



Nations Torn Asunder: The Challenge of Civil War

By Bill Kissane

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Civil war has been a recurring feature of human societies throughout history -- and an essential catalyst for major international conflict. Since 1945, the number of civil wars in the world has grown steadily, bringing devastation on a scale more traditionally associated with international wars.

In spite of this, there is no classic treatise on civil war to compare with the classic works we have on war, revolution, or peace. On the one hand, historians have tended to treat the "big" civil wars, such as the American and the Spanish, in isolation. On the other, social scientists have concentrated on identifying common patterns, without looking in too much detail at the specifics of any given conflict.

Focusing on the numerous civil conflicts that have occurred throughout the world since the Second World War, Bill Kissane bridges this gap, asking what the recent social science literature adds to what we already know about civil war, but also how insights from the historical literature, from the ancient Greeks onwards, can help explain the violent experience of so many parts of the world since 1945.

At its heart is the question of what makes the contemporary challenge posed by civil war so different from that of past periods -- and what, if anything, is new about the contemporary experience of civil war at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Bill Kissane has still done a great service to general readers by providing a humane guide to the rather soulless social-scientific literature on civil war a sophisticated, accessible account."--*Times Literary Supplement*

About the Author

Bill Kissane, political scientist and historian, is a Reader in Politics at the London School of Economics, where he is a member of the Conflict Research Group. He is the author of several books on civil-war related subjects, including a pioneering study of the Irish civil war, *The Politics of the Irish Civil War* (2005), also published by Oxford University Press, and has held visiting positions at University College Dublin, the University of Notre Dame, the University of Bielefeld, and the National Humanities Centre in North Carolina.

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