Birth Legacies, State Making, and War

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International relations researchers study the interactions of states in the international system. Excluded from almost all such analyses is any consideration of how those states became members of the international system in the first place. State making researchers, in contrast, focus on the formation experiences of states. Drawing on insights from both approaches, we argue that states with positive birth legacies should be more successful at state making and achieve more favorable outcomes than states without positive birth legacies. As fighting and winning wars are a common pathway to political development, states with positive birth legacies should be more likely to participate in and win interstate and civil wars. Statistical analyses of all states in the international system from 1816 to 2002 support our expectations.

Succeeding in the club of nations is largely a function of organized violence. The states of contemporary Europe emerged from the "thousands of statelike units" that governed Europe in AD 990 (Tilly 1990, 51). Overwhelmingly, the European states that succeeded during the past thousand years did so by militarily defeating their less successful domestic and foreign rivals. Germany and Italy, for example, emerged in the mid-1800s from wars in which Prussia and Piedmont-Sardinia conquered and absorbed lesser German and Italian polities. Importantly, the fundamental role of organized violence in state formation and development is not exclusively a European phenomenon. Argentina, China, and the United States, for instance, would not exist as we know them today without their earlier civil and interstate wars. Although state formation and expansion through military means may be less common in the post–World War II international system, the conquest of South Vietnam by North Vietnam in 1975 and Eritrea’s 1993 separation from Ethiopia demonstrate that it still occurs.

The above examples make clear that interstate and civil wars have influenced the birth and expansion of states both historically and in the contemporary international system. International relations (IR) researchers studying when states wage war, though, usually ignore the fact that war is also a source of the states they study. The fact that wars make states and states make wars, as state making researchers remind us, suggests that an important research agenda lies in the study of interconnections between how states come into existence and how they subsequently behave. Motivated by this observation, we investigate how states’ origins influence their subsequent war experiences.

Some states come into existence via contentious struggles against forces opposing their independence. The successful prosecution of a secessionist or colonial independence war, for example, requires the newly born state to have demonstrated considerable political capacity and/or legitimacy in order to have prevailed. Such origins represent relatively “good births,” the legacies of which are generally helpful for state survival, development, and expansion. In contrast, the emergence of some states requires neither capacity nor legitimacy, for example, when states are born by derelict decolonization or via the sudden disintegration of an imperial center. Such origins are relatively “bad births,” the legacies of which are generally negative with respect to a state’s subsequent political development.

Not all good births are followed by unambiguous successes nor all bad births by unmitigated failures. In general, though, good births should be associated with better
Although the details may vary considerably from case to case, state births take only a few forms. Some states arise organically as a “core area,” expand into and occupy nearby territory, and eventually solidify and stabilize as national states (see Pounds and Ball [1964] for core areas and Tilly [1985, 1990] for organic state formation). Such states emerged through a process of “indigenous generation.” Prominent examples of this include Britain, France, China, and Thailand.

A second type of birth occurs when a state violently secedes from an existing state, or fights its way out of colonial status to independence. Examples include the United States of America and Eritrea. Nonviolent secession is a third way in which states are born. In such instances a would-be state makes demands for independence from another state, and these claims are respected or the demands are conceded. States born this way have likely impressed the former “host” state that their prospective autonomy is plausible, that they encompass a coherent population and territory, and perhaps even that they will govern it well. Examples include Slovakia and the Czech Republic’s nonviolent separation in 1993 and Norway’s peaceful split from Sweden in 1905.

The fourth birth type is characterized as “births by agreement.” Many states reverted to sovereignty after a period in which they were occupied and/or governed by an external state. An example of long-term reversion is Poland. Shorter-term reversions to sovereignty are represented by the various European states that lost independence during World War II but regained it by war’s end, or cases like Syria, which temporarily ceded its autonomy to the United Arab Republic. Another form of birth by agreement is the creation of buffer states like Belgium and Uruguay. Also falling into this category are a number of “split” states (e.g., West and East Germany) that were constructed by agreements among other states to create new states that did not have an earlier period of sovereign independence. Another type of birth by agreement are instances of decolonization that followed a careful, long-term policy of preparation for self-governance. Australia and Canada represent examples of this birth type. Such states effectively are born by agreement between themselves and their former colonizer rather than between two already existing states.

