

Essay on a descriptive paper on the civil war with focus on the american civil wa...

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



Introduction

It is in the very nature of humans to have conflicts with one another. At the same time, it is not impossible to meet those conflicts with the appropriate resolutions. Whereas conflicts, small or large in scale, arise from disagreements over matters crucial to the parties involved, the escalation of such matters often lead to amicable resolutions, regardless of the length of time and representation changes within parties. War, a disastrous form of conflict, often stems from disagreements between large groups of people within a certain context and milieu, with both parties risking their interests in the given case.

Civil wars are among the kinds of large-scale conflicts humans wage against one another. Whereas many would think of wars as mostly a matter of international relations, civil wars are different and, at some points, even more crucial than those fought overseas. In this paper, I will describe in concise yet thorough detail what a civil war is and how does it come about. I will end this paper with a summarizing focus on the American Civil War of 1861-1965, a significant effect in the history of the United States, which brought forth implications to the development of the nation.

What is a Civil War?

In reviewing Stathis Kalyvas' *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, Jill Vickers quoted his definition of civil war as an “armed combat within the boundaries of a recognized sovereign entity between parties subject to a common authority at the outset of hostilities” (2008). Nicholas Sambanis (2004)

asserted that defining what a civil war is, in operational terms, is a challenging task to undertake. He quoted civil war as an “armed conflict” that should be within only a given area involved actively by the national government and presented with resistance from both sides (Small & Singer to Sambanis, 2004). Nevertheless, he mentioned that “without adopting some ad hoc coding rules to distinguish civil wars from other forms of political violence and accurately code war onset and termination,” it would be “difficult, if not impossible,” to define civil war (Sambanis, 2004). Supplementing his statement are four supporting arguments positing areas pointing to problems in identifying civil war.

The first argument Sambanis raised concerns the blurry line delineating wars of extrastate and intrastate nature. As an explanation, he brought up the case of the civil war in the Russia’s Republic of Chechnya. He suggested that the matter shares quite the same qualities as that of a decolonization war, fought between the secessionists and the colonizers as in his suggested case of the 1954 independence war of Cameroon against France. The second argument takes up the ambiguity between a civil war and violence sponsored by states. Noting that a “degree of organization” is required from the parties in clearing off such vagueness, he brought up examples such as settings in which there are civil wars without functional governments and proxy wars instigated by governments. The third argument focuses on data lapses brought about reporting that is undependable. He expressed the difficulty in defining termination of civil wars, which he characterized by either the reduction of casualties or the meeting of minds in peace treaties.

The fourth argument tackles the intermittent nature of civil wars, recognizing the fact that it is important to define “ when an old war stops and a new one starts” (Sambanis, 2004).

How Do Civil Wars Come About?

According to Patrick Regan and Daniel Norton, either greed or grievances bring forth the causes for civil wars (2005). Greed over economic ends drives the purpose of rebels within certain areas, thus leading them to wage in a civil war to achieve those things. Regan and Norton cite that greed fits right into a model of rebellion anchored towards achieving gains of an economic nature. Those models recognize grievance as a pervasive factor in civil wars, although under said model, the absence of economic gains can hinder movements, even those that are leaned towards heavy grievances. As an example, both authors raised the case of soldiers in the conflict, in which they earn wages in exchange for their hard work - wages that could come from the consequent looting in the area. In this model, both authors recognize that while grievance is the so-called backbone in driving civil unrest, greed over economic ends inspire rebels to go to war (Regan & Norton, 2005).

On the issue of grievance, both Regan and Norton agreed that it arises from certain minority groups bound by their cultural identity (2005). Those minorities that receive uneven treatment under their specific jurisdictions could resort to instigating unrest as long as unequal distribution of political and material resources ensues (Regan and Norton, 2005). While they cited deprivation as a non-absolute cause for motivating individuals to act

collectively and wage a war against the government, it is nevertheless a concerning factor. In addition to that, both authors quoted four “ truths” on uprisings – in this case, brought about by peasants. Peasants are not concerned with the (1) broadness of ideologies anchored on “ purposes, philosophical systems, political theories and the like”, (2) have specific grievances, (3) act based on fulfilling their self-interests and (4) are motivated towards involvement as long as they gain consequences that will benefit them (Regan and Norton, 2005).

