Civil War Comes to the West, Part II: Strategic Realities

David Betz - *King's College London, Department of War Studies*

About the author

David Betz is Professor of War in the Modern World in the Department of War Studies, King's College London. He has wide interests in strategic and military affairs but has written extensively on insurgency and counterinsurgency, information warfare, and strategic communications. His most recent book is *The Guarded Age: Fortifications in the 21st Century* (Cambridge: Polity, 2024).

This is the second of two articles on the dawning of an uncomfortable new strategic reality for the West, which is that the primary threat to its security and well-being today is not external but internal—specifically, civil war.[i] In the first essay, I explained the reasons that this situation has arisen: a combination of culturally fractured societies, economic stagnation, elite overreach and a collapse of public confidence in the ability of normal politics to solve problems, and ultimately the realisation by anti-status quo groups of plausible strategies of attack based on systems disruption of vulnerable critical infrastructure. In this article I expound on the likely shape that civil war will take and the strategies that might be employed to minimise and mitigate the damage that will entail.

At the time of writing the countries that are most likely to experience the outbreak of violent civil conflict first are Britain and France—both of which have already experienced what may be described as precursor or exemplary incidents of the kind discussed further below. The conditions are similar, however, throughout Western Europe as well as, for slightly different reasons, the United States;[ii] moreover, it must be assumed that if civil war breaks out in one place it is likely to spread elsewhere.[iii]

In the previous article in this journal, I explained how the conditions which scholars consider to be indicative of incipient civil war are present widely in Western states. According to the best guess of the extant literature, in a country where the conditions are present the chances of actual civil war occurring is four per cent per year.[iv] With this as an assumption, we may conclude that the chances of it

occurring are 18.5 per cent over five years.

Let us assume, based on the existence of recent statements to that effect by credible national political or academic figures, that there are at least ten countries in Europe that face the prospect of violent civil conflict. In Appendix 1, I provide fifteen such examples—readers may dispense with whichever five of those they deem less credible. The chances then of it occurring in any one of these countries over five years is 87 per cent (or 95 per cent if you include all 15 of the sample).

A further reasonable assumption is that if it occurs in one place it has the potential to spread elsewhere. If we say, arbitrarily but plausibly, that the chances of spreading are half and half, then we may conclude that the chances of it occurring in one of ten Western states and then spreading to all others is about 60 per cent (or 72 per cent with all fifteen of the sample included) over five years.
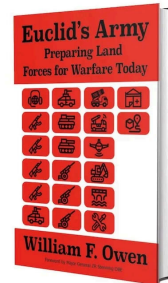
A reasonable person might argue with the assessment of all or some of these factors and calculations. Perhaps things are only half as bad as I argue, might the risk therefore be *just* two per cent per year? On the other hand, perhaps I have been rather conservative? As I have argued previously the perception of 'downgrading' of a former majority which is one of the most powerful causes of civil war, is the main issue in all of the cases at hand.[v] Objectively, one must conclude that there is ample cause for concern about a worryingly large *possibility* of a form of war occurring in the West, to which it has not thought itself vulnerable for a long time.

This brings me to the matter of to whom this article is addressed. The first intended audience is statesmen, a constituency which I hope will get the message that the danger is 'clear and present', to use the jargon. The second is the general public, to whom I wish to say 'No, you are not taking crazy pills', the feeling you have had that something like this is going seriously wrong is right.

Finally and most specifically I hope to address military commanders at all levels, but particularly those with the greatest authority. You have spent a quarter of a century now thinking about insurgency and counterinsurgency. You know exactly what is in store for a fractured society under economic stress in which political legitimacy has been lost because your own doctrine spells it out.[vi] Everything that the general staffs and ministries of defence are now doing is *secondary* to the primary danger.

There is good precedent for what I am suggesting be done. In February 1989 Boris Gromov was the most highly regarded general in the Soviet Army, an obvious candidate to be chief of the general staff, and in time to be minister of defence. Instead, he resigned from the Army to join the Interior Ministry as commander of internal troops—a policeman, in effect. A perplexed journalist begged him to explain why he did it. The answer was that he feared civil war.[vii]

Soviet society was configured in a way that drove it towards internal conflict, he believed. Gromov's duty, therefore, as he understood it, was to reorient his mindset to meet the main danger. The situation faced by soldiers and statesmen in the West today is fundamentally similar. It is as imminent for them now as it was for General Gromov on the eve of the implosion of the USSR.