A fifth type of birth occurs when an existing state or empire fragments due to poor governance or some other cause and new states emerge by default from the political wreckage. Recent examples are offered by the births of the 15 states that gained independence as the Soviet Union fragmented. The final form of state emergence is when a state that is not failing abandons territory with little or no consideration given to what will emerge subsequently. These are instances of “derelict decolonization.” Many sub-Saharan African states, like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia, were born this way. To provide greater context to our conception of state emergence, figure 1 presents a map of states in the Correlates of War (COW) international system and their birth types. In coding each COW system member’s birth type, we consulted Stearns’s (2001) historical compendium, the ICOW Colonial History Data Set (Hensel 2016), and national historical monographs to determine the conditions attendant upon the emergence of each system member as an independent state.¹

Figure 1 demonstrates three important points. First, significant variation exists in how states are born. We see this in the range of colors (shades of gray) on the map and the number of each birth type in the legend. Second, birth types are not randomly distributed across the world. As one might expect, most European states have fairly positive birth legacies, and most African states experienced relatively inauspicious births. Third, despite the regional clustering of birth legacies, geography does not determine a state’s birth type. For example, while many sub-Saharan states emerged via derelict decolonization, Ethiopia enjoyed an indigenous generation and Angola fought its way to independence. Nested

¹. The appendix contains more detail about our classification of birth types.
Figure 1. Birth types across the world
among the old European states that evolved organically, countries like Hungary and Belarus emerged from the rubble of failed empires. Thus, figure 1 nicely demonstrates that geographic location does not determine birth type.

The six birth types vary in the extent to which the political entities that became states had political capacity and political legitimacy. Given the numerous definitions attached to each term, it is worth spelling out what we mean by political capacity and legitimacy. We define political capacity as the ability “of the political system to carry out the tasks imposed upon it by its own political elite” (Organski and Kugler 1980, 72) and political legitimacy as the degree to which the state and its citizens are in “agreement on what constitutes the polity—the politically defined community that underlies the state” (Englebert 2000, 8). By claiming that birth types vary in the political capacity and legitimacy of the proto-state, in effect we are arguing that some birth types require the emerging state to have its administrative act together on the course to statehood to a significantly greater degree than do other birth types. For example, a successful secession usually requires the seceding entity to defeat the rump militarily. Gaining statehood through warfare is nearly impossible without a substantial effort, support from a sizable portion of the domestic population, and the ability of the proto-state’s political leadership to execute their plans successfully. In contrast, states that emerge from sudden decolonization or the fragmentation of empire require neither capacity nor legitimacy.

Our claim that states with better birth legacies entered the international system with greater political capacity and legitimacy is central to our theoretical argument. We therefore think it is worth offering some empirical support for this assertion. Directly assessing our claim requires relevant data on the political entities that became states before they became states. Cross-national measures of state legitimacy and capacity—which typically rely on survey data (Gilley 2006) and tax, bureaucratic quality, or economic performance data (Hendrix 2010), respectively—are sparse and simply do not exist for proto-states. However, we can gain some purchase on the relationship between birth type and states’ legitimacy and capacity by looking at the relationships between birth types and various proxies for legitimacy and capacity in states’ first years of independence.

We operationalize a state’s legitimacy upon joining the international system using Englebert’s (2000, see esp. 125–33) measure of the historical continuity of its political institutions (e.g., Was the state previously colonized? If not, it is legitimate. If the state was colonized in modern times, do the postcolonial political institutions reflect the precolonial political institutions? If so, it is legitimate; if not, it is illegitimate). One hundred sixty-four of the 219 observations of states in their first year of independence in our data set are legitimate, according to Englebert (2000, 131). We use three variables to identify a state’s political capacity in its first year. The first two measure the coherence of its political institutions. The first is based on the variable “COHER” from the Polity II project (see Jaggers, Gurr, and Moore 1989, 40–41) and is drawn from the more recent Polity IV project (Marshall and Jaggers 2005). Our second measure is a dichotomous variable derived from Gates et al.’s (2006) indicator of institutional coherence (“ourtype”), which identifies the coherence of a state’s political institutions based on how the executive is selected, the constraints on the executive’s power, and the extent of political participation. Our third measure of a state’s initial capacity is its Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC) score (Singer, Bremer, and Stuckey 1972) in its first year as a member of the interstate system. Table 1 reports a set of bivariate models that regress these four measures of a state’s legitimacy and capacity upon entering the international system on Birth Legacy, a six-point index where higher values represent better birth types and lower values represent worse birth types (i.e., the minimum equals derelict decolonization, while the maximum equals indigenous generation).

The coefficient on Birth Legacy is positive and statistically significant in each model. Consistent with our argument, then, states with relatively better birth legacies possessed greater legitimacy, more coherent institutions, and greater capabilities in their first year than did states with relatively worse birth legacies. We argue that variation in a state’s birth type influences its subsequent ability to develop politically through war. Before presenting our theoretical argument, we highlight the role of legacies in other explanations of state behavior and how our perspective differs from existing approaches.

**EXISTING RESEARCH ON LEGACIES**

While our argument linking a state’s birth legacy to war through the state making process is novel, other scholars have investigated how legacies influence subsequent state behavior. For example, a number of studies argue that how an area was colonized heavily influences postcolonial economic performance (Acemoglu, Johnson, and Robinson 2001) or whether democracy emerges and persists (Bernhard, Reenock, and Nordstrom 2004). Our argument differs

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2. A distinct literature on state emergence exists. For example, Coggins (2014) argues state recognition, and thus birth, is a function of great powers’ strategic calculations. Our approach differs from Coggins’s in that we focus on how birth experiences influence subsequent behavior.
from scholarship that focuses on the history of colonization in that we consider the implications for behavior of how the colonial period ended or how a state emerged even if never colonized. This approach allows us to differentiate between states that had a common colonial heritage but that gained independence in different ways. 

