence) or because they want to gain something (i.e., political concessions)?

Key finding(s)

- Both opportunity and motivation factors matter. Ethnic groups are more likely to rebel when (1) civil conflict is happening nearby, and (2) conflict is dragging on a long time.

How this relates to my research project

- I'm interested in peacekeeping. Understanding more about the reasons why new rebel groups arise can help me predict where and when violence is more likely to break out, given the current security environment in a country already experiencing some conflict.

Outgoing questions

- The authors only look at ethnic rebels and ethnic civil wars. What about religious or politically-affiliated groups? Ethnicity is important, but it's definitely not the only factor that unites people to rebel.

- The project seems to assume that rebel groups don't talk to one another. They ignore the potential that existing rebel groups actively try to recruit and mobilize people to fight against the government. Ignoring this important factor might lead to false outcomes.

Useful new sources

- Cederman, Lars-Erik, Andreas Wimmer and Brian Min. 2010. "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis." *World Politics* 62:1 (2010) 87–119.