The question: If civil war in the West is potentially as imminent, what ought commanders be preparing to do now? The answer is that a drastic reorientation of mindset on the part of the Western defence establishment is required. Generals should be formulating strategies to respond to the reality of civil conflict now. At the very least, should they fear for their careers lest they begin to plan for the outbreak of civil war without a civilian political directive, they ought to seek such a directive.

The essay which follows is intended as a guide to some of the things they might seek permission to consider.

In his book *Military Strategy*, John Stone reminds readers of the most important Clausewitzian aphorism, that the most crucial step in any ends-means calculation is the selection of the objective, which in turn must be based upon a realistic apprehension of the character of the war that one faces.[viii] I shall argue that the strategic objective in the coming civil war is the maximum limitation of the damage it will entail.

All civil wars are *sui generis* but we can surmise some general qualities that they tend to possess, which serve well to structure the following rumination on how to navigate the coming turmoil. These are as follows:

1. Civil wars inflict serious depredation through iconoclastic vandalism or theft of societal cultural infrastructure—i.e., art and other historic objects and architecture.
2. They destroy a country's human capital through the strategic displacement of the civilian population on a mass scale.
3. They increase societal vulnerability to predatory foreign intervention.[ix]

Civil wars are disproportionately long and bloody. A statistical study of civil wars from 1945 to1999 found that their median duration was six years and that total deaths in them came to 16.2 million—five times that of interstate conflicts in the same period.[x] It follows that shortening their duration is the most highly desirable strategy for damage limitation. The importance of the last point above is that foreign involvement in civil conflict seems to be the most important contributor to civil war duration.

As for casualties, if we take Britain as an example, with a population of 70 million and assume levels of violence only as bad as the worst year of the Northern Ireland conflict (1971 with 500 deaths in a population of 1.5 million) then 23,300 killed per year would be expected. If we take the Bosnian War of the 1990s, or the more recent Syrian War as indicators we might hazard a guess that between one and four per cent of the pre-war population will be killed, with many times more that amount displaced.

In light of the human cost of what might be called the best-case scenario, readers may, rightly, consider what follows a dismal strategy. It seeks as much as possible to negate/mitigate certain outcomes but does not assume that preventing them entirely is possible. Its logical parallel is the suite of civil defence measures once undertaken by many states in anticipation of mass aerial bombing of cities—which did occur—and nuclear war—which thankfully has not yet.

At this stage, it is useful to elucidate more specifically the shape of the civil wars that are going to occur in the West.

Feral Cities

Western governments under increasing structural civilisational distress and having squandered their legitimacy are losing the ability to peacefully manage multicultural societies that are terminally fractured by ethnic identity politics. The initial result is an accelerating descent of multiple major cities into marginally 'feral' status as defined by Richard Norton in a 2003 essay in this way:

...a metropolis with a population of more than a million people in a state the government of which has lost the ability to maintain the rule of law within the city's boundaries yet remains a functioning actor in the greater international system.[xi]

The concept as further explored by Norton and others is understood to encompass a range of contingencies of increasing ferality, usually explained with a simple green (non-feral), amber (marginally or partially feral), or red (actively or incipiently feral) typology. In 2003, the exemplary feral city according to Norton was Mogadishu, Somalia.

As of 2024, a list of global cities exhibiting some or all the characteristics of amber and red ferality, such as high levels of political corruption, negotiated areas of police control if not outright no-go zones, decaying industries, crumbling infrastructure, unsustainable debt, two-tier policing, and the burgeoning of private security, would include many in the West.[xii] The direction of the situation, moreover, is decisively towards greater ferality.

