

---

# Debating progress as a means to make things better while analyzing civil wars

## Economist Memo: Briefing – Civil Wars: How to stop the fighting, sometimes

The concept of progress, as discussed in class and written on the handout, is weaved into almost every dynamic of world politics. It is the idea that the world can become increasingly better. Progress can be measured in means of economics, politics, society, etc. An example of a progressive theorist is Marxism, where they believe society moves up a ladder of development until they reach the goal of socialism. Some believe that the concept of progress is ultimately nothing and that the replacement of a new “entity” is strictly just another one, nothing more. For example, a new world order is just a different configuration of the old, existing parts.

In the article How to stop the fighting, sometimes, the author starts off by bringing in Mr. Hussein el-Husseini, the speaker of the Lebanese parliament. Hussein attempted to end the Lebanese civil war by going to the outside powers that were sponsoring the civil war: America, France, Iran, Israel, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. After multiple tries, he was able to have the powers stop and bring representatives from the militias together to sign an accord for peace. Civil wars are caused by hatred of two or more factions within a state. It is not state versus state where one can fall back behind a border, there is no hiding and fighting tends to rage on violently because of this. However, recently it has been discovered that civil wars are lasting shorter in length. Since the Cold War, the amount of them as well has decreased exponentially. Mainly because the USSR and US are no longer fueling the states to fight for them to gain advantage. Along with that, the outcomes of the civil wars also have been altered. Victory has become rare, while negotiations. This is a result of the US and USSR not backing the different factions to fight as well as major world powers having active roles in stopping the wars. Nonetheless, civil wars will never disappear because it is a natural circuit of power, however small civil wars can be prevented. One way to prevent a war is if there is a current civil war near an unstable state, most likely it will then go to war with itself like contagion. On a separate note from preventing wars, allowing them to fight and one reign over the other tends to be more stable compared to negotiation; usually because in negotiation the initial problem resurfaces. However, military victories in the long run hurt the institutions that it needs to keep the country running. In some cases, splitting up the country is best case, but moving sects and tribes can spark new conflict. The author then brings in a new aspect and says UN peace missions have accomplished much success with civil wars, mostly because once a faction loses hope in winning, it is easy to negotiate peace. Lastly, the author brings in the anti-negotiation reasoning. They say that power sharing creates weak government creating loyalty to their own sect and not the public. However they then have a rebuttal explaining that people would rather live in a weak government than a bloody war-torn society. This leaves the interventionists with one option: change the leader. Through military actions, take out the leader and through economic actions, cut off the money supply for the government. Either way it will create mutual hurting stalemates and allowing negotiation or one faction winning, ending the civil war.

Civil wars itself tend to be a representation that progress in that state has ended and a new start

---

is to come. However, civil wars over time are actually starting to have progress in terms that they getting better. As mentioned above, civil wars are ending sooner; dropping from 4.6 years to 3.7, almost one full year. Possibly linked to the length of civil wars and the quantity of the amount occurring is the Cold War. The Cold war was a major factor in creating civil wars being pressured by the two big powers also mentioned above. From 1945 to 1989, civil wars occurred in 18% of the world's nations, however since then it has only touched 12% of the nations hinting at another possible clue to the progression of the civil wars. Furthermore, the rate of victory has decreased substantially from 58% to 13% and nonetheless the rate of negotiations has done the opposite going from 10% to 40%. This potentially could be related to the intervention of the world powers not to fuel the wars, but to mediate and stop them. This includes the UN, which has had an ongoing effort to pacify many situations by bringing in the UN blue helmets. They have deployed to 53 peacekeeping missions and are still deployed on 15 currently with 100,000 in uniform.

Of course there are critiques of the concept of progression. Some say that there will never be progress until the violent bloodshed is virtually gone, which as mentioned before will never happen, therefor implying that progression is unattainable. However in different perspectives, one can see that this may be the case, but generally if these wars are shortening and having less bloodshed, then there is definitely progression. Additionally, others say that negotiations are hopeless because power sharing results in a weak government where there is devotion to their religions rather than the people. Contrariwise, the people would rather their children be raised in a weak, poor society than one that is threatening their life every second.

In conclusion, the progression of civil war in terms of it being gone is nowhere in sight, however the overall longevity of civil wars is decaying. Analysts are seeing a decline in time, decline in amount of countries, and an increase of negotiations. All of which create hope that civil wars can eventually be preventable or at the very least shed little blood.