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## *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War*

Civil wars are the dominant form of violence in the contemporary international system, yet they are anything but local affairs. This book explores the border-crossing features of such wars by bringing together insights from international relations theory, sociology, and transnational politics with a rich comparative-quantitative literature. It highlights the causal mechanisms – framing, resource mobilization, socialization, among others – that link the international and transnational to the local, emphasizing the methods required to measure them. Contributors examine specific mechanisms leading to particular outcomes in civil conflicts ranging from Chechnya, to Afghanistan, to Sudan, to Turkey. *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War* thus provides a significant contribution to debates motivating the broader move to mechanism-based forms of explanation, and will engage students and researchers of international relations, comparative politics, and conflict processes.

JEFFREY T. CHECKEL is Professor of International Studies and Simons Chair in International Law and Human Security at Simon Fraser University, and Research Professor in the Centre for the Study of Civil War at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO). He has published extensively in leading European and North American journals, and is the author of *Ideas and International Political Change: Soviet/Russian Behavior and the End of the Cold War* (1997), editor of *International Institutions and Socialization in Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), and co-editor (with Peter J. Katzenstein) of *European Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

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Edited by

JEFFREY T. CHECKEL

*Simon Fraser University*

*Peace Research Institute Oslo*



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## *Contributors*

FIONA B. ADAMSON – Associate Professor, Department of Politics and International Studies, SOAS, University of London

KRISTIN M. BAKKE – Lecturer in Politics and International Relations, School of Public Policy, University College London

ANDREW BENNETT – Professor, Department of Government, Georgetown University

JEFFREY T. CHECKEL – Professor and Simons Chair, School for International Studies, Simon Fraser University, and Research Professor, Centre for the Study of Civil War, Peace Research Institute Oslo

STEPHAN HAMBERG – Ph.D. Candidate, Department of Political Science, University of Washington

KRISTIAN BERG HARPVIKEN – Director, Peace Research Institute Oslo

SARAH KENYON LISCHER – Associate Professor, Department of Politics and International Affairs, Wake Forest University

MARTIN AUSTVOLL NOME – Post-doctoral Research Associate, Centre for the Study of Civil War, Peace Research Institute Oslo

HANS PETER SCHMITZ – Associate Professor, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University

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*List of contributors*

NILS B. WEIDMANN – Marie Curie Post-Doctoral Fellow, Centre for  
the Study of Civil War, Peace Research Institute Oslo

ELISABETH JEAN WOOD – Professor, Department of Political  
Science, Yale University

## *Preface*

Our iconic images of civil war emphasize its local and localized nature. From village-level atrocities during the Greek civil conflict, to bombed-out buildings in Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, to child soldiers cradling AK-47s in Uganda, the focus is on failed or failing states. The very term civil war is meant to mark such conflict as something quite different from inter-state wars. Indeed, the word civil implies that such wars play out in some reasonably well-defined space, typically within the borders of a state.

We now know, however, this is rarely in fact the case. Rebel groups fighting civil wars often operate and recruit across borders; in many instances, neighboring states intervene in an ongoing civil conflict; diaspora communities – transnational in nature by their very essence – play key roles in many civil wars. Such wars thus have border-crossing and transnational dimensions; these need to be explored – theoretically and empirically – if we are to understand fully the complex dynamics behind what has become the dominant mode of organized violence in the international system.

This book addresses such challenges and does so by bringing together insights and arguments from two distinct research programs: work in international relations and sociology on peaceful transnationalism; and a rich and growing comparative-quantitative literature on civil war. The latter has documented in a sophisticated and rigorous manner the importance of transnationalism in civil conflict; the former provides a set of theoretical arguments and methods to explain the nature of these transnational dynamics. Put more colloquially, ours is an endeavor where transnationalism meets the dark side of global politics.

This meeting is captured through the articulation of several causal mechanisms linking the international and transnational to the local and particular. However, the analysis is anything but abstract, as we examine specific mechanisms leading to particular outcomes in a given

civil conflict. This operational focus puts a premium on method, on how we actually measure mechanisms in action. And here, we join with many others in arguing that a key measurement tool is process tracing. Thus, beyond literatures on transnationalism and civil war, our approach and findings speak directly to key conceptual and methodological debates motivating the broader move to mechanism-based forms of explanation.

All chapters have benefitted from several rounds of discussion and revision. Chapter 1 started as a conceptual memo for a first project workshop, a brainstorming meeting held at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) in December 2007. This was followed by three workshops – Washington DC (October 2008), Simon Fraser University (October 2009), PRIO (August 2010) – where the other chapter drafts were discussed and debated.

I owe thanks to many people and institutions, most importantly to the Centre for the Study of Civil War (CSCW) at PRIO. Scott Gates, Andrew Feltham, and others created a welcoming and intellectually exciting environment for a civil-war “newbie” – one who had spent the previous decade studying a slightly different topic (European integration and identity). I would like especially to thank and acknowledge Kristian Berg Harpviken, both for inviting me to join the CSCW and for his key role at early stages of this project.

Matthew Evangelista and Scott Gates gave indispensable help at a crucial later stage. At our last workshop, they acted as discussants not only of individual chapters, but also of the project as a whole. Their differing areas of expertise (Evangelista – transnationalism; Gates – civil war), trenchant criticisms, and constructive suggestions have made this a much better book. Shortly after this final meeting, when the manuscript was under review at Cambridge, two anonymous reviewers did a brilliant job reminding me that ours is a volume with important things to say about civil war – and not just about method and mechanisms!

For helpful comments on various parts of the manuscript, I thank – in addition to those already named – Andy Bennett, Lars-Erik Cederman, Marty Finnemore, Stephan Hamberg, Anna Holzscheiter, Andy Mack, Martin Austvoll Nome, Martha Snodgrass, and Elisabeth Wood, as well as the students of my May 2011 Ph.D. seminar, “Qualitative Methods and the Study of Civil War,” and seminar audiences at the Peace Studies Program, Cornell University; the Merzhon Center for International Security Studies, Ohio State University; the Swiss Federal

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Institute of Technology (ETH Zürich); the University of Washington International Security Colloquium; the Otto Suhr Institute of Political Science, Free University Berlin; and the Liu Institute for Global Issues, University of British Columbia.

Last and certainly not least, I owe a debt of gratitude to Damian Penfold, who carefully – and cheerfully – edited and formatted the entire manuscript in-between conducting stints, and to Eileen Doherty-Sil for preparation of the index. At Cambridge University Press, I thank John Haslam for organizing an efficient, rigorous but fair review process, and Carrie Parkinson for overseeing the production of the book.

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I end by stating the obvious. This book would not exist if it were not for the dedication and perseverance of its contributors. They not only complied – many times – with my requests for changes and revisions, they also helped a recovering “Euroholic” rediscover his roots in what we used to call security studies. When I left the field 20 years ago, the central actors were superpowers with their ICBMs; today, they are more likely to be imploding states and rebel groups. It is my modest hope this book tells us something new about the latter.

JTC  
Vancouver