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# What Exactly are the Social and Political Consequences of Civil War? A Critical Review and Analysis of Recent Scholarship

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## ABSTRACT


The last decade has seen a proliferation of studies on the consequences of civil wars; yet, we are far from reaching a consensus about what wars leave behind. In this review, we summarise findings from recent scholarship on four areas of importance for post-war politics: civic attitudes, prosocial behaviours, political participation and partisanship. We summarise findings, and suggest ways to answer contradictory or conflicting findings in the existing research by comparing across different literatures. We identify weaknesses in methods and measurement, and provide clear suggestions for future research, particularly calling for greater attention to wartime dynamics, measurement, and mechanisms.

## Introduction

Since 1945, civil wars have supplanted interstate wars as the dominant form of political violence (Human Security Report 2013). Although studies on why civil wars erupt have been numerous, those examining the consequences of civil wars on social and political relations have only gradually increased in the last decade. These works have challenged the dominant view that civil war was uniquely destructive; while many studies find negative effects on civic attitudes, there is evidence of at least some ‘growth’ in pro-social behaviour after violence (Bauer *et al.* 2016).

However, there are still a number of open and critically important questions. For example, does a post-war growth in altruism mask a similarly important growth of in-group parochialism (Bauer *et al.* 2016)? Given that much of the literature uses subnational designs, how do these findings compare across contexts (Reno 2019)? Are there certain classes of conflict that might affect existing findings? Considering the

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growth in research, the diffusion across disciplinary boundaries, and the complex and interrelated nature of many of the dependent variables, there is a need for critical review of the literature on social and political consequences of civil wars, to distil extant findings and suggest productive ways forward.

We offer the most comprehensive review of scholarship to date on the legacies of civil war covering civic attitudes of trust and tolerance, prosocial behaviours such as altruism, cooperation, and egalitarianism, and related political behaviours such as participation and partisanship. Civic attitudes of trust and tolerance are the foundations of functioning societies, and prosocial behaviours are their building blocks (Frey and Meier 2004, Gregg *et al.* 2011, Newton *et al.* 2018). Transformations in these areas are crucial to understanding war's effects on post-conflict group relations, and the economic and political prospects of the country. Hence, we chose to keep our focus on these fundamental building blocks, rather than more macro-processes.

This review provides three improvements to existing reviews on the social consequences of civil war. First, by exclusively focusing on civil war, it provides more depth than Davenport *et al.* (2019, p. 363), which looks at all types of contention. Second, our review examines a wide set of dependent variables, expanding the focus beyond Bauer *et al.* (2016, p. 250)'s sole focus on 'cooperation'. Third, it systematises the findings by paying close attention to methods and measurement and discusses the role methods and measurements play in some of the conflicting findings we observe.

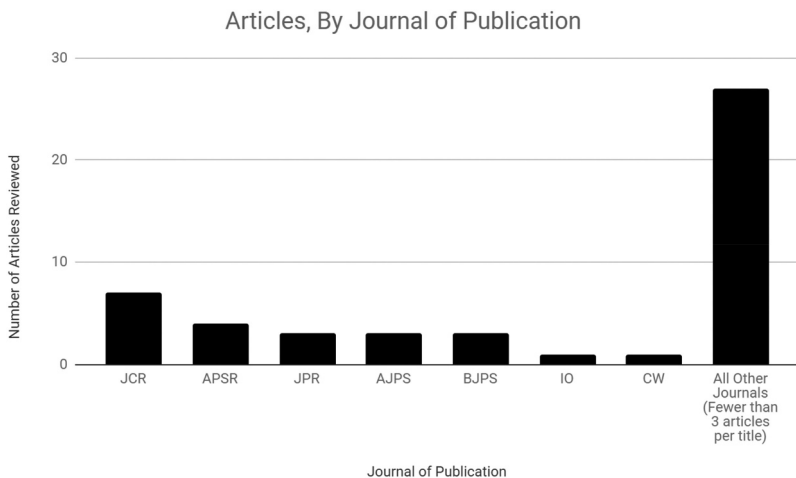
We highlight three avenues with strong potential for advancing scholarship. First, our review confirms that the character and dynamics of warfare deeply influence the consequences of civil wars, and suggest that more attention should be paid to these dynamics. Second, consensus in measurement of the variables would help build on previous scholarship. Concepts that are tightly connected such as such as altruism, cooperation, and egalitarianism, are sometimes conflated, and measured, to the extent possible, with the same tools despite conceptual differences among these concepts. We advocate for making distinctions. Particularly when using behavioural games to measure outcomes, it is crucial to match the set-up of the game with the dependent variable. Third, more attention needs to be paid to the potential mechanisms which link civil war and social behaviour. For example, post-traumatic growth, often cited as a reason for prosocial behaviour, is rarely discussed in relation to post-traumatic stress, an opposing mechanism. Institutional mechanisms are seldom considered, yet it seems probable that warfare may deeply alter social and political institutions, and these institutions may in turn be responsible for changes observed after conflict.

## Scope of the Review

We focus on the changes civil wars have on the attitudes and behaviours of individuals in the social realm that are in turn important explanatory variables for political attitudes and behaviour. Civic attitudes of trust and tolerance and prosocial behaviours of altruism, cooperation, and egalitarianism are critical antecedents to political behaviour, and are well represented in recent works. We link these to a subset of political behaviour, particularly participation and partisanship, to show the importance of these social variables to political processes of interest. While there are a number of other important legacies of civil wars, such as economic performance or regime type, we focus on these variables because of their prominence in recent studies, and their comparability across cases.

We selected articles for this review using a two-stage process. First, we did a deliberate search through what we regard as a representative sample of mainstream generalist and specialist journals looking at conflict, from January 2017 to June 2019. We limited the articles to only cases of civil war, rather than other forms of contention and excluded post-conflict interventions, such as peacekeeping and aid. In all, this gave us a body of 49 articles drawn from 35 journals across the social sciences (Figure 1); full details on the search method and articles selected are in Section A of the Appendix.

