1 Introduction

Can civil war give rise to democracy? On the face of it, this seems an implausible proposition. Much of the academic and popular literature in recent years has emphasized the destructive force of violent conflict on all aspects of state and society: it can create human rights and humanitarian atrocities, destroy institutions and infrastructure, displace families, drain the economy, unravel social networks, threaten regime survival, inundate countries with small arms, and breed fear and mistrust. These consequences appear directly inimical to the conditions needed for the emergence of a democratic state. Indeed, conventional wisdom holds that civil war tends to prod already unstable states down the path to state failure, creating serious security concerns not only for citizens within those states but also for the region and even the world (Helman 1992/1993; Rotberg 2002; Krasner and Pascual 2005; Patrick 2006). The enormity of the challenges that now beset countries such as Haiti, Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria lend credence to these claims, so that to speak of democratization in the face of civil strife does seem far-fetched, if not outright naïve.

And yet, even a cursory survey of the dozens of states that have experienced major internal conflict since 1950 shows that there is remarkable variation in the fates of these states following the war. While some became "trapped" in a cycle of war and state weakness, others settled into relatively stable authoritarianism and still others went on to enter the ranks of electoral democracy just shortly after belligerents laid down their arms. Authoritarianism has prevailed in states such as Rwanda, Tajikistan, and Chad after their civil wars ended, but Uganda, Nepal, Mozambique, and Guatemala each took notable steps toward democratization in the immediate wake of civil war. And where it occurred, post–civil war democratization appeared to take even long-time observers by surprise. "Democratization [in the 1980s] was unexpected because so many of us took civil war to mean that peaceful solutions to conflicts had failed," writes Latin Americanist Fabrice Lehoucq of the region. "No one in or outside the region predicted democracy would emerge

once political violence became widespread" (2012: 67). Why, then, do some states take a surprising turn toward democracy after civil war while others do not? In the extreme, how is it that a state that is staunchly autocratic as it enters into a civil war can emerge from war a nascent democracy?

Much of the answer, this book argues, lies in the extent to which ordinary people become politically mobilized during the war by rebel forces seeking their support. War has the force to dislodge the old order at the top while galvanizing political action in the grassroots. When ordinary citizens become embroiled in the politics of civil war, they acquire greater voice and organizational capacity to demand rights that had been denied them. Postwar powerholders, seeking to establish their rule and ensure stability, come under strong pressure to address such demands. Where it occurs, postwar democratization is a result of an elite strategy of power maintenance in the face of significant reformist mobilization from below. The argument involves both path dependence and the agency of war participants: what may initially be a wartime choice on the part of rebel groups on how to engage with the people in their milieu has the force to catalyze regime change at the center once the war has come to an end.

In seeking to explain variation in political regime outcomes in the aftermath of civil war, this book is motivated by both theoretical and practical insights. In the past three decades, scholars have devoted significant attention to the causes and resolution of violent conflict, making major contributions to our understanding of the determinants of durable peace. However, existing studies rarely examine what *kind* of peace might emerge from civil war; the predominant focus has been on the maintenance of peace, democratic, or otherwise.[1] While ending the bloodshed and restoring order are first-order concerns, analysis of how to achieve peace, stability, and strong state capacity without reference to the nature of the political regime leaves the discussion incomplete. Research amply shows there will be vast differences between a democratic peace and an autocratic peace after civil war, with implications for individual, domestic, and international security.[2] An understanding of postwar states'

[1] Works studying the determinants of durable peace are many. See, for example, Walter and Snyder (1999); Stedman, Rothchild, and Cousens (2002); Walter (2002); Doyle and Sambanis (2006); Hartzell and Hoddie (2007); Fortna (2008); Mason et al. (2011).

[2] Again, the relevant literature is vast. In the realm of domestic politics, aside from the greater individual rights and freedoms afforded citizens in democratic, as compared with autocratic, states, studies show democracy is the most stable form of political regime (Hegre et al. 2002) and, when democratic states do engage in civil war, they tend to suffer fewer casualties (Lacina 2006). Democracies are also more economically developed (Przeworski et al. 2000) and allocate resources more efficiently (Lake and Baum 2001).

political regimes, then, is an integral part of a wider effort to identify the determinants of peace and stability in war-torn states. Meanwhile, for better or for worse, the promotion of democracy in postconflict states by the United Nations (UN), the United States, and other international actors has been a prominent feature of international politics since the end of the Cold War. There is thus a need to develop theoretical and empirical bases for understanding when, why, and how civil war paves the way to democratization, with or without external intervention.