On the onset of rebels wanting to establish a rebellion, Clayton Thyne said that it is more probable that the government has more ample information than the opposition on the possibility of a civil war happening and the degree of support or aggression that it might receive from external actors (2006). Based on the premise that the government regularly establishes communication with other states under the dictates of sovereignty norms, the author states that international actors trust governments in terms of handling their own affairs within their jurisdictions, particularly notions of a civil war onset (Thyne, 2006). While the opposition may undermine the government’s position in that aspect due to their own international connections, it does not affect the possibility of a civil war happening (Thyne, 2006).

How Does Diplomatic Intervention Help In Managing Civil Wars?

Aysegul Aydin and Patrick Regan (2006) noted that it diplomatic intervention provides crucial benefits for managing civil wars, subject to certain

parameters that would help in the effective containment of the conflict.

While there are specific studies in the subject pertaining to the ineffectiveness of diplomatic intervention in preventing the rise of casualties and shortening of the duration of conflict, both authors have come to conclude that intervention models will work best if their implementation is appropriate to the conditions in which it would be implemented. The involvement of external actors in managing civil wars should also focus on delivering the desire of the rebellious party in terms of their demands and compromises (if needed) to fulfill those. In their study of the subject matter, both authors found three important conclusions. Firstly, it is effective to utilize diplomatic intervention for conflict management in civil wars because it can alter its progression. Secondly, a combination of several strategies can strengthen individual ones. Lastly, diplomatic intervention should arrive at the right time, for it has an important bearing on its possible outcomes on the war. In coming to those conclusions, both authors have defined conflict management in civil wars as a complicated process that involves information manipulation of both parties in the war (Aydin & Regan, 2006).

Brief Case In Point: The American Civil War (1861-65)

The United States of America (US) steadily grew and expanded its territory towards the rest of the North American continent. Jeremy Adelman, et. al (2011) noted that it is during that growth when the nation had to reconcile with several people from the newly acquired territories (California and other states from Mexico) on its policies. During that period, the issue on the abolition of slavery has grown to great proportions, when Abraham Lincoln,

elected president of the nation in 1861, committed to the removal of slavery. The result led to the onset of the Civil War, fought between the North and South states of the nation (Adelman, et. al, 2011).

The Civil War, viewed by many as the second American nation, saw its end leading to the eradication of slavery in the nation. As a result, it heralded a new generation of American champions in the mold of President Lincoln, who fell victim to martyrdom of his cause in 1865 due to an ongoing cause of Confederate supporters to go against the abolition of slavery in the nation. Because of Lincoln's policy, former slaves have integrated into American society as full-fledged citizens. The former slaves have attained basic civil rights the same as white American have, although the road to attaining that completely endured a tough road of resistance against those who opposed the changes (Adelman, et. al, 2011).

Counterrevolutionary movements were prevalent in the years following the Civil War. Southern states reverted to white-only policies such as in ruling planters. The Reconstruction Period of 1867-1877 failed to provide solid sense towards the opposing Confederacy supporters on the establishment of democracy anchoring two races. Eventually, radical groups such as the Ku Klux Klan sought to instigate measures to establish an absolute sense of white supremacy and eradicate the rights granted to former slaves towards standards that existed during the pre-Lincoln period (Adelman, et. al, 2011).

