

# Theories of Ethnic Violence (Civil War)

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# Definition

- Civil war is “an armed combat within the boundaries of a recognized sovereign entity between parties subject to a common authority at the outset of the hostilities.”
- Civil war “is a form of political violence with three major characteristics:
- It involve fighting between agents of a state and organized non-state groups that seek to capture control of the government or over a region or to influence government policy by means of violence,
- The fighting kills at least 1, 000 people over its course and 100 on average in every year and
- At least 100 people die on the both side of the conflict.”

# Civil wars

- Civil war is a complex social phenomenon with many overlapping dimension. There are many interpretations on the nature and character of civil war and there is no commonly agreed position.
- Carl von Clausewitz remarked that that the conduct of war is determined by the nature of societies, as well as “by their times and prevailing conditions.”

# Theories of rebellion

- There are two dominant models that explain the behavior of rebel groups: one approach treats rebel organizations as **social movements** and the other as if they were **states**.
- 1. rapid structural changes in a society.
- 2. rebellion is the result of security dilemma.

# Civil wars

- Violence in civil wars may be affected by factors that include the specific profile of political actors and their political ideology, their organizational structure, underlying social basis and military culture, their resources, their national and local leadership and strategies, the type of challenges they face and the assistance they receive from third parties, the prevailing international norms, the level of available military technology and factors such as geography and climate.

# Civil war

- According to **traditionalists** civil wars are the ultimate manifestations of the collective grievance of a people and are caused by inequality, political oppression and competition over scarce resources. According to grievance theory the outbreak of civil war is linked to the deprivation of a particular group by another group and those underprivileged and deprived groups strive to attain relative equality.

# Civil war

- According to greed theory more important are those factors which determine the financial and military viability of rebellion. In other words this theory was built around economic model of rebellion. The biggest proponents of greed theory were Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler.

# Civil war

- Which theory can best explain the causes of civil war?
- Grievance theory was criticized from various scholars, who stressed that “grievance” was crucial, people did not simply jump into revolutionary fervor because they were discontent. They argued, that the act of rebellion requires effective mobilization strategies and the ability to mobilize resources that determines the extent of the conflict. On the other hand, greed theory is criticized for overemphasizing the idea of a conflict economy. It is argued that personal economic gains are not the only motivating factors for the outbreak of civil war.



# Civil war

- It can be said that neither “grievance” nor “greed” are the sole motivational factors influencing the dynamics of civil war. The opposite is true; combination of the two is often the norm in various conflicts. It should be underlined, that while both greed and grievance motivate belligerents, there are many other complex and deep-rooted factors that contribute the outbreak of civil wars.

# Risk screening process

- 1. Violent conflict in the past 10 years: If a country has experienced violent conflict in the past 10 years, there is a high possibility of recurrence of conflict.
- 2. Low per capita GNI: Countries with low per capita GNIs face a higher risk of experiencing violent conflict.
- 3. High dependence on primary commodities exports: Countries with a high dependence on primary commodities exports are more likely to experience violent conflict.

# Risk screening process

- 4. Political instability: It has two components
- \* transformation of the state structure: Restructuring of the state at frequent intervals
- signals serious instability and the likelihood that violence is being employed to bring
- about systemic changes.
- \* breakdown of law and order: When the government is not able to maintain control or
- effective rule (in certain parts or throughout the country), the breakdown of law and
- order, and hence violence, is likely.
- For violent conflict, these two factors can occur independently or in tandem.

# Risk screening process

- 5. Restricted civil and political rights: The deliberate and systematic denial of civil liberties and political rights increases the likelihood that groups will express dissenting views through violence, thus increasing the probability of violent conflict.
- 6. Militarization: Countries may have a high defense spending as a ratio of their GNI and large armies as proportion of their population. However, a militarized society also highlights the availability of arms among non-state actors. These factors suggest the likelihood of emerging or escalating violent conflict.

# Risk screening process

- 7. Ethnic dominance: When one ethnic group controls state institutions and/or the economy, there is an increasing risk of outbreak of violent conflict.
- 8. Active regional conflicts: Regional conflicts are likely to have a cascading effect, such that the internal stability of a country (flow of refugees, arms) is threatened, increasing the probability of violent conflict.
- 9. High youth unemployment: Youth unemployment can have a critical bearing on the probability of violent conflict. Lack of jobs and opportunities tend to create frustration, making unemployed youth (especially young men) prime candidates for recruitment by militant organizations with funds and arms at their disposal.