In short, things are manifestly worsening right now. They are, however, going to get very much worse—I would estimate over not more than five years. That is because of the combination of two other vital factors. The first is the urban versus rural dimension of the coming conflicts which, in turn, is a result of migrant settlement dynamics. Simply put, the major cities are radically more diverse and have a growing mutually hostile political relationship with the country in which they are embedded.
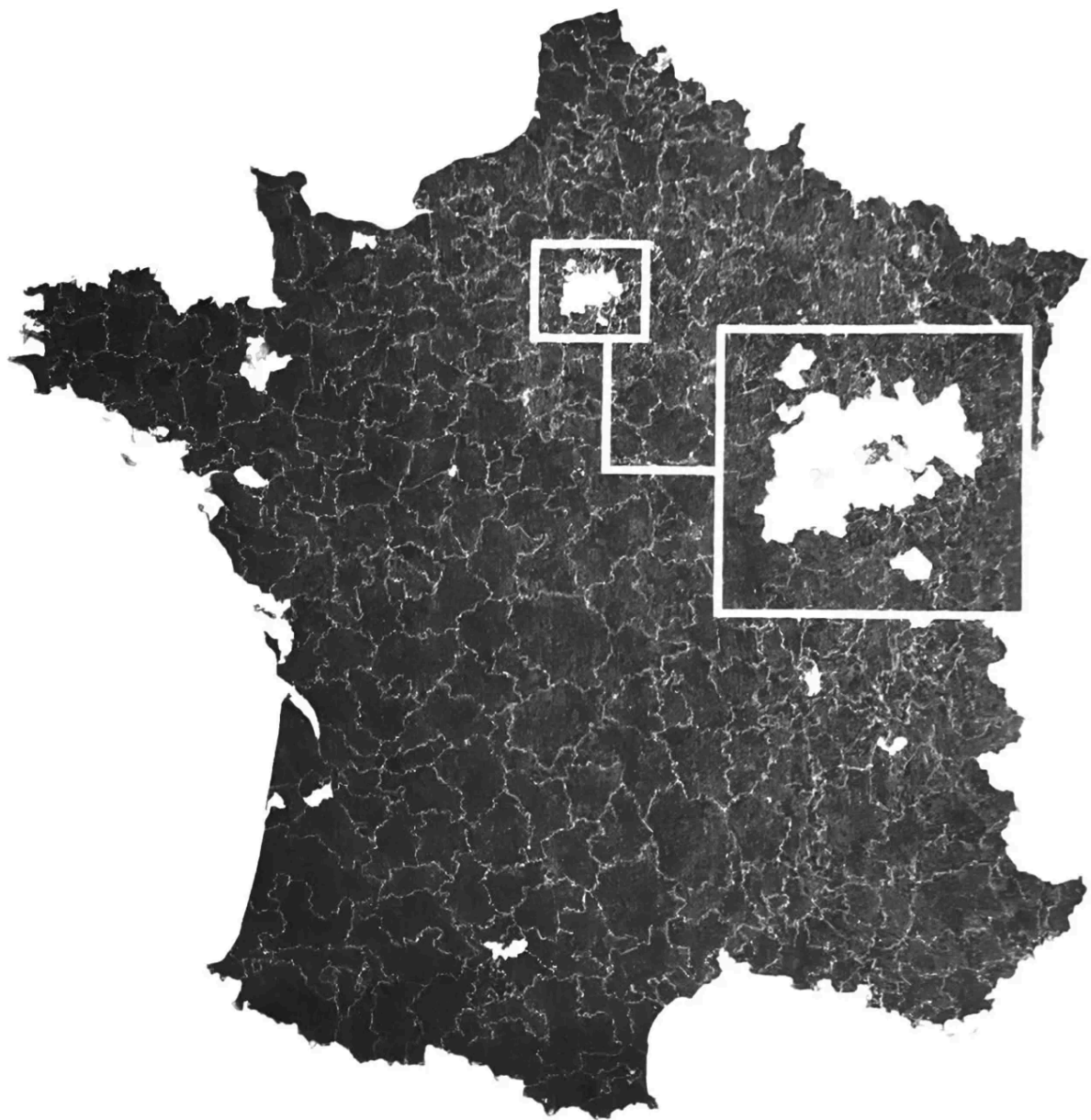
Figure 1: French Elections 2024

Source: map adapted by the author from an original published in Le Monde (16 June 2024).

This is most effectively shown graphically, as in the map above which shows in black the 457 French constituencies which voted in the first round of the 2024 European Parliament elections for Marine Le Pen's National Rally, as opposed to the 119 in white that voted for other parties. Similar maps using other proxies for measuring anti-status quo mood showing the same pattern of geographic distribution could be easily made for the United States, Great Britain, and other countries.

The second is the way in which modern critical infrastructure—gas, electricity, and transportation—is configured. Again, simply put, the life support systems of cities are all located in or pass through rural areas. This is easily illustrated below with a simplified map of Britain's energy infrastructure. None of this infrastructure is well guarded, indeed most of it is effectively impossible to guard adequately.

Putting these factors together allows one to outline the trajectory of the coming civil wars. First, the major cities become ungovernable, i.e., feral, exhausting the ability of the police even with military assistance to maintain civil order, while the broader perception of systemic political legitimacy plummets beyond recovery. The economy is crippled by metastasising intercommunal violence and consequent internal displacement. Second, these feral cities come to be seen by many of those indigenes of the titular nationality now living outside them as effectively having been lost to foreign occupation. They then directly attack the exposed city support systems with a view to causing their collapse through systemic failure.

