CIVIL WAR

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There is no comprehensive definition of a civil war that all scholars agree upon. The simplest definition is that of a violent conflict in which organized groups within a country fight against each other for political control (of the center, a region, or over a separatist state) or to change government policies.

According to the fuller definition developed largely by J. David Singer and Melvin Small, a civil war is an armed conflict that has: (1) challenged the sovereignty of an internationally recognized state; (2) occurred within the recognized boundaries of that state; (3) involved the state as one of the principal combatants; (4) included rebels with the ability to mount an organized opposition; (5) involved parties concerned with the prospect of living together in the same political unit after the end of the war; and (6) caused more than one thousand deaths. Both government forces and an identifiable rebel organization must have suffered at least five percent of these casualties. Although the authors added this last condition on fatalities to rule out both terrorism or low-level political strife (that is, banditry), and state-led massacres where there is no organized rebel opposition, some social scientists claim this number is too low and prefer to stipulate that an average of one thousand people be killed per year. There is no clear threshold for how much violence is necessary to qualify a conflict as a civil war. Insurgencies, anticolonial wars, and wars of secession may at times be classified as civil wars by some historians if organized armies fight conventional battles, if there is prolonged violence between organized factions or defined regions of a country, and if they involve a total of one thousand deaths with a minimum of one hundred deaths annually. Civil wars are often triggered by coups d'état.

Revolutions and Religious Wars. Civil wars are also closely related to revolutions, especially if they involve the prospect of key social or ideological restructuring. Both civil wars and revolutions are internal or intrastate—as opposed to interstate—conflicts. Whereas a civil war generally means the leaders of the opposing sides were once part of the same ruling authority beforehand, a revolution is the successful result of citizens versus the ruling authorities. In fact, a revolution can be viewed as a type of civil war that involves mass demonstrations in the capital city in favor of deposing the regime. Some uprisings or civil wars are renamed "revolutions" if they succeed, as in the French Revolution (1789–1799), Russian Revolution (1917), and American Revolution (1776). Likewise, Marxist historians describe the English Civil Wars (1642–1651) as the English Revolution, since this conflict led to the execution of the Charles I, the exile of his son Charles II, and the replacement of the English monarchy with first the Commonwealth of England (1649–1653) and then with a Protectorate (1653–1659) under the personal rule of Oliver Cromwell.

Religious tensions have sparked most premodern civil wars and many modern civil wars as well. The rise of Islam witnessed a rash of uprisings against non-Islamic rulers, and the Shiite-Sunni divide has generated repeated civil conflicts. In China an attempt at religious revolution caused the bloody civil war known as the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864). The Protestant Reformation in Europe had a similar effect, sparking years of both civil and international wars of religion. Civil wars between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism consumed France in the Wars of Religion (1562–1598); the Netherlands during the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648); Germany during the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648); and, more recently, the Troubles of Northern Ireland (1922–1923; 1968–1998). Official persecution of Catholics during the French Revolution spurred the counterrevolutionary Revolt in the Vendée (1793–1796). Religious disputes among Protestant sects also played a role in the English Civil Wars.

Modern Civil Wars. By definition, modern civil wars generally began only in the seventeenth century, with the rise of the nation-state (that is, a political unit consisting of an autonomous state inhabited predominantly by a people sharing a common culture, history, and language). Ending the

Thirty Years' War, the Peace of Westphalia (1648) is commonly viewed as the progenitor of the modern nation-state and the principle of sovereignty (that is, supreme power over a body politic without external control). Nationalism and imperialism generally repaced religion as the motor of conflict in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as new scientific inventions during the Enlightenment accelerated transportation, communication, overseas trade, and rivalries over colonies (steamships, 1807; railroads, 1820s; telegraph, 1844, and so on).

