

# Ending Civil Wars

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# Introduction

- unlike interstate conflicts, civil wars rarely end in negotiated settlement
- most internal wars ended with the extermination, expulsion, or capitulation of the losing side
- Why are warring sides in civil wars typically unable to reach a settlement without a third-party intervention?

# Interstate and Civil Wars

- credible guarantees on the terms of the settlement are nearly impossible to arrange by the combatants themselves
- **Barbara Walter (1997)** argues that credible guarantees on the terms of the settlement are nearly impossible to arrange by the combatants themselves
- the key difference between interstate and civil wars negotiations is that adversaries in a civil war cannot retain separate, independent armed forces if they agree to settle
- this difference fundamentally alters incentives to accept any peace treaty and makes it difficult for groups to cooperate

# Interstate and Civil Wars

- states in the international system have a number of military and economic strategies to encourage cooperation:
- early warning systems, monitoring and verification procedures, building military defenses, forge external alliances, set up buffer zones etc.
- crucially, even if the war is renewed, states with strong defences and active forces would not be worse off than before the peace settlement
- none of these strategies is available to groups fighting civil wars



# Interstate and Civil Wars

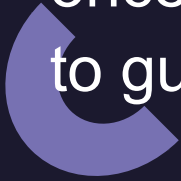
- if they wish to cooperate, they must disband their forces and thus relinquish their only remaining means for protection
- in other words, settlement can leave a group far worse off than it would have been had it simply continued to fight
- third-party guarantees can facilitate settlement by changing the level of insecurity
- they can guarantee that groups will be protected, and terms will be fulfilled



# Interstate and Civil Wars

- to be **credible**, a **guarantee** must fulfill at least three basic conditions:
- 1. the outside state must have a self-interest in upholding its promise (old colonial ties, strategic interests, economic investments etc.)
- 2. the guarantor must be willing to use force if necessary (sufficient military capacities)
- 3. the intervening force should be able to signal resolve (strategic placement of outside forces, strong military presence without having to send for additional forces)

# Insufficient alternative explanations

- the skills of the mediator,
  - wars where the stakes are easy to divide (secessionist wars),
  - the stakes of war (the more can be won, the less likely a settlement is)
  - analyzing the civil wars in 1940-1990, Walter (1997) finds strong support for the credible commitment argument:
  - once adversaries agreed to negotiate, every case where a third party stepped in to guarantee a treaty resulted in a successful settlement
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# Peacekeeping and its effects

- we also need to know if peace is more likely to last in cases where peacekeepers are present than where they are absent? i.e. Does peacekeeping help maintain peace in post-civil war settings?
- peacekeepers tend to be sent to more difficult cases of civil war conflicts
- they rarely go where war has ended in a decisive outcome but rather try to maintain peace where both sides have the capacity to disrupt it
- peacekeeping is also less likely where a peace treaty has been signed indicating the combatants' commitment to peace



# Peacekeeping and its effects

- different **types of peacekeeping**:
- observer missions (small in size, unarmed)
- traditional peacekeeping missions (larger, lightly armed military units authorized to use force only in self-defense)
- multidimensional peacekeeping missions (supplement traditional missions with large civilian components to monitor elections, train police, monitor human rights)
- enforcement missions (better armed, mandated to impose peace by force, do not necessarily require the consent of the warring parties)

# Peacekeeping and its effects

- **Virginia Fortna (2004):** intervention by the international community helps maintain peace
- peacekeeping works, especially after the Cold War (when most of the peacekeeping missions have been deployed)
- it does not guarantee the lasting peace in every case, but it tends to make peace more likely to last, and to last longer
- all four types of mission have decreased the risk of another war
- traditional peacekeeping missions and observer missions have been the most successful
- despite a number of fiascoes in the early and mid-1990s, peacekeeping is an effective conflict management tool

# Consequences of Civil War Settlements

- there has been a clear policy preference for settling civil wars through negotiated settlements
- the core recommendation is to employ third-party resources to halt the violence and preserve the combatants
- however, some authors argue that allowing wars to reach their “natural” conclusion enhances the likelihood of a durable peace and effective postwar reconstruction
- they believe that outside intervention may block the transformative effects of both decisive victory and exhaustion of the warring parties