GAS PIPELINE

400KV OVERHEAD ELECTRICAL LINE

GAS TERMINAL

POWER STATION

Figure 2: Simplified Representation of UK Energy Infrastructure

*Source: map adapted by the author using data from 'Open Infrastructure', https://openinframap.org/#2.03/26/12.2*

In a limited but exemplary form, infrastructural attacks such as I have described have already occurred. In Paris, in July of 2024, a major sabotage attack on the long-distance fiber-optic cable network followed a series of coordinated arson attacks on the rail network. Both attacks were supposed to have been timed to coincide with the Olympic Games that were being hosted by the city.[xiii] In London, vigilantes known as 'Blade Runners' have damaged or destroyed somewhere between 1000-1200 surveillance cameras intended to enforce the city's ultra-low-emission-zone scheme.[xiv] At the time of writing, counterterrorism police are investigating why the primary electrical transformer for Heathrow Airport is burning, causing 1300 flights to be delayed or cancelled with consequent severe economic damage.[xv]

That civil war is looming in the West is a logical conclusion of standard, well-understood precepts of social science. The likely fracture of multicultural societies along lines of identity is an obvious hypothesis. The configuration of demographic geography, and the factional polarisation that is its political consequence, is a measurable fact. The precariousness of contemporary urbanity is a thing which geographers have worried over for at least a half century.[xvi] In short, the situation which I have described above is unpleasant, but it is not controversial as far as our grasp of current reality and theoretical understanding of how societies function is concerned.

Searching for a definition of 'city' which would satisfy all the many variants of such a thing that have existed in human history, Arnold Toynbee supposed that it was, simply, 'a human settlement whose inhabitants cannot produce, within the city limits, all of the food that they need for keeping them alive.'[xvii] It is a definition which is currently highly apposite. The fact of the matter is that numerous major Western cities are perceived increasingly as alien to and parasitic of the nations in which they are embedded.

The viability of such places has *always* been contingent; their apparent stability is, in fact, an astonishing balancing act requiring constant and competent maintenance. On current trajectory, that balancing act is going to fail.
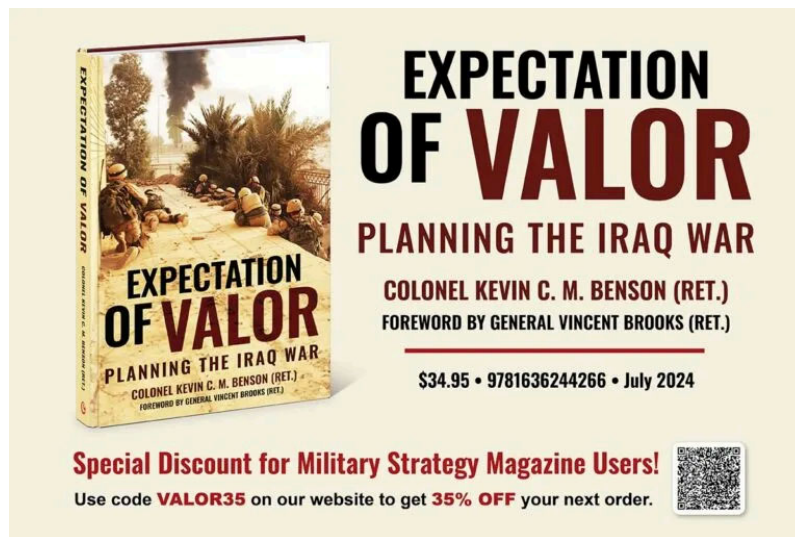
Cultural Capital

In the first weeks of the Spanish Civil War, the cadavers of hundreds of cloistered nuns were dug up and placed on display throughout Republican Spain, a shocking event which featured prominently in revolutionary propaganda which involved a great deal of anti-clerical atrocity.[xviii] While superficially bizarre, in fact, such acts of collective obscenity are common in civil wars and easily explained. They have a time-honoured strategic function.

Attacks on the totems of a given people usually provokes them into an equal or greater reaction, which is useful in the beginning phases of a civil conflict when heightening tensions is crucial to solidifying the in-group bonding capital of one's own side. The further obliteration of whatever bridging capital existed in the society of the *status quo ante bellum* is also useful. In simple terms, it normalises abnormality and makes it harder to return to normal.