Of note, the cases in the articles are only a sub-sample of the larger universe of civil war cases, and perhaps not a representative one.<sup>1</sup> We define



**Figure 1.** Articles, by journal. Shows the distribution by journal of publication; ‘all others’ include journals that had two or fewer articles. JCR: Journal of Conflict Resolution; JPR: Journal of Peace Research; APSR: American Political Science Review; AJPS: American Journal of Political Science; IO: International Organization; BJPS: British Journal of Political Science; CW: Civil Wars

civil wars broadly, as sustained militarised disputes between two or more parties within a bounded sovereign territory, 'when domestic political conflict takes the form of military confrontation or armed combat (Kalyvas 2007, p. 416)'. Studies on Israel and Palestine account<sup>2</sup> for ten out of the 49 articles reviewed; the former Yugoslavia is also well represented, with nine works focused on its successor states. Some cases that would normally be noted for duration, lethality, or number of armed actors, such as Angola, Iraq, Myanmar, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are not included in this sample (Figure 2). While the articles we review may not be representative of the universe of cases of civil war, we believe based on our search methods that that they are a representative sample of recent scholarship on the topic (see Table A1 in the Appendix for a full list of the reviewed articles).

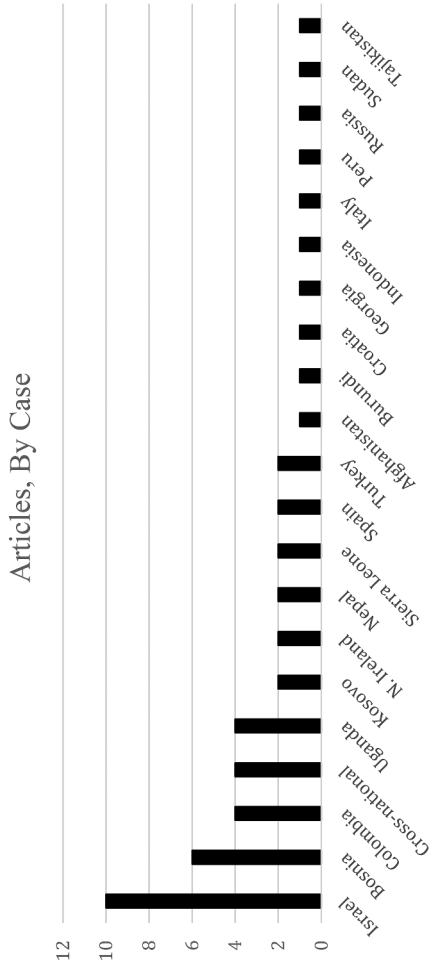
## Issue Areas

In the following sections, we examine findings on the main variables of interest: civic attitudes (trust and tolerance), prosocial behaviours (altruism, egalitarianism, and cooperation), and the effects of these on political participation and partisanship. While these variables are intertwined, they correspond with rough divisions in the wider literature, and we believe that this order captures the process of interest, how civil war influences social attitudes, how these lead to behaviours, and how these in turn inform political behaviours.

### Civic Attitudes: Trust and Tolerance

Trust and norms of reciprocity are integral to any social relationship based on interdependence (for conceptual differentiations see Torche and Valenzuela 2011, p. 187–190). Broadly defined as the belief that others will not deliberately hurt your interest (Newton 2007, p. 343–44), trust reduces complexity, helps individuals cope with uncertainty, and enables social interactions and economic transactions (e.g., Luhmann 1988, p. 105, Coleman 1990, p. 306–10) (See Appendix Section B for details). We look at both generalised trust, between individuals and unknown people regardless of category, and particularised trust, based on specific sub-group membership (Rothstein and Uslaner 2005).

Most of the literature on civil war and trust relies on observational measures, taking advantage of the increase in available survey data. The predominant finding is that civil war decreases generalized social trust. Observational evidence for decreasing generalized trust after civil war comes from Croatia (Kunovich and Hodson 1999), Kosovo (Kijewski and Freitag 2018), and Uganda (Rohner *et al.* 2013), all featuring ethnicity as a major cleavage. These findings show that post-conflict trust levels are



**Figure 2.** Number of articles per case. Shows the country cases covered in our review. Where the authors' analyses are largely cross-national, they are coded as a separate category. In one article where the authors compared across two cases, each case was counted once, giving a sum of 50 cases from the 49 articles.

shaped by exposure to conflict, at least in ethnic civil wars. Alessandra Cassar, Pauline Grosjean, and Sam Whitt (2013) offer experimental evidence from Tajikistan that civil war decreases generalized trust, indicating that effects of war on attitudinal social trust manifests itself in the behavioural realm as well.

Giacomo De Luca and Marijke Verpoorten (2015a), by contrast, argue that while self-reported generalised trust diminishes during conflict in Uganda, it rebounds quickly after the end of conflict. This implies that the effects of civil war violence may be transient, congruent with other findings that social capital can regenerate itself (Colletta and Cullen 2000, p. 29–32).

Works looking at particularized trust provide more nuanced findings. De Luca and Verpoorten (2015a) caution that trust in outgroups is negatively affected by war violence, particularly groups associated with the perpetrators of violence. Sam Whitt (2010) shows that though trust in co-ethnics is higher than trust in non-co-ethnics in post-conflict Bosnia, there is much variation. He suggests that institutions eliminate the difference between in- and out-group trust, and help boost social trust on average. Dominic Rohner *et al.* (2013) add that trust in known people and relatives is not affected by ethno-religious civil war, hinting that the effects differ across types of social trust.

The differences in findings may stem from how authors measure exposure to conflict. Geo-coding the number of events by district as a proxy for intensity is a common approach (e.g., Rohner *et al.* 2013, Kijewski and Freitag 2018), although this fails to account for differences between direct and indirect experiences, which are likely to matter (Werner 2016). Studies find that indirect exposure, where harm is not necessarily just to self but also to family members and close friends, diminish social trust more robustly than contextual exposure (Kijewski and Freitag 2018). This may be because direct violence requires collaboration between locals and armed groups (Kalyvas 2003, p. 482–483), and those victimised may thus have lower trust in their fellow community members than non-victims (Cassar *et al.* 2013, p. 300).

The consensus of these articles is that civil war has a negative effect on social trust, particularly in ethnic wars. However, these effects are not uniform; trust in outgroup members declines more than trust in unspecified others and victimized groups display higher distrust.