Closer to our approach is that of economists who have speculated about the impact of birth legacies. For example, Collier (2009, 219) writes “rapid decolonization created many arbitrary countries” that “had structural characteristics which gravely impeded the provision of public goods” like security and defense. This contrasts with states that “emerged through a quasi-Darwinian process of selection” and had greater capacity and a shared sense of identity. The study most similar to ours is Maoz (1989). Maoz argues that slow or evolutionary state emergence gives existing states time to adjust peacefully to the new member of the club of nations, while states that emerge all at once—what he calls revolutionary state-emergence—present existing states with changed conditions and no time to adjust. This contrasts with states that “emerged through a quasi-Darwinian process of selection” and had greater capacity and a shared sense of identity.

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**BIRTH LEGACIES, STATE MAKING, AND WAR**

States that enjoy greater capacity and legitimacy are at an advantage in the international system. To be sure, not all capable and/or legitimate states are immune from conquest, as an even more capable enemy might defeat them. But, in general, capable and legitimate states can expect to survive and thrive better than weak and illegitimate ones. We argue that states whose emergence required relatively high levels of capacity and legitimacy will enjoy greater state making success than states whose births required lower levels of capacity and legitimacy.

The question becomes, then, how do states succeed in the interstate system? The most common path to successful state making runs through warfare (most centrally, see Tilly [1985, 1990], but also see Hui [2005] and Rasler and Thompson [1989]). War leads to the political development of states through three channels, the first two of which are related to a war’s outcome. First, a successful war effort often results in an expansion of the territory under a state’s control. If nothing else, avoiding defeats that result in a state’s death is a necessary condition for a state to remain a state (e.g., Hanover ceased to exist after being on the losing side in the Austro-Prussian War during German unification). Second, winning a war is often associated with the elimination of domestic and/or foreign rivals for political control over said territory (Tilly 1985, 1990). Recent examples of war being a tool to seize territory from other states include (but are not limited to) Israel’s wars against Egypt, Jordan, and Syria; North Vietnam’s conquest of South Vietnam; Eritrea’s
independence from Ethiopia; and Russia’s seizure of Crimea. Similarly, examples of violent elimination of domestic rivals can be found in the defeat of the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka and in the ongoing liquidation of the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) in Colombia.

There are good reasons to believe that states that enter the interstate system with greater capacity and/or legitimacy should be more likely to win wars than states that did not experience an auspicious birth. Focusing first on interstate wars, decades of research establish that greater political capacity makes states more likely to defeat their external rivals (see, e.g., Kugler and Tammen 2012; Organski and Kugler 1980, chap. 2). We also know that states enjoying greater citizen loyalty are advantaged in interstate wars (Schrock-Jacobson 2013). Early research on the subject held that strength and/or cost tolerance were the primary determinants of interstate war outcomes (Ray and Vural 1986; Rosen 1972). Our argument is consistent with this scholarship, as it suggests that states with greater capacity (strength) and legitimacy (citizen tolerance of war costs) should be more likely to win interstate wars.

Winning civil wars is important to the state making process, because it eliminates a state’s domestic rivals and therefore leads to the consolidation of a central government’s power over its territory. The outcome of the US Civil War is a prime example of this process. While not as extensive as the literature on interstate war outcomes, existing research on the influence of state capacity on civil war outcomes is consistent with our argument. DeRouen and Sobek (2004) and Mason, Weingarten and Fett (1999) find that rebel victories are decreasing in a state’s capacity. Similarly, Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan (2009) find that states that are relatively weak compared to rebel groups are less likely to win civil wars. In sum, the idea that states with greater political capacity and legitimacy should be more likely to win wars is consistent with existing research on both interstate and intrastate war outcomes.

A third way in which war leads to political development is related to a state’s participation in a war. Fighting a war justifies the extraction of greater resources from the population and territory under a state’s control (Rasler and Thompson 1989; Tilly 1990). Further, war is often associated with new streams of revenue, gains in the efficiency of existing techniques of revenue extraction, the emergence of issues that place greater financial demands upon a state, domestic coalitions that demand new or increased services from the state, and the establishment of new and expansion of old bureaucratic agencies that demand resources from the state (Rasler and Thompson 1989). Upon the termination of hos-

tilities, then, the legacy of war participation is a more expansive, politically developed state capable of exerting greater control over its citizens and extracting more resources from its territory than was the case antebellum.

It should be acknowledged that some scholars question the relevance of this bellicose theory of state making for the modern world. For example, Desch (1996), Jackson and Rosberg (1982), and Sørenson (2001) argue that the post–World War II sovereignty regime, and specifically the norm against violent territorial transfers, eliminates the threat of external war as a tool for state making. Happily, a larger empirical literature strongly supports the claim that war (or more broadly security threats) and preparation for war “makes” states (Boehmer and Sobek 2005; Cohen, Brown, and Organski 1981; Gibler 2010; Kisangani and Pickering 2014; Lektzian and Prins 2008; Thies 2004). These studies vary in the security threats considered, the measures of state making predicted, and the regional or global samples employed. That all find support for expectations of conflict or external threat enhancing state making across all these research design variations is strong support for the validity of the bellicose theory of state formation.