# Civil War Termination

- three ideal typical terminations of civil war conflicts:
- *negotiated settlement*, in which neither side admits defeat and the combatants agree to end the violence and accept common terms on how to govern together
- a *ceasefire/stalemate*: parties end violence but there is no attempt to achieve agreement on postwar power sharing
- *victory*, meaning one side explicitly acknowledges defeat and surrenders




# Consequences of Civil War Settlements

- how do different termination types influence postwar outcomes?
- is it true, that if the former combatants are given a voice in the post-settlement development, renewed violence can be averted?
- **Monica Duffy Toft (2010)** analyzes all civil wars in 1940-2007 and shows that incidence of negotiated settlements substantially increased in the 1990s
- there are a number of arguments for ending civil wars through negotiated settlement, the most powerful of which is that negotiated settlements reduce the number of deaths compared to victories

# Consequences of Civil War Settlements

- if a civil war's "costs" are measured narrowly in terms of life, negotiations to halt the violence would spare lives, and thus reduce the war's costs
- however, even if negotiated settlements may save lives, it is also true that combatants have strong incentives to avoid sharing power in a new government
- moreover, combatants are just as likely to use an armistice as an opportunity to recover and rearm in preparation for a future fight
- negotiated settlements may have an increased likelihood of saving lives in the short term, but an equally increased likelihood of costing even more lives in the long run

# Consequences of Civil War Settlements

- *wars ending in victory were nearly twice as likely to remain settled than those concluded through negotiated settlement or a cease-fire/stalemate*
  - victory reduces the likelihood of civil war recurrence by 24 percent, relative to all other types of civil war termination
  - conversely, negotiated settlements increase the chances of recurrence by 27 percent, relative to all other types
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# Consequences of Civil War Settlements

- the empirical evidence does not support the normative argument that negotiated settlements save lives
- wars following these failed settlements are significantly more deadly
- if war recurrence represents a high cost, then *negotiated settlements appear to be costlier than allowing the combatants to fight until one side emerges victorious*





# Consequences of Civil War Settlements

- negotiated settlements may not be the best way to increase the prospects for greater democratization following a civil war: negotiated settlements are associated with higher authoritarianism over time
- o summarize, Toft finds out that
- 1. civil wars ending in negotiated settlements are much more likely to recur,
- 2. negotiated settlements are no more likely to lead to democracy than other types of settlements, and
- 3. economic growth trends do not seem to be correlated with the type of civil war termination

# Why are negotiated settlements problematic?

- most of the negotiated settlements include extensive provisions for establishing executive offices, legislatures, free and fair elections, and judiciaries
- however, the means and methods to adapt and reinstitutionalize the military is given only secondary consideration
- while negotiated settlements are good at providing benefits, they are less effective in following through on their threats and are therefore not self-sustaining