## **Tolerance**

Tolerance towards other groups, beliefs, and cultures is crucial for co-existence, and a lack of tolerance may delay peace or lead to a renewal of fighting in post-war societies. Tolerance may also facilitate trust (Vives and FeldmanHall 2018, p. 6) and foster participation in civic groups and associations (Cigler and Joslyn 2002, p. 19).

Studies on political and social tolerance are largely observational, and most show negative effects. Marc Hutchison (2014)'s cross-national study

shows that civil conflict decreases political tolerance, measured as attitudes towards least liked groups holding office or engaging in public demonstrations. Evidence from Israel, using equivalent measures for tolerance, shows similar results where persistent attacks decrease political tolerance towards Palestinians (Peffley *et al.* 2015).

Intolerance as a result of civil war is not limited to the political arena. Robert Kunovic and Randy Hodson (1999) show that exposure to wartime violence diminishes ethnic tolerance in Croatia, measured with a composite index. Comparing pre-and post-war surveys, Vera Mironova and Sam Whitt (2016) show that negative views of other ethnic groups increased while support for interethnic marriage declined as a result of the Bosnian Civil War. Another study shows that in Sudan exposure to violence in a secessionist conflict decreases the likelihood to support citizenship for Southerners remaining in the North, because Northerners do not want to live together with those seeking secession (Beber *et al.* 2014). Jaroslav Tir and Shane Singh (2015) extend these findings to social tolerance, the desirability of a range of groups as neighbours, and find that only secessionist civil wars decrease social tolerance.

Similar to results on political tolerance, studies from Israel show signs of increasing exclusionist and prejudicial attitudes after exposure to violence (Besser and Neria 2009). Daphna Canetti-Nisim *et al.* (2009) add that exposure to violence only induces exclusionist attitudes via the mechanism of psychological distress, using measures of post-traumatic stress. This contingency on the mediating role of subjective distress is a theme observed for prosocial behavior as well and is discussed below. Finally, stretching the notion of tolerance to ex-fighters, Juan Fernando Tellez (2019) shows that individuals exposed to conflict are less willing to live together with demobilized rebels.

Although mounting evidence points to negative effects of civil war on tolerance, we still do not know the scope conditions for this finding. Studies on tolerance predominantly come from cases of identity-based wars, and some of them warn that only secessionist wars propel intolerance. Further, the relation at the micro-level between objective and subjective insecurities is worth exploring in future research.

### ***Prosocial Behaviour: Altruism, Egalitarianism, and Cooperation***

Attitudes in general condition behaviour (Armitage and Christian 2003, p. 192–193). For example trust is a main predictor of cooperative preferences (Good 1988, p. 34–37, cf. Cook *et al.* 2005, p. 14–5, Thöni *et al.* 2012, p. 636, also see Vives and FeldmanHall 2018, p. 2), particularly in situations of conflict (Balliet and Van Lange 2013, p. 1102–1103). Given that the predominant finding for the effect of civil war on trust and tolerance is negative, we should expect tendencies for prosocial behaviour to decline in civil war contexts. Yet,



some studies show that individuals become more prosocial after wars (e.g., Voors *et al.* 2012, Gilligan *et al.* 2014). This is puzzling beyond the contradiction with the trust and tolerance literature. Conflict is especially likely to heighten individual concerns, given the need to survive (see Van Vugt and Van Lange 2006 for Altruism Puzzle), and the finding that conflict makes people more other-regarding is a conclusion worth probing.

We look at the effects of civil war on three theoretically distinct but empirically linked components of prosocial behaviour: altruism, egalitarianism, and cooperation. Many recent studies tend to consider these distinct notions as indicators of prosociality and treat them as if they tap the same latent trait (e.g., Gilligan *et al.* 2014). In this review, we do not consider prosociality as a unidimensional concept and instead treat these characteristics separately, particularly in light of findings that show effects of conflict can differ across components (Vélez *et al.* 2016, p. 3, 13). Considering that group-based distinctions are an undercurrent in the legacies of civil war on civic attitudes, we also look carefully at parochial behaviour and pay special attention to measurement of prosocial behaviour across identity dimensions.

Altruism is a common denominator in most studies on prosocial behaviour. Though altruism appears to grow after conflict, a closer look, especially at measurement and experimental designs, reveals signs of parochialism, the favouring of in-group members at the expense of an out-group (Choi and Bowles 2007, Bowles 2008).

Sam Whitt and Rick Wilson (2007) did one of the earlier studies on prosociality in Bosnia, a widely studied case. They employed a dictator game in which a single player is asked to decide to allocate a certain sum of money. The players can keep it all to themselves or send some money to others. Judging by the participants' allocation of resources, the authors infer that the Bosnian civil war did not disrupt pre-war norms of egalitarianism, which continued for almost a decade after the peace agreement.

We contend that the dictator game they used better measures altruism than egalitarianism. Although altruistic individuals tend to be more egalitarian (Abásolo and Tsuchiya 2014, p. 7), they are separate concepts. Altruism is the incorporation of the well-being of others into one's individual preferences and utility function, whereas egalitarianism is about collective preferences for fairness, particularly the equal allocation of resources (Frohlich *et al.* 1984, p. 5–6). Egalitarianism may imply a loss of personal gain for the larger goal of equality, but if no such loss is at stake, one can be egalitarian without sacrificing anything. As such, altruism and egalitarianism need not go hand in hand. That's why we consider Whitt and Wilson's study to measure altruism.<sup>3</sup> Whitt and Wilson also observe co-ethnic favouritism and out-group bias, classic signs of parochial altruism.

Vera Mironova and Sam Whitt (2016) repeated this study in 2013 and find that parochial altruism indeed increased across all ethnic groups in the

intervening decade. Nevertheless, they found important remedies to reverse rising parochialism: inter-group contact and institutional power-sharing boosts altruism towards out-groups. They add that victimisation affects altruism towards out-groups positively.

In Northern Ireland, Antonio Silva and Ruth Mace (2014) did a study on cooperation between Protestants and Catholics after war but we categorise it as a study on altruism on the basis of their measurement tool as well. They run 'naturalistic experiments' using charity donations and returning lost letters to operationalise cooperation, and find no evidence of greater in-group cooperation but significant discriminatory effects towards out-groups, which were greater for those who experienced more violence or felt a stronger sectarian threat during the war. The experiments they ran mimic dictator games, where only the sending player makes a decision on allocating resources, and are thus more suited for measuring altruism than cooperation. We interpret their findings as support for declining altruism towards outgroups after civil war.