Recent research on the link between war and state making typically focuses on interstate rivalries, conflicts, and wars. We argue that fighting intrastate wars is also central to successful state making. This view runs counter to the conventional wisdom of intrastate conflict scholars that civil wars are “development in reverse” (Collier et al. 2003, chap. 1). However, the idea that interstate and civil wars can facilitate political development is consistent with state making research. Tilly’s prominent formulation sees interstate and intrastate wars serving similar purposes. Specifically, interstate war involves “eliminating or neutralizing . . . rivals outside the territories in which they have clear and continuous priority as wielders of force,” while intrastate war is one method for “eliminating or neutralizing . . . rivals inside those territories” (Tilly 1985, 181). More recently, Porter (1994, 2) argues that, comparable to interstate wars, “civil wars played an equally crucial role in shaping states. By triumphing in civil wars, central governments established their authority and asserted the all-critical monopoly on violent force that Max Weber identified as the essence of the modern state.” Wimmer (2002) sees a “cultural compromise” as central to state making. This compromise involves agreement about who is part of the nation. Those who cannot or will not assimilate are repressed or even eliminated. Civil war is one way to subordinate permanently those unwilling to agree to the national cultural compromise. Mann (2005) describes this process as occurring even in
democracies. These scenarios may sound atypical for civil wars, but there are dozens of conflicts in which the government initiated a civil war specifically to eliminate or neutralize internal rivals, just as Tilly describes, within the Correlates of War civil war data set (Sarkees and Wayman [2010] provide detailed descriptions). Examples of such civil wars range from Ottoman attacks on Egyptian or Shiite internal opponents in the early 1800s (COW intrastate wars 537 and 542) to Sri Lanka’s elimination of the LTTE in the period 2006–9 (COW intrastate war 940). Focusing explicitly on the question of whether civil wars are associated with state making success, O’Kane (1995, 2000) details a number of revolutionary civil wars that directly contributed to state development: France in the 1790s, Russia in the 1910s–1920s, China in the 1940s, and Iran and Nicaragua in the 1970s. It turns out that the positive relationship between revolutionary civil wars and stronger states is a broad empirical regularity (see, e.g., Carter, Bernhard, and Palmer 2012). Moving away from explicitly revolutionary civil wars, it appears that civil wars generally are associated with positive long-term gross domestic product growth. Koubi (2005) finds that states that experienced civil wars in the 1960s and 1970s enjoyed greater economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s than did states that had remained at peace. Koubi’s results show that Collier et al.’s findings hold only for the immediate economic effect of civil wars. Longer term, civil wars can be growth enhancing.

Why do scholars of state making and intrastate conflict reach different conclusions regarding the effect of civil war on state development? The source of the disagreement is likely the relevant time horizons for scholars working in each tradition. Most contemporary social science research on civil war focuses on the short- and medium-term effects of intrastate war. Civil wars are undoubtedly deadly and destructive. Even with these costs in mind, however, if civil wars eliminate and/or marginalize domestic opposition (Porter 1994; Tilly 1990; Wimmer 2002) and support for the state facilitates development (North 1990), then they should aid a state’s long-term political development. This view is echoed by Fearon and Laitin (2014, 16), who write that “From a short-run perspective it is obviously true civil war can weaken or cause states to collapse. But from a longer historical perspective, civil wars have provided foundations for ‘state strength’ for many of the most consequential and capable contemporary states.” Consistent with this idea, Duffy Toft (2010) finds that, compared to states that experienced civil peace, states that fought a civil war had lower rates of economic growth in the first 10 years following a war’s conclusion and comparable or higher rates of economic growth 20 years following a war’s conclusion. In sum, fighting a civil war appears to be destructive in the short- and medium-term and a viable strategy for constructing well-made states in the long run.4

The above discussion highlights the fact that historically warfare has been central to the geographic and administrative expansion of states. Further, it suggests a straightforward argument linking a state’s birth legacy to war participation and outcomes. States with a positive birth legacy required relatively higher levels of capacity and/or legitimacy to join the club of nations than did states that emerged through little effort of their own. Historically, fighting and winning wars have been central to state making success because they increase a state’s control over its population, extractive capacity, and territory and allow a state to eliminate domestic and foreign political rivals. Connecting these pieces, we expect:

