

Civil wars I

Francisco Villamil

War, peace, and political violence

UC3M, Fall 2023

Civil wars



American Civil War

Civil wars



Liberian Civil War

Civil wars



Troubles, Northern Ireland

Civil wars

News

Tamil Tigers show off air force

Sri Lankan rebel group releases photos of pilots posing with their new aircraft.



26 Mar 2007



The Tamil Tiger rebel movement has introduced the world to its new air force in the most dramatic way possible – by bombing Sri Lanka's main airbase.



Sri Lankan war

Civil Wars



Nagaland conflict, India

Civil wars



Naxalites, India

Civil wars



Guatemala

So what is a civil war?

- What do all these have in common? And differences?

So what is a civil war?

- Basic idea: armed conflict *within* a sovereign state, fought between the government and a non-state challenger over opposite claims to sovereignty
 - We usually refer to the challengers as *rebel groups*
- What is it that they fight over?
 - Governmental civil wars: full control of the state
 - Territorial civil wars: control over one part of the territory
- Who is involved?
 - Internationalized civil wars: involvement of third-party countries through alliances with local actors
- How is the fighting?
 - Warfare technology

Technologies of rebellion

- Not all rebel groups look the same
- Some actually don't even look like rebel groups (or the idea we usually have of them)
 - e.g. Confederate States, Franco's Nationalists
- Same applies sometimes to the government forces
- Concept: technologies of rebellion
 - What kind of fighting forces are the rebels capable of launching?
 - Guerrillas? Conventional armies?

Technologies of rebellion

TABLE 1. Technologies of Rebellion in Civil War

		Military Technologies of the State	
		High	Low
Military Technologies of the Rebels	High	Conventional	[Successful military coup]
	Low	Irregular	Symmetric nonconventional

Balcells & Kalyvas (*APSR* 2010)

Technologies of rebellion

- Irregular wars
 - ≈ 34% (1944–2004)
 - (e.g. Nepal, Peru, etc)
- Conventional wars
 - ≈ 54%
 - (e.g. US, Spain, Sri Lanka, Syria)
- Symmetric non-conventional
 - ≈ 12%
 - (Somalia, CAR)

What is **not** a civil war?

- It's *not* violence against civilians
 - War \neq violence
- It's *not* terrorism
 - Although terrorism can be used within wars
- It's *not* genocide
 - Any war involves sustained, bidirectional battle violence
- It's *not* non-state violence (e.g. communal riots)
 - State/government is always one participant
- It's *not* ethnic conflict
 - Although there are *ethnic* civil wars (but ethnic conflict also includes ethnic riots, or ethnic violence against civilians)

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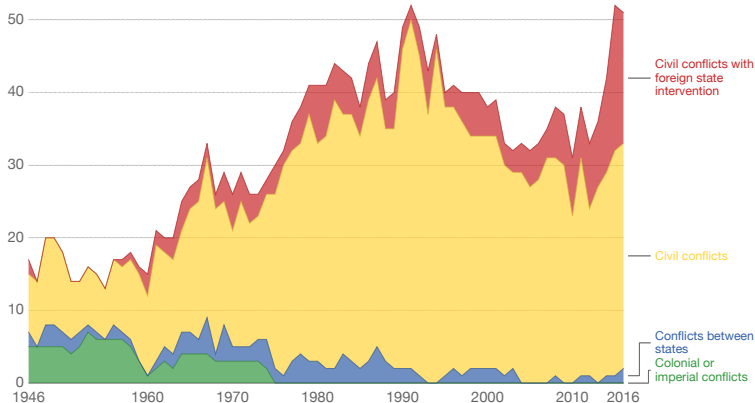
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Patterns of conflicts over time

State-based conflicts since 1946

Only conflicts in which at least one party was the government of a state are included. Ongoing conflicts are represented for every year in which they resulted in at least 25 battle-related deaths.



Source: UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset

Note: The war categories paraphrase UCDP/PRIO's technical definitions of 'Extrasystemic', 'Internal', 'Internationalised internal' and 'Interstate' respectively.