It is for this reason that the so-called 'Culture Wars' ought to be regarded by strategists seriously, as manifestations of deep conflicts that have the potential to become violently actual. The American sociologist James Davison Hunter, who coined the term 'culture war' thirty years ago, warned of this in a recent interview:

> ...I'll just call to mind an observation made over a hundred years ago by Oliver Wendell Holmes, who said, between two groups of people who want to make inconsistent kinds of worlds, I see no remedy but force...

> In the early 1980s, early 1990s, people were still willing to engage each other. I'm not sure that the arguments got very far, but the very process of engaging each other was important. I think we've largely given up. There's an exhaustion. And that spells some trouble.[xix]

Moreover, smashing symbols of the collective countenance of one's enemy is the central element of civil war strategic messaging. There is, simply put, no surer way to demonstrate the demise of one social order and its replacement with another. That is why from ancient times, such as when the Hebrews obliterated Canaanite shrines, to modern times such as when the Afghan Taliban exploded the Bamiyan

Buddhas, iconoclasm and civil war have been partners.[xx]

Portable art such as paintings, statuary, manuscripts, and other artifacts are also significantly endangered in civil war because they may easily be turned into money. Whether it is intended to enrich opportunistic warlords or to generate funds to purchase arms, the fact of the matter is that widespread looting and opportunistic vandalism is endemic in such conflicts.

It follows that a main part of a strategy of mitigating the severity of the coming civil war, while maximising the potential of post-war reconstruction, ought to be planning to protect cultural capital. There already exists a well-developed military manual for the protection of cultural property in conflict that was published by UNESCO in 2016, which may serve as a useful guide to commanders working through what to protect and how.[xxi] It was not written with civil war in the West in mind, but its advice nonetheless is applicable in that context.

To be specific, actions taken before the outbreak of conflict should include the identification, cataloguing, and prioritisation of locations of vulnerable cultural property—e.g., museums and galleries, archives, and listed buildings; preparation for the removal and secure storage of movable property where appropriate; and planning for the guarding of places that are deemed especially vulnerable and most valuable.

There is considerable historical precedent for such measures. Early in the Second World War, Britain at great logistical cost removed a substantial fraction of its historical treasures from places thought vulnerable to damage by aerial bombardment to more secure facilities, often underground.[xxii] Indeed, plans for the emergency removal of the contents of the British Museum to abandoned mines and caverns in Wales and the north of Britain were practiced as late as the 1980s.[xxiii]

It would be advisable today to establish a special service for the undertaking of cultural protection planning. The German Kunstschutz (art protection) corps established during World War One under the leadership of an art history professor is a good example. The American Monuments, Fine Arts and Archives officers, or 'monuments men' stood up during the Second World War to mitigate the theft, destruction of, or damage to cultural property would be another.[xxiv]

Secure Zones

All wars cause civilian displacement. The matter in the case of civil wars is not necessarily greater in terms of scale but can be more complex. For one thing, as a formerly multivalent society tears itself apart at the level of neighbourhoods it can be difficult to tell where to flee and when. For another, displacement can easily spread and intensify the conflict. Having been uprooted, refugees have a direct grievance and experience of victimization. Moreover, having suffered losses they have lowered opportunity costs for more fighting.[xxv]

It may be supposed in the first instance that people with the foresight to leave large cities for perceived safe harbour in smaller centres or rural areas will do so. Subsequently, as levels of urban ferality progress from amber to red, the fraction of the remaining mass that still possesses the wherewithal will also attempt to flee.

Additionally, a civil conflict such as I have described which centres on the active destabilisation of urban areas is going to produce waves of refugees by design. As with iconoclasm, displacement has a deliberate strategic function. First, it provides an assortative mechanism as people signal their group affiliation based on whether and to where they flee. Second, having sorted themselves in this manner, it is easier to extract rents and recruits from the resulting more homogenous and geographically concentrated factions. Third, both preceding effects serve the ultimate objective of permanently realtering population demographics.[xxvi]

The pattern described above is typical of recent civil wars including Bosnia (1992-1995), Lebanon (1975-1990), and Congo (1996-1997). Examples of large-scale population movements induced by civil conflicts litter human history from the dimmest past to the present day. They often are the origin story of many of the world's diasporas and some great countries, notably the United States which was populated in part by the descendants of English Puritans fleeing religious persecution.