**H1.** States with better birth legacies are more likely to wage wars than states with worse birth legacies.

**H2.** States with better birth legacies are more likely to win wars than states with worse birth legacies.

It is worth discussing two potential critiques of our argument before describing our research design. The first is that we anticipate finding support for our argument when considering interstate and civil wars.5 We recognize that this aspect of our argument is potentially controversial for two reasons. The first, explicitly discussed above, is that most civil war scholars assert that civil wars inherently retard state development (Collier 2003). However, and as also noted above, state making researchers who consider a longer time horizon argue that fighting and winning civil wars are crucial to successful state development (Porter 1994; Tilly 1985). The second reason is that scholars almost always analyze civil and interstate wars separately. It is questionable whether this standard practice should be standard. Cunningham and Lemke (2013) demonstrate that not only are many

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4. Nevertheless, some states experience much war yet remain poorly made, hinting that Taylor and Botea’s (2008, 34) suggestion that wars make states given a preexisting presence of national cohesion but otherwise “break” them might be valid. It is not far from this to an expectation that good birth states are further made by war, while bad birth states are broken by war. Such a possibility is consistent with our expectations that good birth states will both fight and win wars more often than will bad birth states.

5. With respect to civil wars, hypothesis 2 expects that good birth states experiencing civil wars are more likely to see government victory than are bad birth states experiencing civil wars.
theoretical arguments about civil and interstate wars complementary but the empirical correlates of onset, duration, and outcome of both interstate and civil wars are extremely similar. Beyond this general point, existing research on state making argues that interstate and intrastate wars should have similar implications for states’ political development (e.g., Tilly 1990), and some scholars explicitly combine civil and interstate wars in their theoretical and empirical analyses (see Wimmer 2013, esp. chap. 4).

A second potential critique is that we do not explicitly consider how strategic interaction and bargaining could influence the relationship between birth legacy and war participation and outcomes. At the most general level, why should states use war to develop politically given that it destroys resources that otherwise could have been used for state development? State making researchers argue that states’ leaders are willing to fight wars in exchange for a chance to increase the breadth and depth of their control over territory. For example, Levi (1981) and Tilly (1990) argue that intrastate and interstate wars are driven by leaders who want to maximize revenue through greater control over the territory they rule and the acquisition of new territory. While war is ex post inefficient if an ex ante bargaining range exists in a unitary actor framework (Fearon 1995), it can be rational when the expected benefits and costs of war are unequally distributed among states’ leaders and populations (e.g., Debs and Goemans 2010).

Even if one accepts that states have used war to develop politically, it is reasonable to ask whether strategic behavior might affect the relationship between a state’s birth legacy and war participation and/or outcomes. For instance, if we think that good birth states are more likely to win the wars they fight than states with negative birth legacies, then a straightforward bargaining expectation is that, all else equal, good birth states should be less likely to fight civil or interstate wars. This would occur because potential opponents, be they a domestic opposition group or an interstate competitor, would be more likely to offer concessions in hopes of avoiding the costs associated with fighting a losing war against a good birth state. This runs directly counter to our expectation in hypothesis 1. Similarly, a bargaining framework might contradict hypothesis 2. If good birth states are expected to be especially formidable, the only opponents that will resist them to the point where war occurs will either be even more formidable states or states with such high resolve that they will be willing to bear high costs. Meanwhile, bad birth states should disproportionately select themselves out of wars in which they are likely to lose. These two dynamics suggest that good birth states should be more likely to lose the wars they find themselves involved in.

The bargaining perspective is popular with conflict scholars because of its focus on strategic interaction and its demonstrated theoretical fertility. This second characteristic is particularly important with respect to expectations about birth legacies. What we mean is, it is straightforward enough to develop bargaining expectations about good birth states being both more likely to fight wars and more likely to win them, in direct contrast to the bargaining expectations we developed in the previous paragraph. How so? There is likely to be uncertainty about the precise level of capacity and legitimacy associated with a new state’s birth experience. Per Fearon (1995), all states have an incentive to represent their birth experience as positive in this regard. This incentive could result in well-born states making demands that seem unrealistically strong to opponents. If a war were to occur as a result of these dynamics, the well-born state would likely win this war because it would be more formidable than its opponent suspected.

Even after a state has persisted long enough for the implications of its birth legacy to have become clear, it is possible to motivate bargaining expectations about the link between birth legacies and war. Generally, well-born states will begin well and improve over time. Their capacity and legitimacy make wars and victories more likely, and as a result, such states can be expected to go from strength to even greater strength in the future. It is difficult for a state to promise credibly to adhere to bargains in the future after its power has increased (Fearon 1995). Well-born rising powers will have incentives to revisit bargains they struck previously. Striking a bargain with a well-born state is risky. It might be better to wage war against it now and avoid having to accept worse bargains in the future. This credible commitment logic suggests that well-born states should experience more war even after they are well established and any uncertainty about the consequences of their birth experience have become clear to all.

The bargaining perspective is a useful addition to conflict scholars’ toolkits. Our main goal in this article is to present birth legacies as a new concept and to test hypotheses about it that are motivated by state making arguments. We have shown that it is possible to use the bargaining perspective to motivate hypotheses consistent with our expectations about the influence of birth legacy on war participation and out-

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6. We thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this question.
7. Additionally, civil wars might be unlikely to occur in good birth states if their greater legitimacy and capacity limits domestic discontent and, thus, the existence of rebel groups.
comes and contradictory to them as well. It is likely that more rigorous theorizing about birth legacies from a bargaining perspective will generate additional hypotheses. We look forward to such efforts, but they are beyond the scope of this article.