Not all findings point to negative effects of civil war on altruism. Two studies find surprising positive effects, and interestingly both of them used behavioural games where the identity of the receiving party is not known. In Burundi, Maarten Voors *et al.* (2012) find that individuals exposed to violence are more altruistic towards neighbours, and that altruism positively correlates with ethnic homogeneity. Given that players did not know whether they share group membership, higher altruism in more ethnically homogenous communities may indicate parochial rather than general altruism. Voors *et al.* admit that they cannot exclude "that differences in beliefs about the play of others may also drive" the results (2012, p. 945), so the observed increase in altruism may also be an artifact of in-group trust. Michael Gilligan, Benjamin Pasquale, and Cyrus Samii (2014) similarly find that members of communities that were exposed to higher levels of violence in Nepal score higher prosociality on an index combining altruism, trust, and cooperation. However, violence did not have any significant effect on altruism alone. Given that the civil war in Nepal was Maoist, and thus markers of cleavages were less visible, and that the identity of the receiving party was not known, the null finding for altruism may be either because in- and out-group distinctions are not as visible or because their salience was hidden.

Katharina Werner and Johann Graf Lambsdorff (2020) indeed find that revealing the identity of the counterpart in dictator, ultimatum, and trust games in Ambon, Indonesia diminishes prosociality. Without revealing this identity, there is only moderate evidence for discrimination between in- and out-group, and these effects are more pronounced for those who were either personally injured or had an injured family member (also see Mironova and Whitt 2018, p. 759). Similarly, Luke Condra and Sera Linardi (2019) find that parochial altruism is observed in Afghanistan when there is casual interethnic contact. All this is to say that experimental designs that do not incorporate

identity of the recipient may have confounded findings. When the identity dimension is considered, particularly in cases where the identity cleavage was important during the war, almost all the studies show that civil war induces parochial altruism, rather than broad altruism.

Regarding egalitarianism, findings again support the idea that parochialism is a legacy of civil war. Sam Whitt (2014) uses non-costly dictator games, a version where the recipients are again asked to allocate money but cannot keep any for themselves unlike the original (costly) version and thus a better measure of egalitarianism, and finds that though the majority of subjects are fair regardless of ethnicity, one-third discriminate. He argues that this ethnic bias is a symptom of war-induced parochialism, although his results do not control for subjects' exposure to conflict. Michal Bauer et al.'s (2014) research in Georgia and Sierra Leone, featuring surveys and social-choice experiments, show that victimisation affects egalitarian choices, although with inconsistencies between cases. They find a significant difference for in-group favouritism by the 'affected' group, which was not observed for the 'least affected' group (Bauer *et al.* 2014, p. 49). For this study, in-group and out-groups are not defined in ethnic terms; in-group refers to fellow villagers or students in the same school, and there is less of an 'enemy' connotation attached to out-groups.

For cooperation, only three studies used public good games, the gold standard in measuring cooperation, and they report contrasting findings: Maria Alejandra Vélez *et al.* (2016) and Mironova and Whitt (2018), with evidence from Colombia and Kosovo respectively, show that wartime victimisation undermines cooperation, while Gilligan *et al.* (2014) find that individuals are more cooperative in communities exposed to conflict in Nepal. It is possible community-level exposure taps indirect effects of wartime violence while victimisation taps direct personal effects, and thus though seemingly at odds, these findings may be complementary. Whereas personally victimised groups may be less trusting and less cooperative, they are often in the minority and may not be driving the average community effects. Those who are exposed to violence indirectly, however, may evolve to be more cooperative.

Perceptions of insecurity and threat are presumably a main mechanism triggering these behavioural changes. Often, these perceptions are assumed to be a measurable function of violence, although some authors probe for subjective differences. For example, Voors *et al.* (2012) explore whether subjective insecurities may be the main driver behind the observed changes in behaviour, and do not find evidence that victims perceive their security differently than nonvictims. Vélez *et al.* (2016) challenge this finding and show that subjective insecurity is indeed a key determinant of prosocial behaviour. Even though individuals are from the same location, they vary in their perception of security, and this perception has a positive effect on trust and altruism but a negative effect on cooperation.

Although the overall conclusion that parochialism is a by-product of civil war is disheartening, it is far from conclusive and there is still much to explore. In many cases, an observed outcome which authors take as a growth in altruism is indistinguishable from what might be better described as ‘parochial altruism’ in which individuals are increasingly likely to sacrifice for an in-group, at the expense of relations with out-groups (Bowles 2008, p. 326, Bauer *et al.* 2016, p. 250,264). Without consistently defining in- and out-groups (Bauer *et al.* 2016, p. 250), it is hard to know whether potentially altruistic findings are a welcome sign of individuals coming together to overcome inherent collective action problems, or a worrying sign of parochialism, that they are highly motivated to subordinate political rivals across a still acrimonious divide.

### ***Political Attitudes and Behaviour***

In terms of political legacies, we look specifically at studies that examine the relationship of civil war violence with political participation and partisanship, because of what we believe to be a tight connection between prosocial attitudes of trust and tolerance and prosocial behaviours such as altruism, cooperation, and egalitarianism to provide a means to solve the inherent collective action problems in these types of political behaviours (Wood 2003). While formal political participation, such as turning out to vote, or supporting a specific party may be seen as an outgrowth of civic attitudes, we group these behaviours separately. There are two reasons for this. First, most of the studies looking at voter turnout and partisan support are based on national elections, something that transcends local community function. Second, particularly when looking at studies on the willingness of voters to support reconciliatory parties, we believe there may be differences with the related attitude of ‘tolerance’. In particular, one argument is that tolerance towards one’s neighbours is a social norm, based on a logic of appropriateness, while a willingness to vote for a peace referendum or a specific political party is based on a logic of consequences. Despite distrusting or disliking one’s neighbours, one might support an affiliated political party in the belief that it will end hardship and lead to material gain. With these caveats in mind, we review the literature on the effects of civil conflict on political participation and partisanship in the sections below.