A possible means of mitigating the human cost, in the short term of immediate deaths and suffering and in the long term of permanent loss through migration of the most highly educated and able people, would be the establishment of some zones through the duration of the conflict in which a degree of normal civil life might persist. 'Secure zone' would be a misnomer such places which would, rather, be places of diminished but not absent danger. Establishing them in their own countries will be novel for Western armies. The skills involved, however, are the same as those they have employed often in states wracked by civil conflict such as Iraqi Kurdistan (1991), Bosnia (1993-1995), Rwanda (1994), Haiti (1994-1995), Kosovo (1999) Libya (2011), Iraq (2014-), and Syria (2013).[xxvii]

Secure zones should be as large as possible while also being defendable by whatever fraction of the pre-war regular forces remains loyal and effective. Military forces involved need to be strong enough to control access into them by land, sea, or air, able to subdue any militias which may seek to use them as base areas and manage the provision of basic humanitarian services, including foreign aid. Safe zones should include an airport capable of handling large planes, ideally a seaport, power generation and communications capability, and a clean water supply.

Prior to the outbreak of conflict, map-based identification of suitable secure zones should be undertaken. Additional useful preparation would include the establishment of secure civil defence centres and stockpiling of necessities. An existing model that might be reactivated or copied and adapted, is the early Cold War British Regional Seats of Government system. In that case, the working threat assumption was of a nuclear attack, in which event central government might cease to exist. Control would then pass to a regional commissioner whose staff would seek to replicate as many aspects of central government as they were able.[xxviii]

Taking Britain as an example, limited goals such as this could be achievable by the already very small British Army on parts of its territory. Compared to the task of extinguishing multiple simultaneously burning cities, treating millions of injuries, and dealing with fallout, the humanitarian challenge of civil conflict is more manageable, which is the good news.

Failed States & Fissile Materials

When the Soviet Union collapsed the primary security concerns of external powers related to the custody of nuclear warheads, fissile materials, and components of other weapons of mass destruction. The Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) programme was initiated by the United States in 1991 with the specific intent 'to secure and dismantle weapons of mass destruction and their associated infrastructure in former Soviet Union states.'[xxix] The range of activities funded under CTR was broad, including the safe dismantlement of some weapons, improvements in storage and accounting systems, and the conversion of military research facilities to civil purposes.

CTR operated in Russia up until 2015 when President Vladimir Putin announced that American assistance was no longer required to secure weapons-grade nuclear materials. Russia's cooperation with CTR is explicable on account of its own genuine fear of the 'loose nukes' problem, as well as its realist interest in the nuclear disarmament of other former Soviet states. There were other reasons, however, for the preoccupation of the Russian authorities with such weapons.

Although Russia narrowly avoided civil war in the post-Soviet era, the 1990s might be described as a national 'near death' experience. The social impact of an economic implosion that was more severe than the Great Depression was extraordinary. For two periods, both of nearly a year in duration, the state was unable to pay the salaries of most military officers completely and in a timely manner. Only the Strategic Rocket Forces received sufficient funding to remain credible, as the state verged on bankruptcy.[xxx]

There are three lessons for American, French, and British commanders as their nations slide toward comparable disaster. First, they ought to carefully validate existing accounting mechanisms for WMDs and related materials and consider the utility of their storage and security facilities in the case of internal conflict. That is because, second, obviously, the long-term effect of the use of such weapons by belligerents in civil conflict would be gigantic. External actors, moreover, may justify their intrusion into the conflict on grounds of prevention of proliferation—as has been suggested, for example, that the United States might do in the case of Pakistan in the context of a hypothesised civil war or military coup.

The USSR was once described as 'Upper Volta with rockets', and post-Soviet Russia has been likened to a 'gas station with nuclear weapons.' Both appellations were deliberately derisory but also broadly accurate, a fact that no one knew better than the Russians themselves. The difference, though, to come to the third lesson, is that without nuclear weapons nations that cannot govern themselves and which other powers regard as little more than resource suppliers and instability generators, are acutely vulnerable to foreign predation.

The reasons for wishing to secure potential weapons of mass destruction against their potential use in a miasmic civil conflict do not require great explication. History has not yet provided an example of a nuclear power descending into civil war, although the case described above was a narrow escape. A partial parallel might be the treatment of the British Crown Jewels at the beginning of the Second World War which under fear of German invasion were buried sixty feet under Windsor Castle in a secretly constructed chamber. In anticipation of the need for further relocation, the Royal Librarian prised the most valuable gems from their settings and hid them in a biscuit tin—a fact not revealed to anyone, including Queen Elizabeth II until 2018.[xxxi]

A bigger biscuit tin will be necessary, but the principle is the same.

Conclusion

'Normalcy bias' is a concept originating in disaster management that refers to the way in which people sometimes fail to react in a timely manner to warnings of imminent danger. The defence establishments of the West ought to guard against a tendency to disbelieve or to minimise the threat of internal conflict. The matter is that conditions which are generally agreed to be indicative of the potential for civil war are vividly present across a range of states which have for a long time been thought beyond such sort of conflict.

