

The statistical results demonstrate that scarcity is no cause of *internal* violent collective action, which would be a very valuable insight by itself. Such a conclusion implies, however, that the appropriation of resources as a goal of warfare means plundering or seizing the land of *other* societies or political communities. Table 7 shows, that this is not the case. Plunder is significantly related to all other forms and material motives of violent conflict, except the subjugation of territory or people, and especially the correlations with internal violent conflict are very high. On the other hand, the acquisition of land is significantly related primarily to external warfare. As already suggested above, the subjugation of territory or people can be regarded to be conceptually distinct from all other variables besides the collection of tribute.

Conclusion

The aim of the present study has been a test of alternative theories related to the scarcity-hypothesis in anthropological conflict research. None of the previous explanations, based on one-dimensional concepts of scarcity, could be confirmed by the data. On the other hand, the socio-ecological explanation developed in this paper proves to be valid for an explanation of the crucial dependent variable, the acquisition of land. Further, three other types of violent conflict or its motives – external warfare, subjugation of territory or people and collection of tribute – turned out to be determined primarily by internal societal antagonisms, rather than demographical or ecological factors. Only plunder may be predicted without taking into consideration social stratification. However, the appropriate model contains an unexpected interaction effect, which has not been foreseen by the socio-ecological argument and which runs counter to the causal mechanisms underlying the demographical explanations.

While the present study could demonstrate the general validity of a socio-ecological explanation of violent conflict, the results are far from complete. The measurement of distributional flexibility or restriction had to recur on an existing and rather approximate measure, social stratification. Some new variables have been constructed which shall provide more fine grained measures of this phenomenon as well as for land-scarcity, and coding is currently underway.

References

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