### ***Political Participation***

The positive relationship between civil war violence and increased political participation was initially the most counterintuitive given expected negative effects of war (Blattman 2009), although it has been subsequently found in works looking at other forms of victimisation (Bateson 2012). While there are

still questions on the mechanisms responsible, positive relationships are found in both single case and cross-national studies.

Three studies argue that exposure to violence is likely to lead to greater political participation due to the mechanism of post-traumatic growth. John Bellows and Edward Miguel (2009) use cross-national polling data from Sierra Leone gathered in 2005 and 2007, shortly after the end of conflict, and find robust evidence that direct victimisation makes individuals more likely to take part in community meetings and political groups. Chris Blattman (2009) runs a natural experiment in Northern Uganda, looking at the difference in self-reported political participation in a 2005–2006 survey between children who were kidnapped by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) between 1995 and 2004. He finds that they are significantly more likely to vote and be a community mobiliser than peers who were not. Using cross-national survey data, Pauline Grosjean (2014) finds that individuals who self-reported exposure to civil war violence were significantly more likely to report taking part in civic collective action than those who were not exposed.

However, not all findings paint an unequivocally positive picture. Looking at the same Ugandan case as Blattman, De Luca and Verpoorten (2015b) find a statistically significant increase in local informal political participation, but not for the Ugandan presidential election, and argue that conflict only enhances local political participation. Others report negative effects. Looking at Senate Elections in Colombia from 1994–2006, Jorge Gallego (2018) finds that FARC, and paramilitary violence after 1998, reduce voter turnout significantly at the district level in national elections. Analogous findings come from Turkey, where Gunes Murat Tezcur (2015) shows that districts exposed to political violence between Kurdish insurgents and the Turkish state experience lower turnout, although drawing attention to the accompanying rural displacement and institutional barriers which may also explain the decline in voter turnout.

In general, these studies suggest that individuals who have been exposed to civil war violence are more likely to participate in politics, although these effects are most likely to occur at the local level, and there are still significant outliers to this finding. A closer look at the mechanisms may help explain the authors' contradictory findings. Many authors invoke the mechanism of post-traumatic growth (e.g., Blattman 2009, Kijewski and Freitag 2018) but there is little which would explain when and for which individuals' trauma leads to a positive transformation via post-traumatic growth rather than negative effects via post-traumatic stress. The exposure shown in Blattman's (2009, p. 233–234) article was amongst individuals (kidnapped child soldiers) who were both victims as well as members of an armed group, and processes of

armed group socialisation might explain why we see both positive growth in his study yet a mixed result in the similar De Luca and Verpoorten study (2015b), which includes victims who were not socialised into an armed group. In the same vein, differences on formal and informal participation may be due to different mechanisms at work. For example, political trust may be a key mechanism for increasing formal participation, and studies show that civil conflict is detrimental to political trust (Hutchison and Johnson 2011, De Juan and Pierskalla 2016). If it is changes in political trust that serve as the mechanism for change (Levi and Stoker 2000), informal and formal political participation may grow in opposite directions. While distrust in the state and government diminishes formal political participation, we may expect informal participation to rise in reaction. New lines of work that focus on mechanisms as well as the differences between local and higher level participation are necessary to find such distinctions. Understanding the effects of civil war violence on electoral participation is particularly important given the critical role that many authors note for elections in a return to peace (Matanock 2016).

### *Partisanship*

As important as changes in political participation as a result of civil conflict are, the related question of whom people vote for and their motives for participation may be more important. For voters who may have suffered during the war, do their experiences lead them to argue for peace and to punish the parties responsible for the war, or do they lead them to support the same parties to avoid their sacrifices being in vain? Here, evidence is less clear, with a number of works arguing that violence leads to polarised preferences and others finding mixed results.

Both Claude Berrebi and Esteban Klor (2006) and Anna Getmansky and Thomas Zeitzoff (2014) find that violence shifts Israeli voters to support right wing parties, looking at both opinion polling and vote share in Israeli elections. Along these lines, Tamar Mitts (2019) traces a rise in right-wing content in Israeli books after the Second Intifada using a novel text-as-data approach, and argues that the rise of discourses after violence explains a longer term shift to supporting right-wing political parties, a shift not evident before the second intifada. Dino Hadzic, David Carlson and Margit Tavits (2020) find that increased casualties in a district during the Bosnian Civil War leads to higher levels of post-war voting for ethnic parties. Similar results come from Turkey where Arzu Kibris (2011) finds that rising combatant casualties lead to greater support for right-wing parties among Turkish voters.<sup>4</sup>

While most of the preceding works invoke individual-level mechanisms, institutional changes may be crucial in explaining outcomes. Stefano Costalli and Andrea Ruggeri (2019) find that the presence of communist-aligned

partisans within a province from 1943–1945 explains increased vote share for the Italian Communist Party into the 1960s, controlling for pre-war support, as wartime structures were converted into organisational strength, allowing the party to better contest democratic elections.

Other works, including some on the same cases, argue that these relationships are subject to cross-cutting effects. Eric Gould and Esteban Klor (2010) find that there is a curvilinear relationship in the Israeli-Palestinian case; at lower level of fatalities, the mean attitude of a voter in a sub-district shifts towards the left, but for higher levels of fatalities, they swing to support right wing parties. Berrebi and Klor (2008) find that Israeli voters are pushed towards right-wing parties when fatalities occur within their electoral district, but this effect is mitigated by voters' supporting left-wing parties when fatalities are outside the district, hinting that effects of violence on partisanship are not uniform and may be contingent on contextual effects. In Northern Ireland, Ian McAllister (2004) finds that Catholic support for parties significantly co-varies with exposure to violence, although in different directions; personal exposure, in the form of harm to family or self, has a negative effect, while contextual exposure, based on neighbourhood, has a positive effect. In Peru, Jóhanna Birnir and Anita Gohdes (2018) show that while political parties associated with Sendero Luminoso lose support in the locality where violence took place, this effect is outweighed by a national level response, where voters punish incumbent parties for failing to stop violence. Lastly, Luis de la Calle and Ignacio Sanchez-Cuenca (2013) find that the electoral landscape is endogenous to ETA targeting, and the effects of ETA killings on Spanish elections depend very much on the identity of the victims. In municipalities where ETA kills non-nationalist and state security forces, support for its political wing Batasuna declines, particularly where supporters are a minority, yet in municipalities where ETA killed drug dealers or informers, Batasuna's vote share rises, although at the margins.