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Source: UCDP-PRIO & <https://ourworldindata.org/>

Patterns of conflicts over time

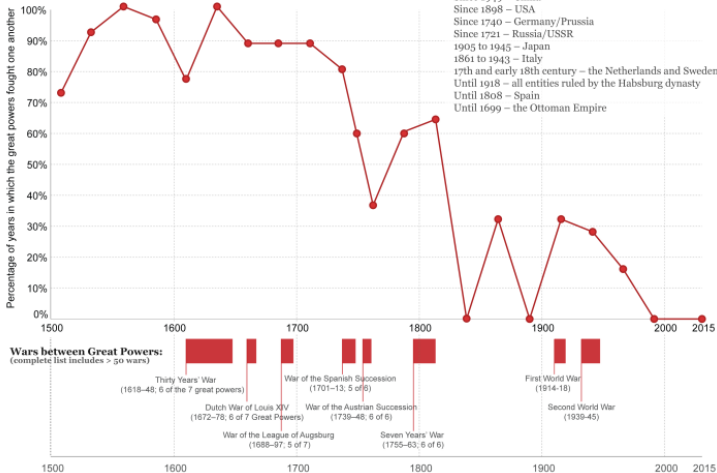


Percentage of years in which the 'Great Powers' fought one another, 1500-2015 – by Max Roser

Between 1500 and today there were more than 50 wars between 'Great Powers'.
Data are aggregated over 25-year periods.

The Great Powers:

- Entire period – France and England/Great Britain/U.K.
- Since 1949 – China
- Since 1898 – USA
- Since 1740 – Germany/Prussia
- Since 1721 – Russia/USSR
- 1905 to 1945 – Japan
- 1861 to 1943 – Italy
- 17th and early 18th century – the Netherlands and Sweden
- Until 1918 – all entities ruled by the Habsburg dynasty
- Until 1808 – Spain
- Until 1699 – the Ottoman Empire



Data source: Steven Pinker (2011) – The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined. Based on data from Levy, J. S., & Thompson, W. R. (2011) – The Arc of War
The interactive data visualisation is available at [OurWorldInData.org](https://ourworldindata.org). There you find the raw data and more visualisations on this topic.
Licensed under [CC-BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) by the author Max Roser.

Source: UCDP-PRIO & <https://ourworldindata.org/>

What do we know about civil wars?

- Onset of civil wars
 - Why, where and when do they break out?

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 - What happens during a civil war? How do we explain wartime violence?
- **Termination of civil wars**
 - How and when do they end?
- **Postwar politics**
 - How do we avoid the relapse of civil wars? What are their consequences?
 - The 'conflict trap'

Understanding civil wars



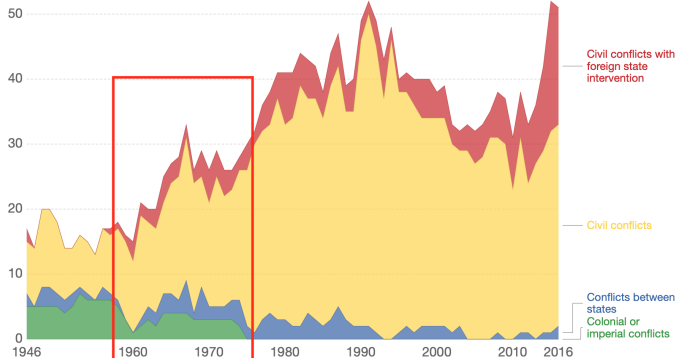
Duelo a garrotazos (Goya, ca. 1820)

- Civil wars were traditionally seen as irrational mass violence

Context

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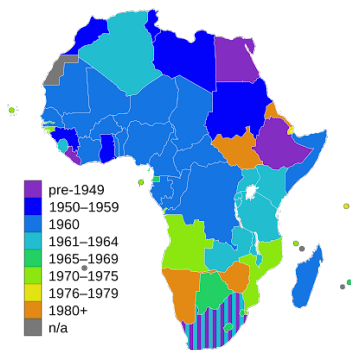
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- Increase of civil war incidence after the 1960s

Context

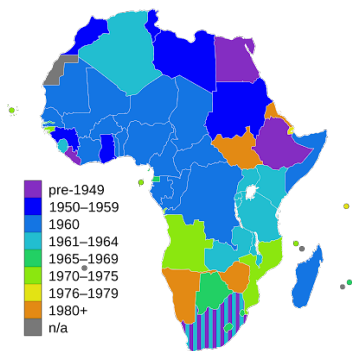
- Role of decolonization from 1960 on
- Newly independent countries followed Western-style form of state rule
 - Centralized administrations, clear territorial borders (e.g. Organisation of African Unity, Addis Ababa, 1963)