Strategic studies may be quite caught off guard, moreover, for two other reasons. First, civil wars are little studied in the same manner as interstate wars. The literature on civil wars is extensive, including important works on its causation, resolution, social origins, outcomes, post-war rebuilding and so on; but it is rarely studied, as is 'normal war', from the perspective of military strategy—in other words, how it is or should be fought. The work of Stathis Kalyvas, the most astute contemporary observer of the 'logic' of civil wars, is a rare exception. [xxxii]

However, second, even Kalyvas just over a decade ago concluded that in the long view, civil wars were in decline. His further point, though, was that civil war had undergone three major transformations over the last 200 years to, in the last instance, a form which he struggled to describe—one far less ordered and conventional.[xxxiii] That form is becoming evident. To suggest that civil war is imminent and ascendant and precisely in parts of the world thought, heretofore, to be the wealthiest and least restive—is contrary to expectation—but that is where we are.

Appendix

Country	Warning	Context

United Kingdom	Nigel Farage, former leader of the Brexit Party and Reform UK, warned in November 2023 that 'mass immigration' and multiculturalism risked 'civil unrest verging on conflict' if integration continues to fail	Following the Dublin riots in November 2023, Farage linked the UK's own tensions—exemplified by 2024 Southport riots after a mass stabbing blamed on a migrant-background individual—to immigration policies. He argued that cultural divisions and "two-tier policing" favoring minorities could destabilize Britain, a stance echoed during his appearances on GB News and X posts amplifying far-right concerns.
France	Éric Zemmour, 2021 plus French generals 2021 both warning of 'civil war'	Terrorist attacks (e.g., 2020 beheading of Samuel Paty) and suburban unrest tied to immigrant populations fueled fears of cultural fragmentation.
Germany	Hans-Georg Maaßen, former intelligence chief, warned in 2022 that failure to control immigration and integrate migrants risked 'civil war-like conditions'	The 2021 migrant influx and AfD's rise capitalized on anti-immigrant sentiment, with incidents like the 2020 Hanau shooting underscoring tensions.
Sweden	Jimmie Åkesson, leader of the Sweden Democrats, warned in 2022 that multiculturalism and immigration-driven crime could push Sweden toward 'civil conflict'	Rising gang violence in immigrant-heavy areas (e.g., 2023 Malmö shootings) has been linked to failed integration, amplifying public unrest.
Italy	Matteo Salvini, former Interior Minister, warned in 2020 that uncontrolled immigration could spark 'civil conflict' between Italians and migrants amid economic strain	Migrant arrivals (e.g., 2021 Lampedusa surge) and clashes in urban centers fueled anti-immigrant rhetoric from the far-right League party.
Netherlands	Geert Wilders, leader of the Party for Freedom, warned in 2023 that 'Islamization' and immigration could lead to 'civil war' if multiculturalism is not reversed	Farmer protests (2022–2023) intersected with anti-immigrant sentiment, with Wilders citing cultural erosion as a destabilizing force.
Hungary	Viktor Orbán, Prime Minister, warned in 2021 that multiculturalism from immigration threatened 'civil conflict' by undermining Hungary's Christian identity	Orbán's government has framed immigration (e.g., 2021 Afghan refugee debates) as an existential threat, justifying border fences and nationalist policies.
Denmark	Rasmus Paludan, leader of the Hard Line party, warned in 2022 that immigration and multiculturalism could lead to 'civil conflict' if ghettoized communities grow	Anti-immigrant riots (e.g., 2022 Quran burnings) and strict "ghetto laws" reflect fears of parallel societies destabilizing Danish cohesion.
Austria	Herbert Kickl, leader of the Freedom Party (FPÖ), warned in 2023 that immigration and multicultural policies could provoke 'civil war' by eroding Austrian culture	The 2020 Vienna attack and subsequent immigration debates bolstered far-right claims of societal breakdown linked to migrant inflows.
Belgium	Filip Dewinter, Vlaams Belang politician, warned in 2021 that multiculturalism and immigration in Brussels could lead to 'civil conflict' between Flemish natives and migrant groups	Brussels' large immigrant population and linguistic tensions have been cited as risks, with far-right voices amplifying cultural clash narratives.
Spain	Santiago Abascal, leader of the Vox party, warned in 2021 that unchecked immigration and multiculturalism could lead to 'civil conflict' by threatening Spanish identity	Rising migrant arrivals (e.g., 2021 Ceuta border crisis) and Vox's anti-immigrant stance have fueled debates about cultural cohesion, especially in southern regions.
Poland	Jarosław Kaczyński, leader of the Law and Justice (PiS) party, warned in 2022 that EU-driven immigration policies could destabilize Poland, risking 'civil conflict' with native Poles	Poland's resistance to EU migrant quotas (e.g., 2021 Belarus border crisis) and fears of multiculturalism eroding Catholic values have stoked nationalist tensions.
Greece	Kyriakos Velopoulos, leader of Greek Solution, warned in 2020 that immigration influxes could spark 'civil conflict' if migrants overwhelm Greek culture and resources	The 2020 Moria camp crisis and clashes on islands like Lesbos heightened anti-immigrant sentiment, with far-right voices citing multiculturalism as a threat.
Switzerland	Oskar Freysinger, former Swiss People's Party (SVP) politician, warned in 2021 that growing immigration and multicultural policies could lead to 'civil conflict' by diluting Swiss traditions	Debates over asylum policies (e.g., 2021 Afghan arrivals) and SVP's campaigns against minarets and burqas reflect fears of cultural destabilization.