The mixed findings contain suggestions about the direction of future research. Tellez (2019) notes that most of these works focus on cases where the cleavage is ethnic, rather than ideological, and the majority of findings cited here come from the Israeli-Palestinian case, rather than centre-seeking civil wars, which highlights the importance of scoping findings by the type of conflict. Similarly, disaggregating exposure to violence may be fruitful, as hinted at by the curvilinear relationship found with regard to the intensity of violence, and the off-setting effects of nearby and more distant violence (Gould and Klor 2010, Weintraub *et al.* 2015). One possible interpretation of these results is that as individuals face a greater risk of direct victimisation, they behave differently than when the threat is more abstract.

## Discussion

In the last ten years, researchers from across the social sciences have added measurably to our understanding of civil wars' social and political legacies, an area where conducting research is remarkably difficult, given ethical, safety, and data challenges. Notwithstanding the progress, we believe that there are three important avenues for future research: paying greater attention to the different characters of wars, measurement, and attention to mechanisms.

### *Recognising the Different Characters of Civil Wars*

Many of the findings on out-group discrimination or polarised identities came from cases where ethnicity was the organising principle of the conflict. Cross-national findings show that it may be necessary to distinguish civil wars by their type: for example, Tir and Singh (2015, pp. 484–487) show that only the experience of territorial wars such as secessionist conflicts diminish social tolerance. Similarly, altruism is not significantly affected in Maoist Conflict in Nepal (Gilligan *et al.* 2014, p. 612–613), whereas in Bosnia and Kosovo, cases of ethnic conflict, parochial altruism increased.

Beyond the political goals of combatants, technologies of violence may also explain divergent findings. As Cassar, Grosjean, and Whitt (2013, p. 290) argue, violence where victims were chosen indiscriminately, may well have different societal consequences than selective violence. Civil wars fought by irregular forces which rely on surreptitious denunciations seem likely to have a deleterious effect in generalised trust, while wars which involve the mass mobilisation of individuals into organised military units through strong processes of military socialisation seem likely to create at least bonding social capital (see Lockyer 2010 for dynamics of warfare, Balcells and Kalyvas 2014, p.1393). Variation in the causes and dynamics of warfare seem likely conditions to explain the observed variation in results across cases, and authors should be explicit in thinking about how their cases fit with wider typologies of civil wars.

### *Measuring Variables Accurately*

The second way forward, after thinking about the scope conditions imposed by different types of civil wars, is paying more attention to the measurement of variables. We underscored this problem for prosocial behaviour literature, by showing that there are inconsistencies in the measurement of altruism, egalitarianism, and cooperation, and that the use of similar measures for distinct constructs may conflate findings. Dictator games have been essential tools in measurement of other-



regarding behaviour, encompassing altruism, egalitarianism, and cooperation (Camerer 2011). Yet, modifications are necessary to match the game to the concept measured. While costly dictator games are great for measuring altruism, for egalitarianism non-costly versions should be preferred. For cooperation, public good games are better tools than games that ask for donations, which largely measure altruism. As James Cox (2004, p. 262) contends, for game theory models to have more empirical validity, it may be better to separate the constructs of trust, altruism, reciprocity and egalitarianism. While we are sympathetic to claims that these are deeply related concepts, if an article speaks to only one element, the methods should be chosen carefully to ensure construct validity.

Measurement of exposure to civil war violence is another area we would like to draw attention to. In the articles we reviewed, the measures ranged from living in a country that is categorised as a civil war case to losing most of one's family members. Although personal or direct experiences may not be necessary to produce effects (Jaeger *et al.* 2012), findings indicate that whether the exposure was direct or only via context makes a difference (e.g., McAllister 2004, Voors *et al.* 2012, Kijewski and Freitag 2018).

Moreover, further attention should be paid to the specific protocols of the experiments as they can interfere with the results. A recent meta-analysis on trust games show that the outcomes are contingent on experimental protocols such as the multiples used by experimenters, and more importantly, whether participants play both roles in the experiment (Johnson and Mislin 2011, p. 869). How much of these findings are an artefact of experimental design is something worth exploration in future works.

### ***Better Understanding of Mechanisms***

Our third point on how to advance the literature pertains to mechanisms connecting civil war experiences to socio-political outcomes. A decade ago, arguments and findings that civil war violence did not have entirely destructive legacies were a major break with the conventional wisdom (Wood 2008, Bellows and Miguel 2009, Blattman 2009). While it may be an artefact of the search method, many of the works reviewed use designs, which while well suited for identifying causal effects, provide little understanding about the mechanisms responsible for these effects. Understanding, for example, how and why ethnic wars change trust, tolerance, or altruism in contrast to non-ethnic wars would be a next step.

Many articles suggest that psychological mechanisms of post-traumatic stress or growth are responsible for the individual-level effects (e.g., Blattman 2009, p.231, Canetti-Nisim *et al.* 2009, p.379). While these mechanisms may explain short-term change, open questions remain on how long these effects last and whether other mechanisms, such as institutional changes or alterations to social networks, may be responsible for these changes.

Of the pieces we reviewed, four of them brought up the mediating role of subjective attitudes on the effects of violence exposure. Activation of psychological distress is presented as a necessary step for exhibiting negative attitudes towards peace and exclusionist attitudes (Canetti-Nisim *et al.* 2009, Hirsch-Hoefler *et al.* 2016). Subjective insecurities are an underexplored area and future studies may consider integrating subjective experiences as a mediating variable, for example by including measures of subjects' feelings of insecurity as well as direct measures of exposure to civil war violence.