After France's defeat (1763) in the Seven Years' War, Britain became the foremost European trade power in India, and the British East India Company instigated local land-grabbing wars. The discovery of diamonds (1867) and gold (1880s) in sub-Saharan Africa intensified Dutch-British rivalry and accelerated imperial expansion there, resulting in other wars (for example, Anglo-Zulu War, 1879; South African War, 1899–1902). British exports of opium to China resulted in the Opium Wars (1840–1842; 1856–1860). Depressed economic conditions across Europe in 1845–1846 led to the revolutions (civil wars) of 1848 between royalist absolutists and democratic reformers in France, Poland, Brazil, the Habsburg Empire, and the German and Italian states. In Switzerland three years earlier (1845) a civil war broke out between Catholic and Protestant cantons, but a federal constitution was instituted in 1848.

Extreme ideologies like communism (Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, 1848) and its refutation, fascism,spawned several insurgencies and civil wars (Russian Civil War, 1918–1920; Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939; first Chinese Civil War (1928–1937) and contributed to the larger Cold War. Defined as a period of intense conflict, without direct military engagement, between the United States and the Soviet Union from the mid-1940s to the early 1990s, the Cold War had geopolitical and nuclear, as well as ideological, dimensions. It shifted the theater of war away from Europe, sparking crises, civil wars, and revolutions in every other region. The superpowers sought to keep new "dominoes" from falling to the opposite ideological camp, often engaging in proxy wars, while local elites played one superpower off the other to gain foreign aid. In the Middle East, these conflicts include Iran, 1946; the Greek Civil War, 1946–1949; the Suez Crisis, 1956; and the Iranian Revolution, 1978–1979. In Latin America conflicts

arose such as the Colombian Civil War, 1948–1958; the U.S.-led coup d'etat in Guatemala, 1954; the Cuban Revolution, 1959; the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962; the Dominican Republic crisis, 1965; El Salvador's civil war, 1980–1992; Peru's civil war, 1981–1990; and the Nicaraguan Civil War, 1981–1990. Asia was torn by several civil wars, including the Chinese Civil War, 1946–1949; the First Indochina War 1946–1954; the Korean Civil War, 1950–1953; the Vietnam War, 1964–1973; the Cambodian Civil War, 1975–1979; Sri Lanka's civil war, 1983–2002; and Afghanistan's civil war, 1988–2001. Finally, in Africa, the list includes Kenya's Mau Mau insurrection, 1952–1959; the French-Algerian War, 1954–1962; the Congo Crisis, 1960–1965; Mozambique's civil wars, 1962–1975 and 1977–1992; the South African Border War, 1966–1989; the Angolan Civil War, 1974–2002; Ethiopia, 1974–1991; Uganda, 1981–1986; and Rwanda, 1990–1994.

Civil Wars and the Nation-State. As Charles Tilly and others have argued, civil wars are often closely linked to state formation. Civil wars and revolutions shaped the modern European nation-state between 1792 and 1945 by forcing competing elites in a Darwinian struggle for sovereignty to forge the mechanisms of state governance: drafting constitutions, forming bureaucracies, and instituting taxation and conscription. By contrast, African states were formed mostly by external conquest by British, French, Dutch, and Portuguese imperialists who quickly subdued natives with their superior firepower. The territories thus conquered were formed into states that had no internal rationale, their borders having been delineated by the European states that conquered them. Even after the anticolonial wars (wars of decolonization, or "wars of national independence") of the 1950s and 1960s, the continued survival of African states was assured, not by their own efforts at state and nation building, but by the norms of the United Nations to protect states' sovereignty. If the colonial powers had not carved up Africa, an indigenous process of state formation might have proceeded. Two examples of the link between war and state formation in Africa are Ethiopia and Eritrea. Distinguished from other African states by its adherence to Christianity (not Islam) and its written language, Ethiopia succeeded in defeating an invading European army (Italy) in March 1896 at the Battle of Adwa with an army of over 100,000 men.

Eritrea, although incorporated into Ethiopia between 1952 and 1991, also achieved independence after its successful war of secession in 1991.

