INTRODUCTION

In the last few years academics have made progress in understanding the processes that lead toward peace and conversely, toward domestic conflict. Understanding the dynamics that affect whether or not a country will fall victim to civil war or become a stabilized regime is relevant for world leaders who wish to create a positive outcome of peace negotiations and influence policy makers crafting democratization initiatives. There has been recognition of the need to study regime type and frequency of civil unrest, but little empirical analysis has been done that concentrates on countries with varying levels of democracy (i.e. countries that are consolidated democracies versus transitional democracies). The problem with previous empirical studies of conflict is the intensity of the conflict has been measured annually — making measurements of the frequency of unrest impossible.

Research has been done concerning the relationship between intensity of conflict as countries move between democratic and authoritarian regimes [1], but this does not examine changes in unrest patterns between more or less democratic countries. Knowledge regarding the frequency of conflict incidents will give us a more detailed picture of how much conflict there is as opposed to how serious the conflict is. Previous research has examined the seriousness of conflict, but this does not tell us how much conflict different regimes experience [1][2]. An empirical analysis of the amount of conflict that is experienced by different democracies will give us a better understanding of the nature of conflict within various regimes. Up until today, it has been assumed that studying the seriousness of conflict is sufficient when examining conflict inside different regimes. Studying the quantity and frequency of conflict will inform scholars if there is a disparity in the research concerning the study conflict. If the findings of this report are consistent with previous theories, no relevant disparities may be assumed. Additionally, previous studies have focused on civil war and violence as a measurement of civil unrest. These are important, but they only capture the extreme incidents of rebellion; they do not show if conflict continues in a country after violence has subdued. We address this issue by including non-violent protests as a variable.

In this paper we hope to conduct a preliminary analysis of the relation between regime type and conflict frequency. First, we will describe the two variables being used: the frequencies of both nonviolent protests and more serious rebellions will determine the frequency of conflict (dependent variable) in countries with varying levels of democracy (independent variable). This is followed by a literature review which explains the relevant background to our hypothesis. It is hypothesized that transitional democracies (having recently switched from autocracies to semi-democratic countries) will have a significantly higher frequency of conflict incidents than consolidating (countries that have a substantial amount of democratic traits) and consolidated democracies (fully democratic countries). Additionally, we hypothesize that more democratic countries are prone to a higher frequency of incidents of protests (non-violent conflict) since consolidated democracies provide more opportunities for non-violent opposition to the government [2].

CONFLICT FREQUENCY AND TYPE OF DEMOCRACY

It will be important to determine if there is a correlation between regime type (the type of democracy) and the frequency of conflict within a country. To test this, the dependent variable of conflict occurrence will be measured using a binary coding scheme. Either a zero (no incident of conflict) or a one (some form of conflict) will be coded to a country for each month of the years 2004 through 2006. This variable will be dependent on regime type (level of democracy). To determine the level of democracy (regime type), polity data from the Integrated Network for Social Conflict Research will be used to rank countries from transitionally democratic (coded 0 polity) to consolidated democracies (coded 10 polity). Transitionally democratic countries will be countries scored between zero and three, consolidating democracies between four and seven, and consolidated democracies between eight and ten.

FREQUENCY OF REBELLION: APPLYING HEGRE’S ANALYSIS

There is a general consensus amongst scholars that countries at either pole of the polity continuum — namely consolidated democracies and autocracies — experience lower levels of unrest as compared to transitional, intermediate regimes. These intermediate regimes “possess inherent contradictions as a result of being neither democratic nor autocratic” [1], and the literature suggests that this middle ground is correlated with the increased potential for unrest. Our theory builds on the analysis done by Hegre of the “relative risk of civil war as a function of democracy and time since most recent regime change, 1816-1992” [1]. Whereas Hegre’s analysis uses level of democracy and time since most recent regime change to gauge a country’s relative risk of civil war, our theory broadens the unrest variable considerably and disregards regime change altogether. Instead we apply the most basic theoretical assumptions of Hegre, namely that intermediate regimes are more likely to experience unrest, and apply them to all incidents of rebellion. By zooming out to include all unrest in the form of rebellion, as opposed to focusing only on civil wars, we theorize that the conditions of intermediate regimes engender a climate conducive to more violent unrest on a variety of levels. We also expand our study to include protest as a related but different form of unrest. By analyzing unrest in two separate categories — rebellion and protest — we cast a broader net than Hegre’s study. Further, our study looks at the actual occurrence of unrest, as opposed to the risk of such events occurring.

It should be noted that some portion of our rebellion variable does in fact coincide with Hegre. Civil war, while rare in the data we analyzed, is included as a portion of the rebellion variable. However, our rebellion variable is much more of a catch all, including political banditry,