Decolonization in Africa

Context

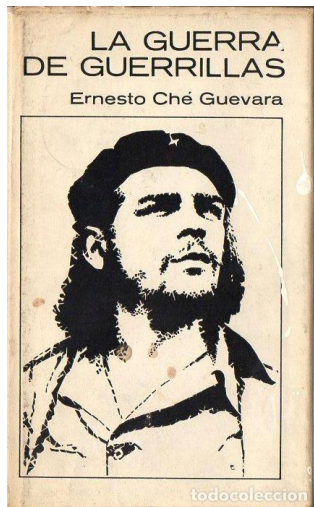
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- Newly independent countries followed Western-style form of state rule
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- But clear **problems of state capacity**



Decolonization in Africa

Context

- Spread of revolutionary insurgencies
- Role of ideological global context
 - Cold War and US/USSR rivalry



Early studies

- Early studies on **revolutions**
- Focus on grievances, inequality
- That was the prevailing way of studying this before the 1990s
- Even if they were **not studied** as 'civil wars,' but as '**peasant rebellions**' or '**social revolutions**'
 - Mixing onset with outcome, etc



Cuban Revolution

Early studies

- Things started to change in the 1990s
- The end of the Cold War
- Yugoslavia, Rwanda and the role of ethnicity
- Ancient hatreds, 'clash of civilizations', etc



Siege of Sarajevo

Research on 'civil wars'

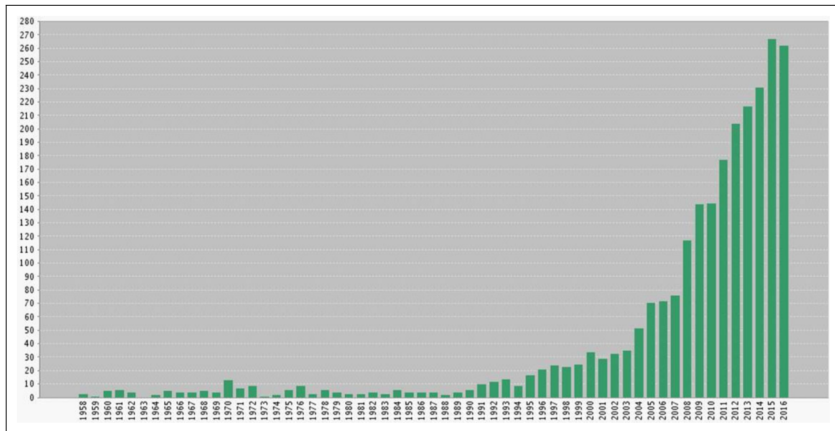
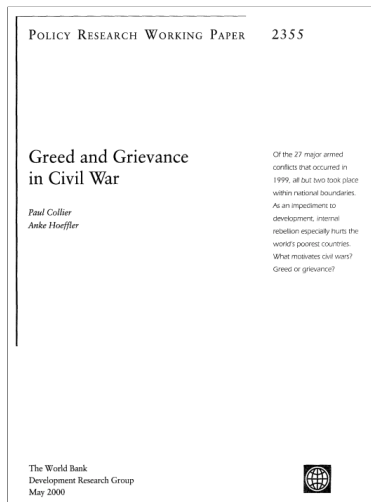


Figure 1. Number of “civil war” articles published in political science, economics, and sociology journals. *Source: Web of Science.*

How it started: the role of development economists

- Civil wars as a development problem
- What drives civil wars?
- First quantitative analyses of CW onset
- New explanation: greed
 - Greed vs. grievance debate



Paul Collier & Anke Hoefler (2000)

The *greed* perspective

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The *greed* perspective

- Previous studies on revolutions highlighted the role of grievances: peasants rise up because they are oppressed
- Collier & Hoeffler argued that grievances do not explain anything because they are always present
- Grievances are just used by **greedy rebels** who think a civil war is a good opportunity to get rich
- **Microeconomic perspective**: civil wars erupt if the the opportunity cost of violence is low (poverty) and the expected gains are high (natural resources & looting)

Empirics in Collier & Hoeffler model

Key variables:

- **Male secondary schooling:** opportunity cost of joining insurgency
- **Primary commodity exports:** expected gains
- **Social fractionalization:** should capture grievances

