

CIVIL WAR: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

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Introduction

A civil war is a war in which parties within the same culture, society, or nationality fight against each other for the control of political power. Civil wars bring brother into conflict with brother, as people of the same lineage often find themselves on opposite sides, inflicting more than physical damage on each other and their families. Without “parents” to resolve such conflicts the violence continues until a victor emerges. A civil war is “a violent conflict within a country fought by organized groups that aim to take power at the center or in a region or to change government policies”.

Ultimately the distinction between a “civil war” and a “revolution” or any other name may be arbitrary, and is determined by usage. However the distinction between a “civil war” and “revolution” can be recognizable. The successful civil war of 1640s in England which led to the overthrow of the monarchy represented by Charles I became known as the English Civil War; however it has also been described, by Marxists in particular, as the “English Revolution”. The unsuccessful insurgency of the 1860s by Southern U.S States against the federal government backed by Northern States, which featured organized armies fighting battles, came to be known as the American Civil War.

Causes of the Civil Wars

Almost every nation has minority groups, religious plurality, and ideological divisions, but all plunge into civil war. In the modern world most civil wars occur in nations that are poor, autocratic, and regionally divided. However, the United States was one of the wealthiest and most democratic countries in the world at the time of its bloody civil war. Some models to explain the occurrence of civil war stress the importance of change transition. According to one such line of reasoning, the American Civil War was caused by the growing economic power of the Northern relative to the South; the English Civil War by the growing power of the middle class and merchants at the expense of the aristocracy.

Competition for resources and wealth within a society is seen as a frequent cause for civil wars, however economic gain is rarely the justification supported by the participants. Marxists historians, stress economic and class factors, arguing that civil wars are caused by imperialist rulers battling each other for greater power, and using tools such as nationalism and religion to delude people into joining them.

The probability for a civil war is also increased by political change, regardless whether toward greater democracy or greater autocracy. One study states, “based on the analysis of the period 1816-1992, we conclude that intermediate regimes are most prone to civil war, even when they have had time to stabilize from a regime change”. The fall of communism and the increase in the number of democratic states were accompanied by a sudden and dramatic decline in total warfare, interstate wars, ethnic wars, revolutionary wars, and the number of refugees and displaced persons.

Coups

Coups d'état are by definition quick blows to the top of a government that do not result in the widespread violence of a civil war. On occasion a failed coup, or one that is only half successful, precipitate a civil war between factions. These wars often quickly try to pull in larger themes of ideology, nationalism, or religion to try to win supporters among the general population conflict that in essence in an intra-elite competition for power.

Purges

Depending on the definition civil war used, one can consider purges or genocide to be a kind of civil war on the part of a ruling regime against its populace. These purges are done under the auspices of protecting the regime from espionage or sabotage, but are usually done to stifle dissent or to undercut any popular uprising. Such purges occurred in Russia under Joseph Stalin, the Armenian Genocide in Turkey during the waning years of the Ottoman Empire.

Religious Conflicts

Civil wars that are fought over religion have tended to occur more in monotheistic than in polytheistic societies; One explanation is that the latter tend to be more “flexible” in terms of dogma, allowing for some latitude in belief. In Europe through the Middle Ages, the Christianity of the great bulk of the population was influenced by pagan tradition. With the great majority of the population illiterate, access to the bible was limited and led to a significant amount of syncretism between Christian and pagan elements. With religion so loosely applied, it was rare for people to feel particularly oppressed by it.

As religions tended to become more rigidly defined and understood by their followers, inter-religious tensions generally increased. The rise of Islam witnessed a rash of uprisings against Non-Islamic rulers soon after its appearance. In Europe, the Protestant Reformation 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, the Netherlands during the Eighty Years' war and more recently, The Troubles of Northern Ireland. Religious disputes among Protestants sects also played a role in the English Civil War.