# Why are negotiated settlements problematic?

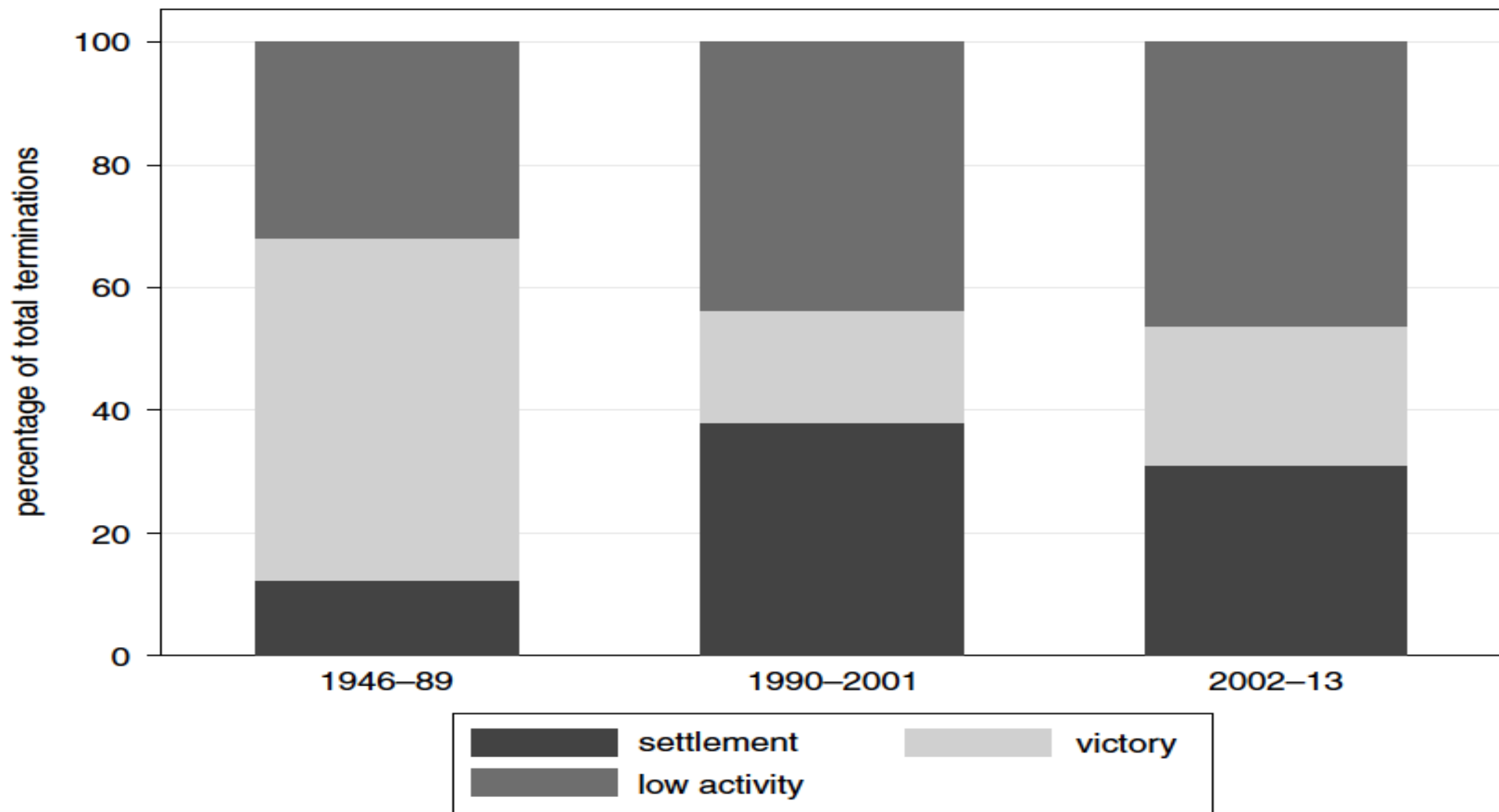
- In contrast, when governments achieve victory, the military is left intact
- as are the other branches of government (the government retains the capacity to repress or harm the population)
- when rebels win, they are in a position not only to harm (or threaten to harm) their populations but also to benefit them
- rebels often need to bolster the legitimacy of their win: allowing greater liberalization of the political system is an effective means of doing so



# What explains the patterns of civil war termination?

- three distinct time periods can be detected in 1946-2013:
- during the Cold War, most civil wars ended in victory by one side
- with the end of the Cold War, many more civil wars ended in negotiated settlements
- furthermore, the total number of civil war terminations rose between 1990 and 2001 (including the many wars that died out in low activity)
- since 9/11 fewer civil wars have ended per year
- there are still many negotiated settlements, but the proportion of wars ending in compromise as opposed to military victory has declined

Figure 1. Type of Civil War Termination as a Percentage of Total, by Time Period



# What explains the patterns of civil war termination?

- Morjé Howard and Stark (2018) argue causes at the level of the international system account for the observed variation:
- the international political environment (both its material and ideational components) gives rise to NORMS, i.e. clusters of ideas of appropriate behavior
- these norms than shape different types of outcomes, including how civil wars end
- in the bipolar Cold War setting, fighting to the finish was the most acceptable way to end the civil war (in line with zero-sum character of the Cold War)

# What explains the patterns of civil war termination?

- after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US and its allies chose not to seek complete defeat and instead favored negotiated solution
- (even when that meant an inclusion of anti-US elements in the new government)
- such an ideational shift was possible due to the absence of major threats and the quest for democratization prevalent in that period
- since 9/11, however, competing ideas of war on terror, and non-negotiation with terrorists challenge the norms of negotiated settlements



# What explains the patterns of civil war termination?

- disillusionment with the quest for externally assisted democracy produced by the new threat of terrorism and the failures of regime change in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere
- the main effect on civil wars have been *a decrease in all types of terminations and fewer negotiated settlements in civil wars* that include actors labeled as terrorist groups
- there has been no complete shift, however, we see normative trends in the US and the UN Security Council of the acceptance of the appropriateness of non-negotiation with terrorists, and the quest not for democracy but **stabilization**