RESEARCH DESIGN
We argue that birth legacies influence state making success and that fighting and winning wars are evidence of successful state making. Our primary analyses assess our expectations using a state-year data set of the 219 members of the COW interstate system from 1816 to 2002.

Our dependent variables indicate whether a state was involved in a war and, if so, whether it won that war. We code the first dependent variable (war participant) as one in year t if a state is an original participant in a COW interstate war in year t or is involved as the government side in a COW intrastate war in year t; otherwise this variable is coded zero. Our second dependent variable is coded one if the state won the war. We also created versions of these variables that consider only interstate war participation and outcomes or only civil war participation and outcomes. Data for these variables are from Sarkees and Wayman (2010).

As described above, we coded each state’s birth legacy from Stearns’s (2001) historical compendium, the ICOW Colonial History Data Set (Hensel 2006), and, when necessary, national historical monographs. Our primary measure of a state’s birth type, Birth Legacy, is a scale that ranges from one (derelict decolonization) to six (indigenous generation). Models with a dichotomous measure (good/bad) or a trichotomous measure (good/neutral/bad) of birth legacy yield the same conclusions as presented here and are reported in the appendix, available online. The appendix also provides more detail about how we coded birth legacy and the relationship between birth type and a state’s political capacity and legitimacy.

At least two possible critiques of our measures of birth legacy, and thus our subsequent inferences, exist. First, one might object that our measures of birth legacy stack the deck in favor of finding that European states have been more successful at state making and thus are more likely to participate in and win interstate and civil wars than African states. Indeed, on average, European states have more positive birth legacies and African states have less positive birth legacies than states located in other parts of the world (these relationships are significant at the .01 level). The second critique is that older states have better birth legacies and therefore have state making advantages over younger states. Consistent with this idea, our data suggest that states with positive birth legacies are older than states without positive birth legacies (137 vs. 72 years old as of 2002; difference significant at p < .01). To mitigate against the possibility that our results are driven by these dynamics, all of our analyses contain control variables for a state’s (logged) age and whether it is located in Europe or Africa. The inclusion of these variables should render birth legacy insignificant if a state’s age, Europe’s well-born states, and/or Africa’s poorly-born states are driving the relationship between birth legacies and war.

Time-series cross-sectional analyses that utilize dichotomous dependent variables often exhibit significant duration dependence. Failure to account for duration dependence can lead to inefficient estimates and faulty inferences. Following the advice of Carter and Signorino (2010), we model duration dependence using the cubic polynomial of the number of years since a state’s last involvement in a war, an interstate war, or a civil war in our statistical analyses.

Our primary statistical analyses are conducted with censored probit estimators. Censored probits allow for efficient and unbiased estimates of multistage processes in which the outcomes of the two stages are dichotomous and the second stage only occurs given a positive outcome on the first stage (Cameron and Trivedi 2005, 551). The benefit of the censored probit here is that it allows us to jointly estimate war participation and war outcomes (Clark and Reed 2003) and Lemke and Regan (2004) are examples). Obtaining unbiased and efficient parameter estimates from censored probits requires identification through an exclusion restriction(s) (Cameron and Trivedi 2005, 551). Our models are identified by including the cubic polynomial of the number of years since a state’s last war and its number of neighbors (Cunningham and Lemke 2013) in the war participation equations but not in the war outcome equations.

RESULTS
We begin by demonstrating the plausibility of our expectations with summary statistics on patterns of war participation.
Figure 2 presents the average number of wars states with a positive birth legacy (solid square) and states without a positive birth legacy (open circle) fought (row 1) and won (row 2) during the period from 1816 to 2002. Figure 2 demonstrates two noteworthy patterns. First, good birth states fought and won more wars than states without positive birth legacies (col. A). Second, the relationships between birth legacy and war participation and war outcomes generally persist when we analyze only interstate wars (col. B) or civil wars (col. C). The differences in war participation and outcome across birth type are significant at greater than the .01 level.

Turning to our primary analyses, standard results tables do not allow for an assessment of the joint probability of a state fighting and winning a war with a censored probit. We therefore report results tables in the appendix and focus our discussion here on a set of predicted probabilities derived from post-estimation simulations of the censored probit models. The simulations assumed states that were the mean age, had the mean number of neighbors, and were not located in Europe or Africa. Figure 3 presents our analysis of the relationship between birth legacy and war participation.