Revolutions

A revolution is generally seen as a civil war fought over issues of ideology, over how power should be organized and distributed, not merely over which individuals hold power. The classic example of revolution, and by some arguments the first is the French Revolution, which is seen to have pitted the middle class and the urban poor of France against the aristocracy and monarchy. Some argue that revolutions are a modern continuation of the peasant revolts of the past. Unlike peasant revolts, however, revolutions are most always led by members of the educated, but disaffected, middle class who then rally the large mass of the population to their cause.

Often see ideology as merely replacing religion as a justification and motivation for a violence that is fundamentally caused by socio-economic factors. To be successful, revolutions almost always require use of armed force and sometimes escalate to a civil war, such as in the Chinese Civil War. In some cases, such as the French and Russian Revolutions the revolutionaries succeed in gaining power through a quick coup or localized uprising, but a civil war results from counterrevolutionary forces organizing to crush the revolution.

Separatist Revolts

One of the most common causes of civil wars, especially in the post – cold war world has been separatist violence. Nationalism can be seen as similar to both a religion and an ideology as a justification for war rather than a root cause of conflict. All modern states attempt to hold a monopoly on internal military force. For separatist civil wars to break out, thus either the national army must fracture along ethnic, religious, or national lines; or more commonly a modern separatist conflict takes the form of asymmetrical warfare with separatists lightly armed and disorganized, but with the support of the local population such groups can be hard to defeat. This is the route taken by most liberation groups in colonies as

well as forces in areas such as Sri Lanka. Regional differences may be enhanced by differing economies, as in the American Civil War.

Examples of the Civil Wars

America

The America Civil War was fought in 1861 – 1865 between the “union”, a group of 24 northern states, and the “Confederacy” (Confederate States of America), and a collection of 11 Southern States. The Confederacy declared their independence from the United States in 1860-61. The most commonly cited cause for the war is the issue of slavery, but the conflict was in fact more nuanced. There existed great economic tension as the federal government levied tariffs on imports in order to aid Northern industrialists forcing Southern to purchase more expensive domestic goods rather than from abroad. Also, there was a tremendous difference in culture separating the two sides, leading to further animosity.

Korea

The Korean Civil War was fought between 1950 and 1953. The war was the result of the division of the country for use as a buffer zone in the Cold War. The Northern half of the peninsula was supported by the Soviet Union, the Southern half by the United States. Leaders of both halves wanted to reunite the peninsula under their regime, and in 1950 the North Koreans began attacking in order to do so. The United Nation condemned the attack, and with American aid, the government of South Korea was reestablished and the communist forces driving back to the dividing line of the peninsula, which remains the 38th parallel.

The Soviet Union and its allies challenged the United Nations resolution on the grounds of illegality since the permanent member of the council (the Soviet Union) was absent from the voting. The North Korean government also did not concur, arguing that the conflict was a civil war, and therefore not clearly within the scope of the U.N while the Americans and the majority of nations regarded this as a valid international intervention, for the Korean people the war had all the characteristics of civil war. The division of their country following the Second World War had divided families and when the boundary between the two countries closed again after the war in 1953 all hope of reunification of family members was lost for generations.

Russia

The Russian Civil War took place from 1917-1922. The war was involved a number of different factions, but was primarily fought between the communist, Lenin- inspired Bolshevik Red Army and the Anti-Bolshevik White Army. The fighting began after the

Bolshevik seized Petrograd (now St. Petersburg) from the rule of Tsar Nicholas II in 1917. The war would lead to the establishment of the Soviet Union and Russia's withdrawal from World War I under the treaty of Brest- Litovsk.

Vietnam

The Vietnam War occurred from 1959 to 1975 the war was fought in name between the communist Viet Cong and South Vietnam, the war can be viewed as part of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. The United States entered Vietnam in an attempt to aid the French colonial forces there and to fight the growing communist threat. American troop levels in the country rose rapidly in the late 1960s and in terms of pure military force, the United States and Vietnam had the superior position. The Viet Cong forces, however, enjoyed tremendous support of the native Vietnamese population. The war concluded in 1975 with the fall of the South Vietnamese government in Saigon and the assumption of control by the communist forces under the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Consequences of the Civil Wars

Impact on Economy

The economy may suffer devastating impacts during and after a time of war. In 2012 the economic impact of war and violence was estimated to be eleven percent of Gross World Product (GWP) or 9.46 trillion dollars. Everyday activities of a community or country are disrupted and property may be damaged. When people become misplaced, they cannot continue to work or keep their businesses open, causing damages to the economy of countries involved. A government may decide to direct money to fund war efforts, leaving other institutions with little or no available budget.