- Analyzing determinants of onset in country-year data

Table 3: Greed Model

	1	2	3	4	5
male secondary schooling	-0.036 (0.011)***	-0.037 (0.011)***	-0.028 (0.012)**	-0.027 (0.012)**	
ln GDP per capita					-0.822 (0.288)***
(GDP growth - 3*population growth) t-1	-0.080 (0.036)**	-0.074 (0.036)**	-0.084 (0.036)**	-0.086 (0.036)**	-0.101 (0.035)***
primary commodity exports/GDP	34.088 (8.186)***	34.109 (8.423)***	32.147 (8.497)***	32.058 (8.465)***	22.923 (6.903)***
(primary commodity exports/GDP) ²	-67.792 (18.683)***	-67.172 (18.679)***	-62.307 (18.954)***	-62.091 (18.962)***	039.192 (14.710)***
ln population	1.026 (0.191)***	0.960 (0.194)***	0.832 (0.198)***	0.832 (0.197)***	0.574 (0.146)***
social fractionalization	-0.0002 (0.0001)**	-0.0003 (0.0001)***	-0.0003 (0.0001)***	-0.0003 (0.0001)***	-0.0003 (0.0001)***
geographic dispersion	-3.517 (1.142)***	-3.888 (1.181)***	-3.384 (1.200)***	-3.289 (1.180)***	-1.568 (1.051)
mountainous terrain	0.019 (0.009)**	0.013 (0.009)	0.014 (0.010)	0.015 (0.010)	0.012 (0.009)
previous war dummy		1.016 (0.405)***	0.252 (0.527)		
Peace duration			-0.004 (0.002)**	-0.004 (0.001)***	-0.004 (0.001)***
n	691	691	688	688	747
no of wars	43	43	43	43	47
pseudo R ²	0.25	0.27	0.29	0.29	0.26
log likelihood	-120.98	-117.63	-114.32	-114.43	-129.44

Notes: All regressions include a constant. Standard errors in parentheses.
 ***, **, * indicate significance at the 1, 5 and 10 percent level, respectively.

Collier & Hoeffler (2000)

The *greed* perspective: context



Liberian Civil War (Ben Curtis)

- End of the Cold War and the big ideologies
- **The New Wars**: resource-rich countries, warlords, brutality, no ideological motivations...

Examples



FARC and cocaine in Colombia

Examples



Taliban and opium in Afghanistan

Examples?

Afghanistan is the world's opium king. Can the Taliban afford to kill off their 'un-Islamic' cash cow?

By Kara Fox, CNN

Updated 0426 GMT (1226 HKT) September 29, 2021



A farmer harvests opium sap from a poppy field in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province in May 2020.

(CNN) — When the khaki-colored landscapes of [Afghanistan](#) are transformed by a patchwork of pink, white and purple each spring, farmers rejoice. Their cash crop of poppies is ready for harvesting.

- By the way, how could we explain this?
 - (i.e. Taliban trying to erradicate opium trade after getting power)

Implications

- Greed perspective is actually quite common (not only for civil wars)
- Not only about an academic debate on the causes, but with **major implications for conflict resolution**



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 - Which ones?



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 - Which ones?
- Related: Causes of onset \neq organizational behavior
 - Onset vs individual recruitment
 - Taliban and opium example



Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War

JAMES D. FEARON and DAVID D. LAITIN *Stanford University*

An influential conventional wisdom holds that civil wars proliferated rapidly with the end of the Cold War and that the root cause of many or most of these has been ethnic and religious antagonisms. We show that the current prevalence of internal war is mainly the result of a steady accumulation of protracted conflicts since the 1950s and 1960s rather than a sudden change associated with a new, post-Cold War international system. We also find that after controlling for per capita income, more ethnically or religiously diverse countries have been no more likely to experience significant civil violence in this period. We argue for understanding civil war in this period in terms of insurgency or rural guerrilla warfare, a particular form of military practice that can be harnessed to diverse political agendas. The factors that explain which countries have been at risk for civil war are not their ethnic or religious characteristics but rather the conditions that favor insurgency. These include poverty—which marks financially and bureaucratically weak states and also favors rebel recruitment—political instability, rough terrain, and large populations.

- Stressing **opportunity** instead of greed
- Most influential explanation on civil war
(most cited article in the main PolSci journal)

Fearon & Laitin's model of insurgency

- It's not about greedy rebels calculating how to get rich
- Focus on the '**technology of insurgency**': factors that improve the capacity of rebels to launch an armed conflict using "small, lightly armed bands practicing guerrilla warfare from rural base areas"

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- It's not about greedy rebels calculating how to get rich
- Focus on the '**technology of insurgency**': factors that improve the capacity of rebels to launch an armed conflict using "small, lightly armed bands practicing guerrilla warfare from rural base areas"
- Implication: civil war erupts when the state is weak (& up for grabs by political opponents)

Fearon & Laitin's model of insurgency

What makes these rural insurgencies more likely?