Row 1 of figure 3 reports the probability of war participation for a state with the best birth legacy (indigenous generation with dashed line) and a state with the worst
birth legacy (derelict decolonization with dotted line) for the first 50 years after their previous war. Consistent with our argument, the probabilities of war in general (col. A), interstate war (col. B), and civil war (col. C) are consistently higher for states with a positive birth legacy than states with a bad birth legacy. To assess whether these estimated quantities are statistically different from one another, we calculated the expected difference in the probability of war across birth type. These differences are reported in row 2 of figure 3. As the 95% confidence intervals in each panel lie completely above the zero line, our analyses indicate that states with a positive birth legacy are statistically more likely to fight a war in general, an interstate war, or a civil war in a given year than states with a negative birth legacy.

Figure 3 is consistent with our claim that states with a positive birth legacy are more likely to fight wars than states with negative birth legacies. To assess our argument about war outcomes, we used postestimation simulations to calculate the joint probability that a state fought and won a war in a given year as a function of birth legacy. This quantity tells us the likelihood that a state will achieve the state making success of winning a war in a particular year. The probabilities that a state with the best birth legacy (indigenous generation with dashed line) and the state with the worst birth legacy (derelict decolonization with dotted line) fought and won a war in the 50 years following their last war are presented in row 1 of figure 4. Per expectations, we find that the probability of fighting and winning any war (col. A), an interstate war (col. B), or a civil war (col. C) is higher for states with a better birth legacy. The second row in figure 4 reports the difference in these predicted probabilities. As the confidence intervals about the expected differences lie completely above zero in each panel, row 2 indicates that states with a positive birth legacy are statistically more likely to fight and win a war (regardless of type) in a given year than are states with a negative birth legacy.

Figure 4 indicates that states with a positive birth legacy are more likely to win a war in a given year than are states that did not have a good birth. It is worth highlighting an interesting aspect of this finding. The results of our primary censored probits suggest that good birth states are more likely to win wars than states without a positive birth legacy because they are more likely to fight wars, not because they are more likely to win the wars they fight. This inference follows from the findings that a good birth state is statistically more likely to participate in a war but is no more or less likely to win a war given its participation (the coefficients on Birth Legacy in the war outcome equations of the
censored probit models are insignificant). Thus, our primary analyses imply that the state making success of good birth states with respect to winning wars is driven by the fact that they are disproportionately the states fighting wars.

With respect to our control variables, European countries are significantly less likely to participate in wars, interstate wars, or civil wars, and African countries are less likely to fight an interstate war. With the exception of the finding that European countries are more likely to win civil wars, we find no relationship between our regional indicators and war outcomes. We find that a state’s age is generally unrelated to war participation or war outcomes, the exception being a positive relationship with civil war onset. Our results also suggest that our censored probits are at least weakly identified: we find that the probability of fighting a war in general or an interstate war is increasing in a state’s number of neighbors and the presence of duration dependence in war participation in all three models.

**Additional Analyses**

We find that states with better birth legacies are more likely to fight and win wars than states with less advantageous birth legacies. We conducted an extensive set of additional analyses to ensure our results persist given alternative specifications, statistical estimators, and units of analysis. We highlight the most important of these robustness checks here and fully report our additional analyses in the appendix.

It is plausible that the effect of birth legacy on war participation and outcomes is conditional on a state’s age (for an example, see our discussion of bargaining dynamics). We therefore estimated a set of models that interacted a state’s birth legacy and its (logged) age. The relationship between a state’s birth legacy, age, and war is complex. Regardless of their age, states with positive birth legacies are significantly more likely to fight and win wars in general than states with poor birth legacies. However, pooling interstate and civil wars masks important dynamics. As they get older, states with positive birth legacies are increasingly likely to fight and win interstate wars than states with negative birth experiences (differences become significant at age 12). In contrast, states with positive birth experiences are more likely to fight and win civil wars than states with poor birth legacies for their first 111 years, but not after. We are hesitant to engage in too much post hoc theorizing, but these results suggest that states with positive birth legacies might have a harder time credibly committing to interstate bargains but are able

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12. We thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this possibility.
to consolidate control over domestic politics more quickly than states with negative birth legacies.

Censored probit models yield biased and inefficient parameter estimates if they are not well identified. Explanatory variables that account for duration dependence are weak exclusion restrictions as they are functions of the dependent variable of the selection equation (Brandt and Schneider 2007). Additionally, the greater the number of shared explanatory variables in the selection and outcome equations of a censored probit, the more difficult it is to identify a censored probit with exclusion restrictions (Brandt and Schneider 2007). It is possible that our inferences about the relationship between birth legacy and the conditional probability of winning a war given participation are faulty. We conducted two sets of robustness checks that jointly estimate the probability of fighting and winning a war that avoid identification through exclusion restrictions. First, we estimated models using Sartori’s (2003) selection estimator, which achieves identification by assuming a fixed value for $\rho$. The results yielded by Sartori’s estimator indicate that, compared to a state with a negative birth legacy, a state with a positive birth legacy is significantly more likely to participate in and win a war, an interstate war, and a civil war in a given year and that the conditional probability of winning a war is also significantly higher for a good birth state. Second, we jointly estimated war participation and outcomes with a set of competing risks models.¹³ These models assume a baseline category of peace and that a state could “fail” in a given year by either fighting and winning a war or fighting and losing a war. These models indicate states with better birth legacies are significantly less likely to be at peace and more likely to win a war in a given year.