# Risk screening process

- Furthermore, the risk screening process contains 6 general categories of potential conflict:
- 1. Social and ethnic relations: Social and economic cleavages, Ethnic cleavages, Regional imbalances, Differential social opportunities (e.g. education), Bridging/bonding social capital (e.g. inter-group associations), Group identity building, Myth-making, Culture/tradition of Violence.
- 2. Governance and political institutions: Stability of governance & political institutions, Equity of governance, Inclusiveness of political institutions, Equity of law/judicial system, Links between government and citizens.

# Risk screening process

- 3. Human rights and security: Role of media and freedom of expression, Human rights' status, Militarization of society, Security of civilians.
- 4. Economic structure and performance: Economic growth, Income disparities, Per capita income changes, Inflationary trends, External debt management, Reliance on primary commodities exports, Employment and access to productive resources, Conflict-induced poverty.

# Risk screening process

- 5. Environment and natural resources: Availability of natural resources, Access to natural resources (including land), In-country and cross-border competition over natural resources.
- 6. External forces: Regional conflicts (including territorial, trade, natural resources, disputes), Role of kindred groups outside country, Role of Diaspora.



# Kalyvas

- Civil war is almost always about control of territory, the resources and over state institutions. That means geography is never far away from the discourse on civil war.
- The absence of state presence, consequently, provides easy movement to rebels and insurgents and this situation leads to a growing divide between the two. Such centre-periphery divide can lead to the creation of opposition against the state mostly along the lines of secessionist insurgency.
- More characteristic feature of civil wars in large states is centre-periphery dichotomy, while in smaller states civil wars fought primarily over the control of the entire territory.

# Kalyvas

- Kalyvas explains the occurrence of violence in civil war by way of *territorially based* armed challenges. According to him, in order to understand the violence we have to distinguish between zones of incumbent control, zones of insurgent control and zones in which control is contested.

# Kalyvas

- Where the government is able to exercise effective control and where its troops and administrators are able to move with safety day and night, we are in a **zone of incumbent control**.
- Where insurgents are able to effectively prevent the operation of government forces day and night, and the government is absent and unable to perform basic state functions, such as collect taxes and draft young men into its army, we are in a **zone of insurgent control**. In both zones sovereignty is undivided.
- In between these two zones lies an “**intermediate**” area, often referred to “contested” or “twilight” zones. This is the “most important arena of struggle”, the zone of contested control.

# Kalyvas

- The higher the level of control exercised by political actor in an area, the higher the level of civilian collaboration with this political actor will be.
- While speaking about the importance of control in conflict zones we should think about how to measure it, how it shifts and how it relates to violence. Kalyvas distinguishes between five control zones. Incumbents exercise *full control* in zone I, in zone II incumbents exercise *secure but incomplete control*, intermediate area, zone 3, where both actors enjoy equal levels of control. These areas are usually described as places where the government rules by day and the rebels by night. Conversely, insurgents maintain full control in zone 5 and secure but incomplete control in zone 4 – “semi-liberated area”.
- The higher an actor’s level of control, the less likely that actor will use violence.

# Weinstein

- Weinstein - the initial endowments to which rebel leaders have access shape the organizations that emerge and the way in which different rebel groups ultimately use violence. His central argument is based on the argument, that rebel groups that emerge in environments rich in natural resources or with the external support of an outside patron tend to commit high levels of indiscriminate violence, contrary to that, rebel movements that arise in resource-poor contexts perpetrate far fewer abuses and employ violence selectively and strategically.

# Weinstein

- We have to distinguish between activist rebellions and opportunistic rebellions. Activist rebellions are high-commitment individuals, willing to make risky and costly investments today for the promise of rewards in the future. Contrary to that opportunistic rebellions expect to be rewarded immediately for their involvement, seeking short-term gains. Weinstein argues that the membership profile of a rebellion is an important aspect we should pay our attention, as it affects its internal organization and the strategies it pursues in war.

# Weinstein

- Groups that are organized on **economic endowments** are populated by opportunists, lack mechanisms for discipline behavior and tend to commit widespread abuses against civilians. Contrary to that rebellions organized around **social endowments** establish structures that facilitate cooperation and discipline and employ violence selectively.

# Weinstein

- The causes of civil war in the contemporary world are limitless.
- But in spite of this complexity, the knowledge about civil conflict has considerably increased and we can find some key points. While exploring the key variables that trigger conflict we realize that although division and difference is a norm in most contemporary societies, the main issues of competitions concerns struggles over resources, influence and power.