Along similar lines, Laia Balcells (2012) and Noam Lupu and Leonid Pesaikhin (2017) argue that family socialisation is an important mechanism in explaining individual's group identification after war; Marcus Alexander and Fotini Christia (2011) note the importance of post-war institutional changes in explaining prosocial behaviour and inter-group discrimination in Bosnia; and Costalli and Ruggeri (2019) note the importance of organisational transformation as a result of war in explaining party preference after the Italian civil war. Given that civil wars often represent a 'critical juncture' in institutional design (Paris 2004), and are also sites of intense socialisation (Checkel 2017), disentangling the differing effects of psychological, institutional, and socialisation mechanisms is an important next step. While not wishing to wade too deeply into an already large debate on methods, work on mechanisms suggests greater balance between process tracing and experimental designs (Lyll 2014).

We conclude that despite some high-profile arguments that civil wars foster prosocial behaviour, the predominant socio-political effects are normatively negative. The main area civil wars have a positive effect on is community involvement and informal political participation. Inasmuch as this is an integral part of social capital, the decline in trust and tolerance keeps us from making broader statements about increase in social capital. We confirm that parochialism rises after civil war, although findings showing more cooperative tendencies exist (e.g., Gilligan *et al.* 2014).

Scholars studying the consequences of civil wars have made great progress over the last decade, yet there is still much work to do. At a first glance, the majority of the findings draw a gloomy picture about what wars leave behind: a distrustful, intolerant, and polarised society. Yet, a closer look shows that

these effects are not for every type of war and not for every section of society, and that there is room for recovery. While much of the recent work has documented cases where the legacies are not wholly destructive, future studies should examine the what, when, and why questions to explain the observed variation in these outcomes.

## Notes

1. The difference in distribution of cases is mapped in the Appendix (Figure A1).
2. Whether to count violence between Israelis and Palestinians as a civil war is to put it mildly, controversial. We include this because the time periods in questions are coded as some variant of civil war in 3 datasets (Gleditsch *et al.* 2002, Sambanis 2004, Marshall 2017), the repeated description within articles as not an inter-state war, and a belief that the conflict is between two parties within what was in 1948 a sovereign territory. We understand that others may disagree with this decision, and this inclusion is not meant to further any sides' claims in the conflict.
3. Also of note, due to ethical concerns they did not control for exposure to conflict, which limits our ability to identify the effect of different types of victimisation (See footnote 16 in Mironova and Whitt 106, 658).
4. In the same vein, Yaylaci and Bakiner (2019) show that combatant casualties feed support for more aggressive responses to Kurdish insurgency.

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## Appendix

### Section A. Logic of Article Selection

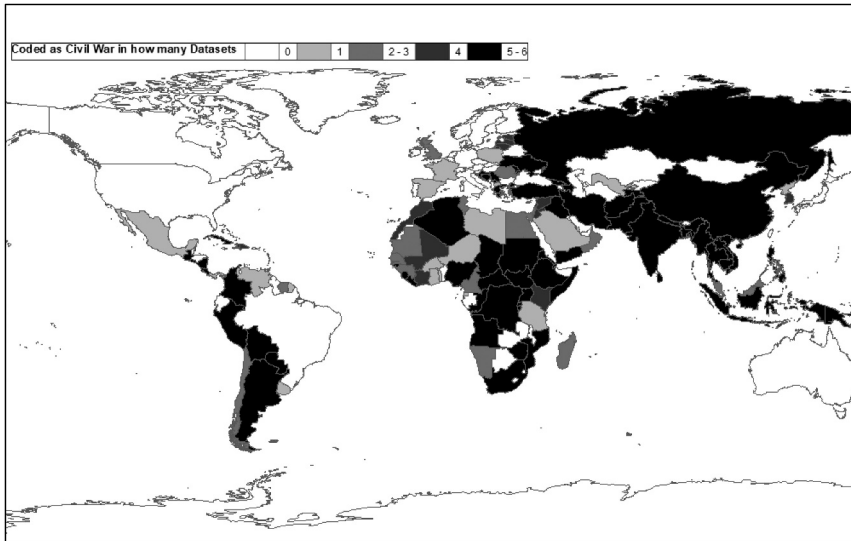
In identifying articles for inclusion in this essay, we used a deliberate method, which we felt would be replicable and provide a representative sample of work on the subject.

First, we did a deliberate search through what we regard as a representative sample of mainstream generalist (*American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *International Organization*, and *Perspectives on Politics*) and specialist journals looking at conflict (*Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Journal of Peace Research*, *Civil Wars*), covering the period from June of 2019 to the journals' last issue in 2016, based on the timing of previous review pieces. Selecting from this body of journals gives us a sample of recent and well-regarded scholarship on social and political consequences of conflict.

Second, from the articles found in the deliberate search, we used a snowball search method, looking at articles that were cited by these recent works. While the direct search gave us the most recent articles, the snowball search method allows us to see which articles have been accepted as conventional wisdom, as well as to broaden the search to articles and journals from other disciplines in a principled manner.

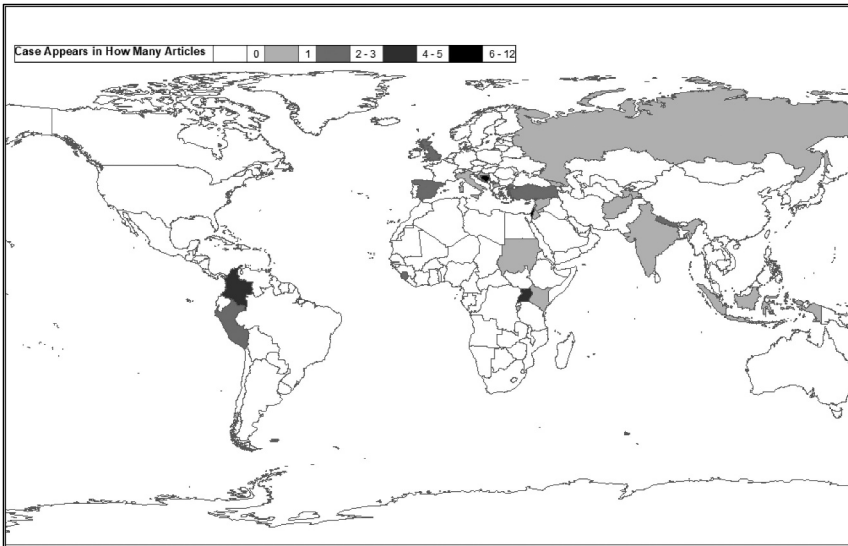
Given an interest in using comparable works, we limited the snowball search to journal articles. Based on our belief in the value of peer review, we also did not include works-in-progress or conference papers.

