



Civil Wars Continued

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POLI 150

20 February 2024



Announcements

- NO CLASS Feb. 22 and 29.
- Subject pool module 1 open from Feb. 21 until Mar. 6.
Module 2 open from Mar. 27 until Apr. 10. For more information see [the PSSP site](#) or email pssp@unc.edu.
Failure to complete the research requirement will result in a grade of IN for the course.



Announcements Cont'd

- Exam 1 on March 7.
- 15-20 multiple choice questions. Open-note, open-book, time limit of 1 hour and 15 minutes.
- Opens at 12:01 AM on the 7th, and closes at 11:59 PM.
- Covers all topics through “Terrorism and Counterterrorism”
- No class that day; exam can be taken from anywhere with Internet connection.



Today's Class

- Civilian Victimization in Civil Wars
- Rebel Ideology
- Walter 2017 Review
- How Civil Wars End



Key Terms

- Selective violence
- Indiscriminate violence
- Three waves of civil wars
- Insurgency
- Counterinsurgency



Central Question 1

What drives violence against civilians in civil wars?



Background: Nepalese Civil War

- Conflict from 1996-2006 between Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and government of Nepal.
- Concluded with peace accords in 2006.
- Over 17,000 deaths and substantial violations of civil and human rights.



Civilian Targeting in Nepal

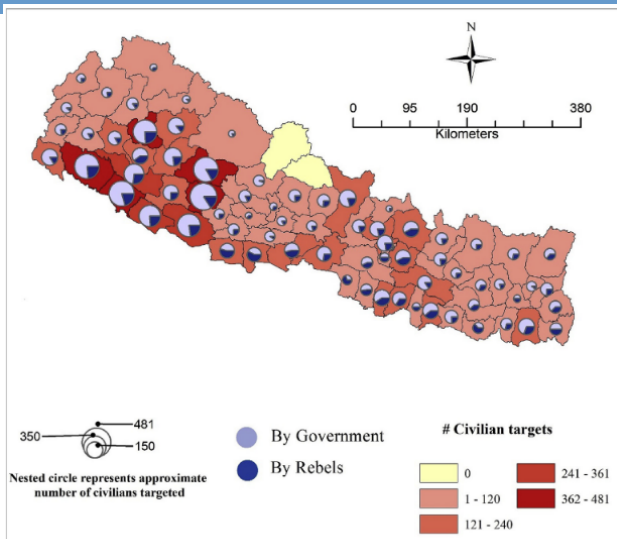


Fig. 2. Spatial distribution of civilians targeted in non-combat during the Maoist insurgency in Nepal.



Civilians and Civil War

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- This means it was a systemic feature of the conflict.
- Civil wars, arguably more than other kinds of war, can incentivize civilian victimization. Why?
- **The civilian population is inextricably linked to the conflict.**



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- Rival rebel groups may demand civilians aid them, creating mutually incompatible demands.



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- State forces may also attempt to collectively punish civilians for their (alleged) support of the rebels.



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- What motivates where and when this violence occurs?



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- In areas held by the rebels, these informants will pass information to the state.
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- Territorial control requires a credible armed presence by an actor.
- **Civilian informants will only collaborate with a given side as long as they believe there is a strong likelihood that they will be punished for helping the other side (“defection”).**



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- Generally, this means rebels hold rural areas while state holds urban ones.
- **Different levels of territorial control predict different types of violence.**



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Logic of Violence

- **Indiscriminate violence** is most effective when used against populations that support the opposing side.
- Why ever use indiscriminate violence? If actors lack information to precisely target their violence against supporters of the opposing side (selective violence), they instead attack populations in which they suspect those supporters are hiding.



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- **Selective violence** is expected in those areas where a side has dominant but not complete control, as information from denunciation enables direct targeting of supporters of the opposing side.
- **Indiscriminate violence** is expected in the areas in which an organization has no foothold, as it is unlikely to harm its own supporters.
- The least amount of violence will occur where both sides have equal power, as neither will be able to shield their informants from retaliation, so no selective violence will occur due to lack of information, while indiscriminate violence would harm their own supporters.



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- Rebel groups may rationally consider the impact of indiscriminate violence on both domestic and international support.
- Rebel groups may be less likely to victimize civilians if they are especially dependent on local resources.
- Not entirely clear that these accounts explain all violence against civilians in civil wars, especially performative or sexual violence.



Central Question 2

Does a rebel group's ideology matter?



Rebels and Ideology

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- Religion is effective at solving:
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 - Generally securing resources and support for the group
- This brings us to today's reading...



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- 2 **Second wave:** lasted from the end of the Cold War to 2003. Civil wars here tended to occur along ethnic separatist lines, with lots of negotiated settlements.
- 3 **Third wave:** 2003-present. Characterized by radical Islamist rebels, frequently with transnational aims.