In some cases war has stimulated a country's economy. According to the World Bank the event that there is a transition to democracy the following will result in an increase economic growth by encouraging investment of the country and its people, schooling, economic restructuring, public good provision and reducing social unrest. Conflicts very rarely have positive effects on an economy according to World Bank.

As a result of the Sri Lankan Civil War, Sri Lanka's military spending as a percentage of GDP, increased from 1.6 percent in 1983 to 3.5 percent in 2008 and reached an all time peak at 5.9 percent of GDP in 1995 representing over 20 percent of the government's total spending. Until the war, arms were not nearly a significant amount of government spending and their defense personnel increased from 22,000 in 1989 to 2,13,000 in 2008. After the war

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began, however, arms were imported annually in response to increasing violence. By the year 2000, the Sri Lankan government's "import bill for arms was around \$US 274 million", a record high during the war.

Destruction of Infrastructure

Destruction of infrastructure can create a catastrophic collapse in the social interrelated structure, infrastructure services, education and health care system. Destruction of schools and educational infrastructure has led to a decline in education among many countries affected by war. If certain infrastructural elements are significantly damaged or destroyed, it can cause serious disruption of the other systems such as the economy. This includes loss of certain transportation routes in a city which could make it impossible for the economy to function properly. For examples, warring factions often destroy bridges to separate themselves from attackers therefore creating barriers for the movement of people both in the short term, but also in the long term, once line of control get redrawn.

Displacement

Displacement or forced migration results more often during a time of war and can adversely affect both the community and an individual. When a war breaks out, many people flee their homes in fear of losing their lives and their families, and as a result, they become misplaced either internally or externally. Those who are internally displaced face a direct threat because they do not receive the rights that a refugee may receive and are not eligible for protection under an international system. Victims of internal displacements are symptoms of war that are often motivated by communal hatred based on ethnic background, race or religious views.

In the case of the Sri Lankan Civil War, displacement had a high chance to impoverish those affected, but women and children were found to be the most vulnerable to the burden of displacement. A Sri Lankan female head of household earns less than a household that has a male head. After men and women become displaced, however, females lost 76% of their income and males lost 80%. While the lost income is within a relatively close percentage, females were more likely, on average to fall below the official poverty line. Male household by comparison were able to stay above the line even after becoming displaced.

Abolition of Slavery

Slavery in America started in the early 17th century with most slaves coming from Africa and being used in agriculture production. By the 18th century, the Abolitionism movement began in the north and caused a divide between the Northern and Southern States. This divide came to the forefront with the election of Abraham Lincoln, who ran on an anti-slavery platform.

Reconstruction

The construction period generally refers to the period just after the civil war, from 1865 to 1877. Reconstruction period was harsh as the war on the Southern states and that they never fully regained their standing. The period of reconstruction was important to build equal standing among the states and to regain trust.

Conclusion

A civil war is “a violent conflict within a country fought by organized groups that aim to take power at the center or in a region or to change government policies”. Competition for resources and wealth within a society is seen as a frequent cause for civil wars, however economic gain is rarely the justification supported by the participants. Marxists historians, stress economic and class factors, arguing that civil wars are caused by imperialist rulers battling each other for greater power, and using tools such as nationalism and religion to delude people into joining them. If we were able to pinpoint the ‘causes’ of civil war, it is unlikely that this knowledge would help us in conflict resolution. Studies of civil war onset and duration show that they are correlated with different factors. Once a war is started, it increased poverty and grievances, are added to the original causes and might even supersede them. The main innovation is to consider the role of the quality of economic institutions in explaining civil war, and to address the problem of endogeneity between institutions and conflict. Moreover, once economic institutions are considered, per capita income has no significant direct or indirect effect in explaining civil wars.

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