- Poverty
 - no capacity to police & easier for the rebels to recruit
- Rough terrain
 - easier for the rebels to organize, hide from the state
- Political instability
 - disorganized center of power, less capacity to control
- Large populations
 - again, more difficult to control and easier rebel recruitment

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- F&L argued **ethnic and religious divisions had no effect**

Fearon & Laitin's diagnoses

- So why did we have so much war in the 1960s and 1990s?

Fearon & Laitin's diagnoses

- Focus on the '**resource curse**': countries that depend on natural resources are more likely to suffer insurgencies and conflict

Fearon & Laitin's diagnoses

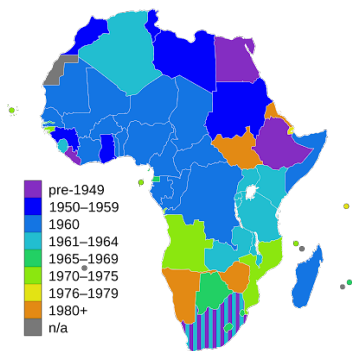
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- Fearon & Laitin's **opportunity model**: resource-rich countries don't need to develop tax extraction and public services, leading to bad governance and weak institutions
- Particularly much worse in countries with rough terrain and peripheral regions
 - Remember Tilly's model of state creation? if you have oil or diamonds, no need to develop state structures for taxation

Fearon & Laitin's diagnoses

- That should be the **main reason** behind the post-1960 increase in civil war
- **Not** because of grievances related to the decolonization process, but because these states were 'half-baked'
- (Same argument applies to Latin America, according to them)



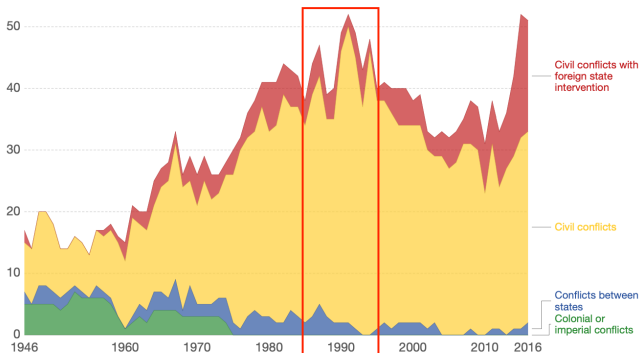
Decolonization in Africa

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Our World
in Data



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- What about the 1990s?

→ civil war incidence *appeared* to rise after the end of the Cold War

Fearon & Laitin's diagnoses

- Previous explanations on the role of the international system or the rise of multi-ethnic countries

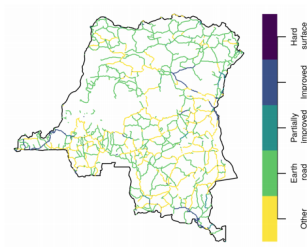
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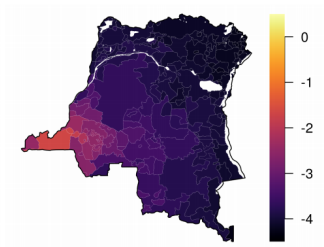
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- Implication? We should focus on the technology of insurgency, the *domestic* conditions that favor rebellion, but not on the international level or on cultural, ethnic, or religious differences

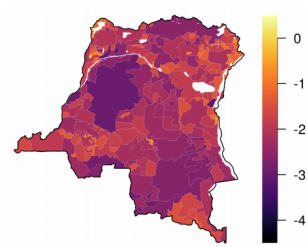
Extensions



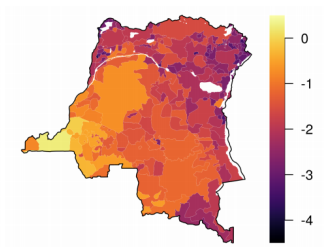
(a) Road network



(b) State access



(c) Internal connectedness



(d) Relational state capacity

Extensions

- Concept of **relational state capacity**
- Empirical methods
- Reference:
 - Carl Müller-Crepon, Philipp Hunziker, and Lars-Erik Cederman (2021) Roads to Rule, Roads to Rebel: Relational State Capacity and Conflict in Africa. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 65(2–3): 563–590.

Next week

- About how we learned the way grievances and inequality also matter
- And on other aspects of civil wars: duration, international factors...

Next seminar

- Robert D Kaplan, 'The coming anarchy' (*The Atlantic*, 1994)
- Pessimist view on Post-Cold War international security