Our primary statistical analyses control for potential confounders that could drive the relationship between birth legacy and war (a state’s age and regional location) but not intervening variables that could induce posttreatment bias and lead to incorrect inferences (see, among others, King and Zeng [2007] and Ray [2003]; a contrary view is offered by Oneal and Russett [2005]; for an overview, see the special issue of _Conflict Management and Peace Science_ [vol. 22, no. 4], published in 2005). This decision rule is methodologically appropriate but excludes two variables that are commonly included in quantitative models of war onset: capabilities and regime type. Capabilities and regime type represent intervening factors between a state’s birth legacy and war participation as a state’s birth legacy is a significant predictor of both a state’s capabilities and level of democracy (see appendix), and a state’s capabilities (CINC scores) and level of democracy (polity scores) in turn predict patterns of war onset and outcome. Recognizing that omitting these variables might be controversial, we conducted two sets of robustness checks that include measures of a state’s capabilities and regime type. The first added capabilities and regime type to our baseline specifications. The second used “residualization” to identify the effect of birth legacy independent of a state’s capabilities and regime type (Clarke and Stone [2008] describe the process). Consistent with the findings presented here, these analyses indicate that states with positive birth experiences are more likely to fight and win wars than are states with negative birth legacies. Further, they suggest that democracies are less likely to fight wars in general and civil wars and are more likely to win interstate wars, while more powerful states are more likely to fight wars, interstate wars, and civil wars and more likely to win wars in general.

In addition to the above robustness checks, logit models of war participation and war outcomes, cross-sectional analyses conducted with negative binomial models, models estimated with dichotomous and trichotomous measures of birth legacy, and models that include measures of gross domestic product per capita, a state’s population, and dummy variables representing the post–World War II and post–Cold War eras suggest that states with positive birth legacies are more likely to fight and win wars in general, interstate wars, and civil wars than states without positive birth legacies.

Between the analyses presented here and in the appendix, we conducted 164 tests of our hypotheses. All 164 tests were in the predicted direction, 150 were significant at the .05 level using two-tailed tests, and 154 were significant at the .05 level using one-tailed tests. In sum, basic summary statistics, cross-sectional analyses, and time-series cross-sectional analyses are all consistent with our argument that states with a positive birth legacy are more likely to fight and win wars than states with less positive birth legacies.

**Selection effects?**

One might reasonably ask whether two types of nonrandom selection with respect to the states in our data set could be driving our results. First, one might argue that states with positive birth legacies are relatively more likely to fight wars because states with worse birth legacies are more likely to die and drop out of our data set. Second, one might argue that entities with characteristics that would allow them to experience good births are more likely to become states than are proto-states with characteristics that are more likely to result in negative birth experiences. While plausible, either of these processes would make it less likely for us to find support for

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¹³ Diagnostics indicate no violation of the independence of irrelevant alternatives assumption.
our argument because nonrandom selection with respect to good birth states being less likely to die and/or more likely to be born push the empirical world (and, consequently, our data set) toward a world within which birth legacy is (or is nearly) a constant.

In fact, our data are inconsistent with both of these processes. As noted in figure 1, the most common birth type is birth by agreement, which falls in the middle of our six-point index. This cuts against the idea that the states that are born are disproportionately those with characteristics that would lead to a positive birth. Diagnostic analyses offer two pieces of evidence that states with poor birth legacies are not disproportionately likely to die. First, the probability of a state exiting our data set is unrelated to its birth legacy.14 Second, the observed birth legacies of the states included in our data do not become more positive over time.15 Thus, it is unlikely that our findings are due to bias from nonrandom state births and/or state deaths.

CONCLUSION
In the pages above we have presented an argument about the influence of birth legacies on state making processes. We have tested our argument and found considerable support for our expectations about war participation and outcomes. States with a positive birth legacy, those whose emergence required capacity and legitimacy, are both more likely to wage and to win wars. This is true when we consider wars in general, as well as when we distinguish between civil and interstate wars.

In addition to our demonstration that birth legacy is a strong influence on conflict behavior, diagnostic analyses demonstrate that a state’s birth legacy is a significant predictor of its capabilities and regime type. Further, in work being prepared for publication, we have found that birth legacy influences political stability (with respect to regime transitions and state failure). How powerful a state becomes, and how stable its governance structure is, are important considerations within state making research. This is because they are indicators of how well made a state is. We find it very interesting that these indicators of state making are themselves influenced by birth legacies and then subsequently influence variables of interest to IR conflict researchers. It appears that a far larger research agenda about the importance of birth legacies for a wider variety of behaviors, both interstate and domestic, remains to be addressed.

For now we have shown that birth legacies are an important influence on the wars states wage as well as on the outcomes of those wars. The major implication is that researchers who study what states do in the international system might profitably ask first how those states became members of the international system.

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