Czech Republic	Tomio Okamura, leader of the Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) party, warned in 2023 that immigration and multiculturalism could provoke 'civil war' by clashing with Czech homogeneity	Anti-immigrant protests (e.g., 2022 Ukraine refugee debates) and Okamura's rhetoric against EU migration policies have amplified concerns about societal fracture.
Ireland	Gearóid Murphy, an Irish nationalist and prominent anti-immigration commentator, warned in 2023 that mass immigration could lead to 'civil conflict' by overwhelming Irish culture and resources	Anti-immigrant protests surged in 2022–2023 (e.g., East Wall, Ballymun), culminating in the November 2023 Dublin riots after a stabbing by an immigrant-background individual. Far-right voices have framed multiculturalism as a threat to Irish identity, especially amid the housing crisis and Ukrainian refugee influx.
Finland	Jussi Halla-aho, former leader of the Finns Party, warned in 2021 that immigration and multiculturalism could destabilize Finland, potentially leading to 'civil conflict' if integration fails	Finland's shift from emigration to immigration (e.g., 2022 Ukrainian refugees) has sparked backlash. Halla-aho's rhetoric ties rising crime and cultural tensions in Helsinki suburbs to multicultural policies, echoing broader Nordic concerns.
Norway	Sylvi Listhaug, former Justice Minister and Progress Party politician, warned in 2022 that lax immigration policies and multiculturalism could erode social cohesion, risking 'conflict' akin to Sweden's issues	Norway tightened asylum laws post-2015 migrant crisis, but debates over Muslim integration (e.g., 2021 Oslo protests) and crime in immigrant areas have fueled warnings of societal fracture from anti-immigrant figures.
Portugal	André Ventura, leader of the Chega party, warned in 2020 that immigration and multiculturalism could lead to 'civil conflict' by clashing with Portuguese values and straining social systems	Though historically immigration-friendly, Portugal saw Chega's rise (e.g., 2022 election gains) amid debates over African and Brazilian migrants, with Ventura linking crime and cultural erosion to multicultural policies.
Slovakia	Ľudovít Ódor, an economist and former advisor, warned in 2023 that rising anti-immigrant sentiment and multiculturalism could spark 'civil unrest' if populist rhetoric escalates.	Slovakia's rejection of EU migrant quotas (e.g., 2021 stance) and far-right parties like ĽSNS blaming immigrants for social issues have heightened tensions, though immigration remains low compared to Western Europe.

References

[i] David Betz, 'Civil War Comes to the West', Military Strategy, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2024).

[ii] See, inter alia, Stephen Marche, The Next Civil War: Dispatches from the American Future (New York: Avid Reader Press, 2022).

[iii] See Ann Hironaka, Neverending Wars: The International Community, Weak States, and the Perpetuation of Civil Wars (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

[iv] See Barbara Walter, How Civil Wars Start—and How to Stop Them (London: Penguin, 2022), p. 198.

[v] On 'downgrading', see Walter, chap. 3.

[vi] See US Army and Marine Corps, Field Manual 3-24: Counterinsurgency (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2006), and British Army, Army Field Manual: Countering Insurgency (London: Ministry of Defence, 2010).

[vii] See Carl Jacobsen, 'Arms and Society, 1988–1992: Russia's Revolutionary Arbiter?', European Security, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1993), p. 427.

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