As communist regimes collapsed in Eastern Europe (1989) and the Cold War came to an end (1991), prompting the withdrawal of both superpowers and former colonial powers, African states have been left to face the challenges of state formation alone. As a result, civil wars in this region have multiplied (for example, Liberia, 1989–1996 and 1999–2003; Sudan, 1983–2005; Somalia, 1988–2007, ongoing). Many have attributed this increase in violent civil wars to Africa's high degree of ethnic diversity. Civil wars and irredentist or separatist conflicts also erupted at this time in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union: Yugoslav Civil War, 1991–2001; Georgian Civil War (in South Ossetia, 1988–1992, and Abkhazia, 1992–1993); Tajikistan Civil War (1992–1997); Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict (1988–1994); Trans-Dniester conflict in Moldova (1992); Russian-Chechen Wars (December 1994– August 1996 and August 1999–2007, ongoing). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, tensions also arose between Hungary and Romania regarding the treatment of the Hungarian minority in the Romanian region of Transylvania.

Scholars like Samuel P. Huntington (*The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 1996) have argued that ethnicity is the key cause of these civil wars and conflicts. They predict a world split by differences between Islam and other major cultures, that is, ethnic warfare on a global scale. Indeed, many civil wars involve efforts by ethnic groups to secede or achieve autonomy from a nation-state. Such ethnic groups are usually not confined to individual states, but are linked to diasporas in neighboring states, which often fund war efforts. Thus, relations between minority groups and national governments can often lead to ethnic frictions with other states. In 1999, for example, the Albanian revolt in Macedonia was to a large extent a continuation of forces previously mobilized in Kosovo. Econometricians Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler opine that it is easier to start and support a rebellion when a state is polarized, that is, when an ethnic group accounts for 40–60 percent of the state's population. However, the literature on civil wars also suggests that ethnic diversity in other cases may

actually reduce the risk of large-scale violent conflict. If a state is composed of several minority ethnic groups, the government might find it easier to pit these groups against each other and prevent them from gaining mass support for their cause. Scholars find that, globally, countries with either highly homogeneous—or highly diverse populations—are the most capable in preventing violent conflicts than in ethnically or religiously polarized countries. Hence, they find that some Asian countries have a greater risk of civil war than poorer African countries due to their ethnically polarized societies.

Data on civil wars from 1945 to 1999 suggest to other econometricians such as James Fearon and David Laitin that ethnically or religiously polarized countries have been no more likely to experience significant civil violence than more homogenous states. Instead, economic viability is the most convincing explanation of rebellion. Civil wars are more prevalent in those states where conditions favor insurgency: large populations, political instability in new or failing states, rough terrain enabling rebels to hide easily, external financing, and extreme poverty (countries with a gross domestic product of less than $6,500 per person). Thus, the upsurge in civil wars in the post–Cold War era, especially in Africa and Asia, they believe, is part of a longer-term trend based on decolonization that created a system dominated numerically by weak states. Compared to all other regions, Africa today is the most prone to civil war. The median per capita GDP in Africa accounts for less than one-half that of Asia and less than one-eighth the income level of Europe and North America. In the twenty-first century interstate or civil wars far outnumber interstate wars in both number and intensity. They are beginning faster and ending more slowly. Civil wars involving guerrilla warfare are the hardest to end, since a small number of rebels can inflict considerable damage. Effective counterinsurgency armies usually require a 3-to-1 ratio. Since weak states lack such large armies, they often resort to drastic measures like burning entire villages instead of identifying rebel leaders. Such brutal tactics generate even greater popular support for the insurgents. International and nongovernmental organizations should develop programs in developing countries that promote economic growth, strong democratic institutions, and legal accountability. Aid to

countries fighting civil wars should be conditional upon their degree of participatory government and their employment of effective counterinsurgency strategies that do not kill innocent people.

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