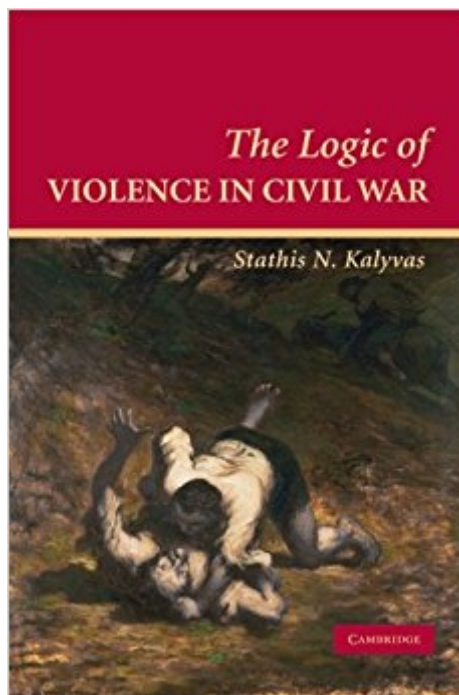




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# The Logic Of Violence In Civil War (Cambridge Studies In Comparative Politics)



## Synopsis

By analytically decoupling war and violence, this book explores the causes and dynamics of violence in civil war. Against the prevailing view that such violence is an instance of impenetrable madness, the book demonstrates that there is logic to it and that it has much less to do with collective emotions, ideologies, and cultures than currently believed. Kalyvas specifies a novel theory of selective violence: it is jointly produced by political actors seeking information and individual civilians trying to avoid the worst but also grabbing what opportunities their predicament affords them. Violence, he finds, is never a simple reflection of the optimal strategy of its users; its profoundly interactive character defeats simple maximization logics while producing surprising outcomes, such as relative nonviolence in the 'frontlines' of civil war.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"While exciting and extensive, the recent literature on civil wars suffers from poorly specified and empirically untested causal mechanisms. Therefore Stathis Kalyvas' important study is a welcome contribution to the field, as it reaches an unprecedented level of specificity and detail without sacrificing analytical cogency. Going beyond simplistic dichotomizations, such as 'greed' and 'grievance,' Kalyvas offers compelling evidence that civil wars often contain micro-level actions that have little to do with the main conflict dimension of the war in question. Reflecting both intellectual curiosity and impressive erudition, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* promises to become an instant

classic in conflict research in particular, and comparative political analysis in general." Lars-Erik Cederman, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich "This superb study will be a landmark in the study of civil wars. It is based on deep and broad knowledge and on a remarkably fertile analytical framework. By focusing on the microdynamics of civil wars Kalyvas is both able to lay old misconceptions to rest and to generate and test a wide range of novel ideas. I predict it will be one of those rare books, an 'instant classic'." Jon Elster, Collège de France "Some seventeen million people have been killed in civil war violence in the past half-century. Social science has made considerable headway in figuring out which countries are more or less susceptible to a civil war onset. But it is extraordinary that until the appearance of *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, there was a dearth of theory and analysis on the dynamics of killing in civil wars. Stathis N. Kalyvas, through his stunning conceptual clarity, his creative synthesis of the historical record, his theoretical formulation, and his path-breaking microanalysis of the patterns of violence in the Greek civil war, has produced a book that would have, if written by the master, made Niccolò Machiavelli proud." David D. Laitin, Stanford University "This book should become required reading for those interested in the study of civil war and insurgency. It is analytically sophisticated, but also encyclopedic in its sweep and discussion of cases from around the world. While academics and specialists will benefit from the work, the material is accessible for more general readership. Furthermore, the work challenges conventional wisdoms and will provoke controversy." Roger Petersen, Massachusetts Institute of Technology "Kalyvas's main aim...is to theorize the role of violence as a specific and separate factor in civil war. The author's hypothesis is that violence in particular civil war contexts is linked to the level of control that either insurgents or government forces have over a village or region. He tests it against a large amount of empirical data, primarily from areas of Greece during World War II and the subsequent Civil War, and more impressionistically with accounts and micro-level studies of civil wars from elsewhere. Kalyvas's point is that violence in civil wars cannot be interpreted as simply irrational brutality, but is rather linked to the pursuit of political objectives." Tara McCormack, Brunel University, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*

Why is violence in civil war so brutal when it is often taking place between people who know each other? Is such violence an instance of collective madness? This book demonstrates that there is logic to this violence, entailing the joint action of armed organizations and individual civilians.