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 - Many of these radical Islamist groups arose in cultures that were already quite Islamic (compared to the West), but the puzzling question was why these groups adopted more extreme views.
- Transnational aims were also puzzling: given how rarely rebels win outright victory, how could they expect to do something like create a new caliphate out of parts of several existing states?



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- ISIS was not the first, but arguably was the most sophisticated.



Online Propaganda Examples





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Central Question 3

What tactics do rebels use?



Civil War Tactics: Rebels

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- This strategy does not involve holding (much) territory, making it suited for smaller, weaker groups.



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- Endemic commitment problems incentivize rebels to keep fighting even if victory is unlikely.



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 - State lacks information on rebels and its attempts at selective violence actually feel indiscriminate to the population.



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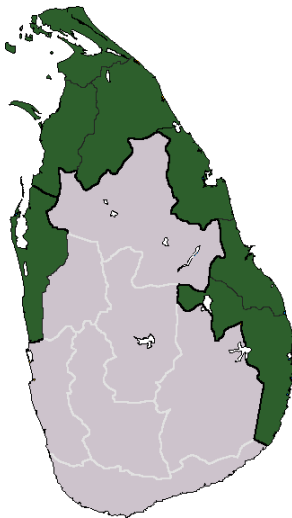


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- Goal: independent state for Hindu Tamils, located in northeastern Sri Lanka.
- Formed in 1972 and carried out its first attack in 1983.
- Notable for extensive and skilled use of suicide bombing, as well as their resemblance of a conventional military in their organization.



LTTE Territory





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- This military victory was possible in part due to a reckless disregard by state forces for civilian lives in LTTE-held provinces.
- LTTE was conclusively defeated, but at the cost of massive human rights violations due to indiscriminate violence by the state.



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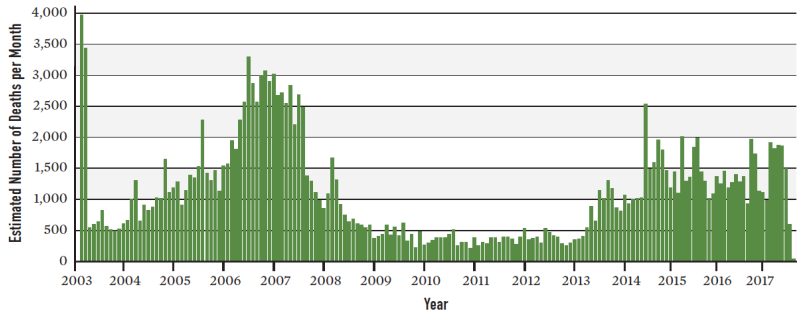


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- US troops were hindered by cultural barriers; attempts to address these came too late.
- Decreasing domestic US support for these wars prevented the kind of long-term engagement with local populations required to make COIN truly effective.
- US state-building failures further compounded these problems.



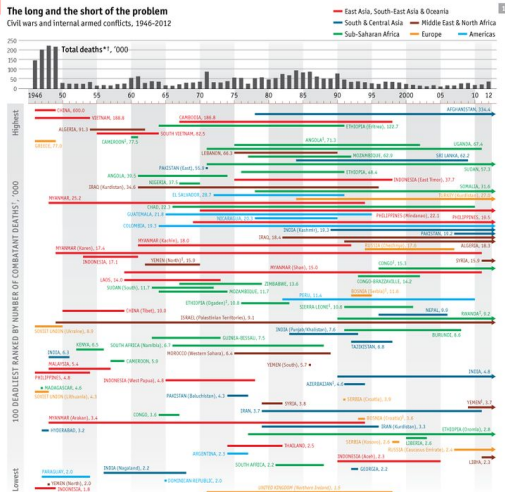
Central Question 4

Why do civil wars last so long?



Why Do Civil Wars Last So Long?

The long and the short of the problem
Civil wars and internal armed conflicts, 1946-2012



*Based on over 250 conflicts, 1946-2012. †Deaths in battle of government troops and troops of politically organized rebels; conflicts restarted within 10 years counted as continuous. ‡Excluding foreign intervention



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- State may struggle to find rebels, especially with a supportive population.
- Disarmament commitment problems incentivize rebels to keep fighting rather than risk being defenseless.



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- If a civil war ended in a victory, *usually* it was a victory for state forces.
- Negotiated settlements became more common in the 1990s, likely due to increased UNSC willingness to intervene by providing peacekeeping forces.



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- However, maintaining peace following the cessation of violence has been possible (peacekeeping).
- Peacekeepers can solve commitment problems by monitoring agreements and warning about renewed aggression. Neutral third parties can provide security for disarmed rebels.
- Encouraging development of domestic institutions is the best way to prevent civil conflict in the first place, but is difficult in practice.