While opposition still ensued in the aftermath of the Civil War, it shows that the rift between states on policies during that time have become intense and

imposed an enduring postwar effect. In the process, the nation went on to experience favorable changes in the system of the nation. The Civil War highlighted the distinct importance of the federal government who sought to remove slavery from the laws of the nation against the self-interests of the Confederates who believed that slavery produced economic benefits and emphasized on white supremacy, which was their paradigm of nationality back then. As a result, not only did the removal of slavery as a policy thwarted the impediments of African-Americans to become citizens, but also it abolished the barrier between North and South states, hence leading the US to become a much more united nation (Adelman, et. al, 2011).

The aftermath of the Civil War brought forth stellar developments in the economic landscape of the nation. Less than ten years after the war, the nation generated massive industry-based outputs by up to 75%, particularly due to transportation in the form of building railroads. In 35 years past Lincoln's administration, the total length of railroads in the nation grew up to more than five times, owing its growth to the benevolent growth of trade and industry happening that time.. Industrialization increased output and did not necessitate much human labor than before thanks to a massive influx of successful investment on machines and technological developments during that time. As an example, wheat production grew at a much faster rate, from 61 hours trimmed down to just three hours due to industrial equipment (Adelman, et. al, 2011).

Soon thereafter, the economy of the United States of America grew at a massive rate and went on to top European nations like Germany and the

United Kingdom. There were several economic innovations introduced as a result, particularly the rise of the stock exchange, an instrument that enabled companies to gain growth via stockholders and managers. Economic wealth attributes itself to the revolution pushed by the Civil War, mainly due to the unity achieved by the cause of Lincoln and his supporters (Adelman, et. al, 2011).

Analysis of the American Civil War

It is the fervent assertion of the American government that led to their victory in the Civil War. While there is no denying that the opposing Confederacy supporters stood ground to oppose the instituted policies throughout the post-Civil War period, albeit at a pace that is less pressing than that during the Civil War proper, the resultant unity nevertheless gained proper establishment and led the nation to impressive growth levels. If the divisiveness of the slavery issue of the 1800s did not reach its tipping point under Lincoln's administration, progress could have not resulted from the secessionist measures of the Confederates. Given those assertions, the Civil War would now seem to emerge as a necessary historical event of the nation, for it tested the integrity of the American government towards the direction that it wanted to give the nation, especially at a time when its borders are expanding across several territories (Adelman, et. al, 2011).

Economic growth following the Civil War could not have transpired if the nation remained divided on the issue of slavery. The strength of the American government underlined the imposition of a crucial national that sought to remove divisions in line with its democratic principles properly

upheld by Abraham Lincoln. While no one could have possibly envisioned the marvelous growth rated that followed after the nation abolished slavery, the growth itself showed as a rightful consequence of quashing the support of the highly divisive Confederates, which spoke of white American nationalism that is in favor of African-American slavery. The nation's Civil War thus serves as a model for the positive lasting effect of victory coming from a government ruled with integrity towards its principles (Adelman, et. al, 2011).

Summary and Conclusion

Civil wars, defined in basic terms as one that happens within a certain national jurisdiction characterized by armed struggle and disputes against the government, have to receive a thorough analysis in order for it to be distinguished from other forms of conflict. While there are several parameters describing what a civil war is, it nevertheless remains a contentious issue introduced with several key parameters for definition.

Disputes between the government and certain groups are often the main cause of civil wars. Civil wars are driven mostly by two things – greed and grievance, as rebellious groups try to coerce ruling governments over their specific material interests as well as address their political grievances. At the same time, personnel of the government operate with material ends in mind so that they can continue to staff their duties. Following that premise is the better advantage of government than the opposition to monitor a civil uprising and the probability that it will get international intervention. Such is due to their internationally recognized sovereignty, which gives them due

trust from international actors in terms of giving them reliable details on the situation of the country. Diplomatic intervention is another duly recognized remedy for civil wars, as long as the intervention is timely and done with suitable strategies.

Finally, the case of the American Civil War underlines the importance of government victory in leading nations against divisiveness and towards prospective progress. The Civil War led to the abolition of slavery and the resultant recognition of former slaves as citizens and proceeded towards national unity that led to upward progress, thanks to industrial developments.

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