

Concise Description of the Project

How do rebel group relations shape civil war outcomes? During the Ethiopian civil war, the Tigray Liberation Front (TPLF) in Ethiopia was allied with multiple groups, including the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), while also clashing with multiple rival groups, such as the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). How did these relations between rebels alter the relative capabilities of TPLF? How did the alteration in capabilities shape the civil conflict outcome for these groups?

This project investigates how positive and negative interdependencies between rebel groups influence civil conflict outcomes. The relative capabilities of combatants are pivotal in determining war outcomes (Gent 2011; Mason 2004). Yet, the literature has generally ignored the simultaneous presence of inter-rebel alliances and rivalries that fundamentally alter rebel capabilities. In this project, my co-author and I argue that while inter-rebel alliances enable rebels to reinforce their depleted capabilities, inter-rebel rivalries deplete these capabilities faster. Therefore, rebel groups that benefit from alliances and avoid engaging in rivalries are more likely to survive the war, whereas rebels facing rivals are more likely to settle with the government.

Examining rebel interdependencies and conflict termination data between 1980 and 2018, we will show that allied groups that are not threatened by rivals are less likely to terminate conflict by a peace agreement and attrition. Moreover, in the absence of alliances, rebel groups in rivalry are more likely to end their conflict by a peace agreement. Finally, allied groups facing rivals, unable to seize the benefits of alliances, are more likely to leave war through attrition.

Goals and Objectives

This is the first study that investigates both positive and negative rebel-to-rebel associations as a predictor of war outcomes. The project offers important implications for scholars and practitioners who study multi-party civil wars and inter-rebel interactions. We will publish this research in article form. We plan to submit it to the prestigious peer-reviewed academic journal *Conflict Management and Peace Science* for review.

Timeline for the Project

Summer 2025: Updating the dataset, data analysis, and manuscript writing.

Fall 2025: Completing the first draft and sending the manuscript for review.

Spring 2026: Decision on the manuscript potentially received. I expect the editorial decision to lean towards an invitation to revise and resubmit the manuscript since the immediate decision to accept is very rare in the discipline. We will work on the revisions and resubmit the revised manuscript.

How the project will enhance teaching and research at Lincoln University

I regularly teach Introduction to International Relations (POL 2004) and Comparative Politics I and II (POL 2002 & POL 3003) for the Political Science Major and International Relations Minor. Civil war dynamics and outcomes are common topics in both of these two subfields. In line with *Institutional Learning Outcome 3* on “Diversity and Cultural Awareness” and the “global engagement” mission of the university, my goal is to use my research to enrich these courses.

I regularly teach Introduction to Research Methods for Political Science (POL 4800) and Senior Seminar (POL 4082), offered to seniors majoring in political science. I teach the scientific method and expect students to practice many steps of the scientific method in these courses, namely, framing the research question, conducting a literature review, and writing a theoretical argument. I also teach students how qualitative and quantitative research is conducted. I use my studies in class to demonstrate how different research paper sections are written. In line with the *Institutional Learning Outcome 7 & Political Science Program Learning Outcome 7* on “Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning,” I will use this project as a teaching resource in this course. In addition to using the manuscript, I will also use the dataset as a teaching tool. Students will examine the independent and dependent variables used in the study in MS Excel. We will also discuss the operationalization procedures for the different variables.

Measuring the Project’s Outcomes

We will submit our article to the prestigious peer-reviewed academic journal *Conflict Management and Peace Science (CMPS)* for review. This journal is published by SAGE and the Peace Science Society. *CMPS* currently has an impact factor of 1.82, which is a high impact factor for the discipline. We will also present the paper at the prestigious International Studies Association’s (ISA) annual conference in March 2026 and the prestigious American Political Science Association’s (APSA) annual conference in September 2026.

Sharing the Project’s Outcomes

The outcomes will be shared with the academic community through publication in academic journals and at two national conferences. Moreover, the outcomes will be shared with Introduction to Research Methods (POL 4080), Introduction to International Relations (POL 2004), and Comparative Politics I & II (POL 2002 & 3003) students. I also plan to share the outcome of the project with interested Lincoln faculty and students through a presentation. My co-author is a professor at Binghamton University (SUNY)—findings will be shared at that public university as well.