Kalyvas's logic of violence in civil war is a superbly researched account of what causes violence in civil war and how state and non state actors are likely to use violence in certain situations. Like the

author, I have also been deeply disturbed by the fact that civil wars can turn family, friends, and neighbors against each other, causing violence between those who have the closest relationships. The author logically explains this disturbing phenomenon as a function of predominately private conflicts, and revenge played out using either the incumbent (government) or insurgent forces as agents of violence. Ordinary citizens are unlikely to engage in violence themselves but often denounce or inform on their neighbors to either the government or insurgent side to remove a business rival, resolve a personal conflict, or settle a family feud. This disturbing facet of civil wars suggest that personal conflict and petty grievances play a major and often overlooked role in causing violence beyond the more cited social, ideological, and political reasons. The author's research also suggest that the presence of permanent military forces by one party in a town ensures and leads to control over an area regardless of that areas animosity towards the occupier. As a civil war drags on most people tend to cooperate with the party that has local supremacy regardless of political and ideological beliefs because they want to survive and see the violence end. This point is especially important for counterinsurgents because it suggests that control and local supremacy may be more important than "hearts and minds" campaigns that are intended to shift political allegiance. The book shows that this phenomenon is not unique to a certain war or culture but that it has occurred in nearly every civil war. I highly recommend this book for anyone interested in the dynamics of violence in civil war and insurgencies and counterinsurgency. This book is not an easy read and I only recommend this book to readers who have had read extensively about civil wars and have a vested interest in understanding what takes place. For those who read the book, it will challenge the most commonly held views on what causes violence in a civil war and may change your perspective on human nature.

Appears to build upon that venerable study by Leites and Wolf, *Rebellion and Authority*, Rand 1970, which was informed by the Vietnam War, which is all to the good. As an erstwhile practitioner, my experience (Vietnam, as well) tells me that moving a conceptual discussion of insurgency/counterinsurgency off a "hearts and minds" focus and squarely onto an examination of the ways in which control determines the behavior of the population, more accurately reflects reality. Adducing evidence from a wide spectrum of conflicts, Kalyvas succeeds in systematizing how this phenomenon occurs, including, inter alia, the "cascade effect" of generating loyalty on the part of family members to the side which conscripts their son into its armed service or militia. This was observed in Vietnam, but Kalyvas cites other examples to show wide applicability of this mechanism.

This is a detailed, heavily annotated, extremely logic based thesis on the etiologies of violence in civil wars. There are many examples included of many civil wars. Very few of the examples are graphic in nature. Symmetrical and asymmetrical wars are examined separately. Each chapter posits postulates which are examined both by logical analysis and references at least twenty civil wars in the last hundred years to arrive at hypotheses which are tested against the history, e.g. The Mau Mau, Philippine, Greek situations. Deeper history civil wars also frequently serve as a fund of examples, i.e. Verdene in the French Revolution and the American Revolution, and the American Civil War, especially the Missouri situation. Unless you are up for logical analysis of history, this is a heavy read. The book is well written by a man who obviously knows the topic, and has done related original research on the Greek Civil War. It would make great gift for a history graduate student, or student in a military academy.

My previous reading most pertinent to the topic of this book would be counterinsurgency doctrine and operational practices, this book is extremely useful to better understanding insurgency and counterinsurgency and understanding the fundamental dynamics of civil war that are so difficult to comprehend. I highly recommend this book to those with similar interests.

Kalyvas' analysis is strongly supported by both anecdotal evidence as well as statistics (where those are available). He lays out his arguments clearly, but also lays out what work has to still be done to deepen the understanding of violence - especially aimed at civilian populations. Outstanding book & fascinating read.

This is a must read!

Great book for conflict studies

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