

taken an action that weakens their military, political or economical power. Commitment problems may deter a lasting peace agreement as the powers in question are aware that neither of them is able to commit to their end of the bargain in the future.^[30] States are often unable to escape conflict traps (recurring civil war conflicts) due to the lack of strong political and legal institutions that motivate bargaining, settle disputes, and enforce peace settlements.^[31]

Governance

Political scientist Barbara F. Walter suggests that most contemporary civil wars are actually repeats of earlier civil wars that often arise when leaders are not accountable to the public, when there is poor public participation in politics, and when there is a lack of transparency of information between the executives and the public. Walter argues that when these issues are properly reversed, they act as political and legal restraints on executive power forcing the established government to better serve the people. Additionally, these political and legal restraints create a standardized avenue to influence government and increase the commitment credibility of established peace treaties. It is the strength of a nation's institutionalization and good governance—not the presence of democracy nor the poverty level—that is the number one indicator of the chance of a repeat civil war, according to Walter.^[31]

Military advantage

High levels of population dispersion and, to a lesser extent, the presence of mountainous terrain, increased the chance of conflict. Both of these factors favor rebels, as a population dispersed outward toward the borders is harder to control than one concentrated in a central region, while mountains offer terrain where rebels can seek sanctuary.^[15] Rough terrain was highlighted as one of the more important factors in a 2006 systematic review.^[24]



Communist soldiers during the Battle of Siping, Chinese Civil War, 1946

Population size

The various factors contributing to the risk of civil war rise increase with population size. The risk of a civil war rises approximately proportionately with the size of a country's population.^[14]

Poverty

There is a correlation between poverty and civil war, but the causality (which causes the other) is unclear.^[32] Some studies have found that in regions with lower income per capita, the likelihood of civil war is greater. Economists Simeon Djankov and Marta Reynal-Querol argue that the correlation is spurious, and that lower income and heightened conflict are instead products of other phenomena.^[33] In contrast, a study by Alex Braithwaite and colleagues showed systematic evidence of "a causal arrow running from poverty to conflict".^[34]

Inequality

While there is a supposed negative correlation between absolute welfare levels and the probability of civil war outbreak, relative deprivation may actually be a more pertinent possible cause. Historically, higher inequality levels led to higher civil war probability. Since colonial rule or

population size are known to increase civil war risk, also, one may conclude that "the discontent of the colonized, caused by the creation of borders across tribal lines and bad treatment by the colonizers"^[35] is one important cause of civil conflicts.^[35]

Time

The more time that has elapsed since the last civil war, the less likely it is that a conflict will recur. The study had two possible explanations for this: one opportunity-based and the other grievance-based. The elapsed time may represent the depreciation of whatever capital the rebellion was fought over and thus increase the opportunity cost of restarting the conflict. Alternatively, elapsed time may represent the gradual process of healing of old hatreds. The study found that the presence of a diaspora substantially reduced the positive effect of time, as the funding from diasporas offsets the depreciation of rebellion-specific capital.^[19]

Evolutionary psychologist Satoshi Kanazawa has argued that an important cause of intergroup conflict may be the relative availability of women of reproductive age. He found that polygyny greatly increased the frequency of civil wars but not interstate wars.^[36] Gleditsch et al. did not find a relationship between ethnic groups with polygyny and increased frequency of civil wars but nations having legal polygamy may have more civil wars. They argued that misogyny is a better explanation than polygyny. They found that increased women's rights were associated with fewer civil wars and that legal polygamy had no effect after women's rights were controlled for.^[37]

Political scholar Elisabeth Wood from Yale University offers yet another rationale for why civilians rebel and/or support civil war. Through her studies of the Salvadoran Civil War, Wood finds that traditional explanations of greed and grievance are not sufficient to explain the emergence of that insurgent movement.^[38] Instead, she argues that "emotional engagements" and "moral commitments" are the main reasons why thousand of civilians, most of them from poor and rural backgrounds, joined or supported the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, despite individually facing both high risks and virtually no foreseeable gains. Wood also attributes participation in the civil war to the value that insurgents assigned to changing social relations in El Salvador, an experience she defines as the "pleasure of agency".^[39]

Duration and effects

Ann Hironaka, author of Neverending Wars, divides the modern history of civil wars into the pre-19th century, 19th century to early 20th century, and late 20th century. In 19th-century Europe, the length of civil wars fell significantly, largely due to the nature of the conflicts as battles for the power center of the state, the strength of centralized governments, and the normally quick and decisive intervention by other states to support the government. Following World War II the duration of civil wars grew past the norm of the pre-19th century, largely due to weakness of the many postcolonial states and the intervention by major powers on both sides of conflict. The most obvious commonality to civil wars are that they occur in fragile states.^[40]

In the 19th and early 20th centuries

Civil wars in the 19th century and in the early 20th century tended to be short; civil wars between 1900 and 1944 lasted on average one and a half years.^[41] The state itself formed the obvious center of authority in the majority of cases, and the civil wars were thus fought for control of the state. This meant that whoever had control of the capital and the military could normally crush

resistance. A rebellion which failed to quickly seize the capital and control of the military for itself normally found itself doomed to rapid destruction. For example, the fighting associated with the 1871 Paris Commune occurred almost entirely in Paris, and ended quickly once the military sided with the government^[42] at Versailles and conquered Paris.

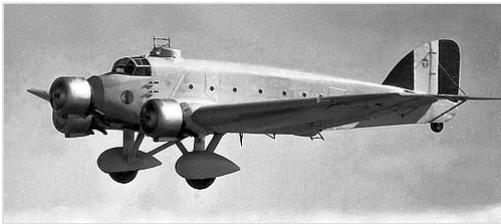


An artillery school set up by the anti-socialist "Whites" during the Finnish Civil War, 1918

The power of non-state actors resulted in a lower value placed on sovereignty in the 18th and 19th centuries, which further reduced the number of civil wars. For example, the pirates of the Barbary Coast were recognized as *de facto* states because of their military power. The Barbary pirates thus had no need to rebel against the Ottoman Empire—their nominal state government—to gain recognition of their sovereignty. Conversely, states such as Virginia and Massachusetts in the United States of America did not have sovereign status, but had significant political and economic independence coupled with weak federal control, reducing the incentive to secede.^[43]



Members of the Red Guards during the Finnish Civil War of 1918



A plane, supported by smaller fighter planes, of Italian Legionary Air Force, allied to Francisco Franco's Nationalists, bombs Madrid during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939)

The two major global ideologies, monarchism and democracy, led to several civil wars. However, a bi-polar world, divided between the two ideologies, did not develop, largely due to the dominance of monarchists through most of the period. The monarchists would thus normally intervene in other countries to stop democratic movements taking control and forming democratic governments, which were seen by monarchists as being both dangerous and unpredictable. The Great Powers (defined in the 1815 Congress of Vienna as the United Kingdom, Habsburg Austria, Prussia, France, and Russia) would frequently coordinate interventions in other nations' civil wars, nearly always on the side of the incumbent government. Given the military strength of the Great Powers, these interventions nearly always proved decisive and quickly ended the civil wars.^[44]

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There were several exceptions from the general rule of quick civil wars during this period. The American Civil War (1861–1865) was unusual for at least two reasons: it was fought around regional identities as well as political ideologies, and it ended through a war of attrition, rather than with a decisive battle over control of the capital, as was the norm. The Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) proved exceptional because *both* sides in the struggle received support from intervening great powers: Germany, Italy, and Portugal supported opposition leader Francisco Franco, while France and the Soviet Union supported the government^[45] (see proxy war).