In terms of case distribution, Figure A1 below shows the incidence of civil war in the post-1945 world, based on six major datasets. The datasets are: UCDP-PRIO 2009 V.4, limited to conflicts defined as intra-state civil war (Gleditsch *et al.* 2002); COW Intra-State War, V4.1 (Sarkees 2010); Technologies of Rebellion (Balcells and Kalyvas 2014); Fearon and Laitin (2003)'s Civil War Dataset; Sambanis (2004)'s Civil War Dataset; and the Systemic Peace Dataset (Marshall 2017), limiting to types of internal and ethnic war.



**Figure A1.** Countries of the world, coded by appearance in civil war datasets.

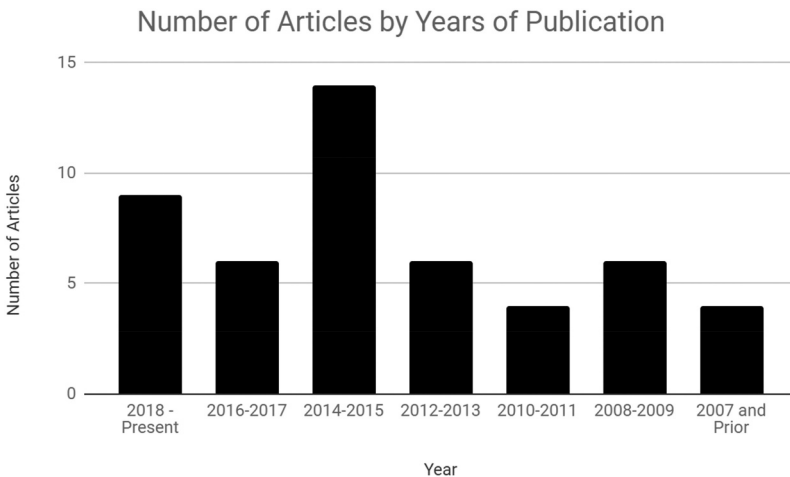
Figure A2 below shows the countries examined in single-case articles; there are 4 cross-national articles, which are excluded from this figure, and an article comparing across two cases is counted twice (Bauer *et al.* 2014).



**Figure A2.** Countries appearing in case specific articles.

Figure A3 below shows the distribution of articles reviewed by date of publication, using two-year bins.

Table A1 below lists the articles reviewed, ordering them by year of publication and author. Where authors used a cross-national test on multiple conflicts, the conflict location is listed as 'cross-national'; when they used evidence from multiple cases, cases are delimited by a comma.



**Figure A3.** Articles by year of publication.

**Table A1: List of Articles.**

Author	Year	Case
Condra and Linardi	2019	Afghanistan
Tellez	2019	Colombia
Werner and Lambsdorff	2020	Indonesia
Mitts	2019	Israel
Costalli and Ruggieri	2019	Italy
Gallego	2018	Colombia
Kijewski and Freitag	2018	Kosovo
Mironova and Whitt	2018	Kosovo
Birnir and Ghodes	2018	Peru
Hadzic, Carlson, and Tavits	2017	Bosnia
Lupu and Peisakhin	2017	Russia
Mironova and Whitt	2016	Bosnia
Velez et al.	2016	Colombia
Hirsch-Hoefler et al.	2016	Israel
De Juan and Pierskella	2016	Nepal
Weintraub, Vargas, and Flores	2015	Colombia
Tir and Singh	2015	Cross-national
Peffley, Hutchison and Shamir	2015	Israel
Tezcur	2015	Turkey
De Luca and Verpoorten	2015	Uganda
De Luca and Verpoorten	2015	Uganda
Whitt	2014	Bosnia
Grosjean	2014	Cross-national
Hutchison	2014	Cross-national
Bauer et al.	2014	Georgia, Sierra Leone
Getmansky and Zeitzoff	2014	Israel
Silva and Mace	2014	N. Ireland
Gilligan, Pasquale, and Samii	2014	Nepal
Beber, Roessler, and Scacco	2014	Sudan
De la Calle and Sanchez-Cuenca	2013	Spain
Cassar, Grosjean, and Whitt	2013	Tajikistan
Rohner, Thoenig, and Zilibotti	2013	Uganda
Voors et al.	2012	Burundi
Jaeger et al.	2012	Israel
Balcells	2012	Spain
Hutchison and Johnson	2011	Cross-national
Kibris	2011	Turkey
Whitt	2010	Bosnia
Gould and Klor	2010	Israel
Alexander and Christia	2009	Bosnia
Canetti-Nisim et al.	2009	Israel
Besser and Neria	2009	Israel
Bellows and Miguel	2009	Sierra Leone
Blattman	2009	Uganda
Berrebi and Klor	2008	Israel
Whitt and Wilson	2007	Bosnia
Berrebi and Klor	2006	Israel
Mcallister	2004	N. Ireland
Kunovich and Hodson	1999	Croatia

## Section B. Logic of Dependent Variable Selection

Trust is so integral to social capital that the two concepts are treated as semi-synonyms, and trust is often employed as the main indicator of social capital (e.g. Brehm and Rahn 1997, Knack and Keefer 1997, Glaeser et al. 2000). Other interrelated components of social capital are tolerance and civic participation.

Trust is also a strong predictor of cooperative preferences (Good 1988, cf. Cook et al. 2005, Thöni et al. 2012, also see Vives and FeldmanHall 2018), particularly in situations of conflict (Balliet and Van Lange 2013).

We focused both on generalized and particularized trust. While generalized trust functions to “bridge” differences and connect groups, particularized trust “bonds” in-group-members and emphasizes divisions (Uslaner 2002, Varshney 2003). In post-conflict societies, not all social capital is equally valuable and, bonding social capital may be detrimental to the prospects for peace by highlighting in-group/out-group distinctions. Just as much as trust in strangers, trust in known others is important to examine. For example, in *“Intimate Enemies,”* Theidon (2013) shows the destructive effects of the civil war in Peru on not only trust in unknown others but also as well as community and family relations.

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