To the extent that studies have examined post–civil war political regimes, they have done so largely from an interventionist angle. By this, I mean discussions have disproportionately focused on evaluating the effectiveness, capacity, strategies, and political will of external actors who intervened in war-torn states with the aim of establishing peace and democracy.[3] While this literature offers incisive critiques and practical ways forward for actors such as the United States and the UN, it tends to sideline the most important actors in the narrative of post–civil war politics: the state's leaders, other domestic political actors, and ordinary citizens. There are at least two consequences. First, although we now have a better understanding of the challenges and dilemmas confronting international actors intervening in postconflict states, the goals and preferences of domestic actors remain relatively little understood. And second, we have few theoretical tools with which to think about the counterfactual of how these states would fare without external intervention. The presumption that they will fail or consolidate into a dictatorship remains, for the most part, a presumption, yet to be systematically tested.

This book departs from the familiar approach of focusing on international interventions or on the terms and implementation of peace settlements to explain post–civil war democratization. The "postconflict" setting is not an institutional *tabula rasa* in which actors, whether domestic or international, can realize their vision of a new state from scratch. Rather, legacies of past events linger to shape the postwar context. Understanding how postwar regimes form requires revisiting the war itself and examining how it affected political structures and political actors. Thus, a central assertion in this study is that the

Though debate continues, recent research shows they experience higher growth rates (Acemoglu et al. 2014). On how regime type affects international politics, see, for instance, the large literature on the democratic peace theory (e.g., Doyle 1997; Russett and Oneal 2001; Ikenberry 2001) and domestic audience costs (e.g., Fearon 1994; Schultz 1998; Gelpi and Griesdorf 2001; though see also Weeks 2008).

[3] See, e.g., Chesterman (2004); Doyle and Sambanis (2006); Paris (2004); Marten (2004); Stedman, Rothchild, and Cousens (2002).

variation in postwar regime outcomes has wartime origins. "Postconflict" politics is endogenous to wartime politics.

In terms of policy, ongoing debates on whether, when, and how international actors should attempt democratic statebuilding in war-torn states can be greatly informed by a deeper understanding of the domestic politics of the civil war. A study of how the state, rebels, and civilians interact and change through the experience of a civil war is, in a simplified sense, a study of the lay of the land. Only when we have a better picture of the lay of the land can we even begin to discuss appropriate policy responses.

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows. The next section provides an empirical basis for the central puzzle of this study. The following section summarizes the study's core arguments. The chapter then turns to a brief description of the research design before providing an overview of the chapters to come.

Patterns of Civil War and Regime Change

How have states' political regimes been affected by the occurrence of civil war historically? Just how common is postwar democratization? One way to answer these questions is to use a quantitative measure of political regimes to discern any patterns in civil war and regime change across a set of cases. The commonly used Polity IV index scores states annually based on a twenty-one-point scale ranging from the most autocratic (−10) to the most democratic (10), taking into consideration the degree of openness and competitiveness the state's leadership selection process, the degree to which ordinary people can participate in that process, and the extent to which rules and institutions constrain state leaders' actions.[4] I use the index to examine all states that emerged from major civil wars – those with at least 1,000 battle-related deaths – between 1950 and 2006 (127 cases in all).[5] To give a sense of where conflict states lie on the scale, on average, states had a score of −3.2 in the years immediately prior to conflict onset – unsurprisingly, most states that experience civil war are autocracies. At the same time, there is also variation in regime type, with both highly autocratic states with scores of −9 or −10 at conflict onset (e.g., Oman, Cambodia, Chad, Congo, Ethiopia) as well as a few highly democratic states with scores of 9 or 10

[4] See Marshall and Jaggers 2005. I describe the index in greater detail in Chapter 4.
[5] See Chapter 3 and the Appendix for further description of the list of civil wars used in this study. Missing observations in Polity make the actual number of cases examined slightly fewer.

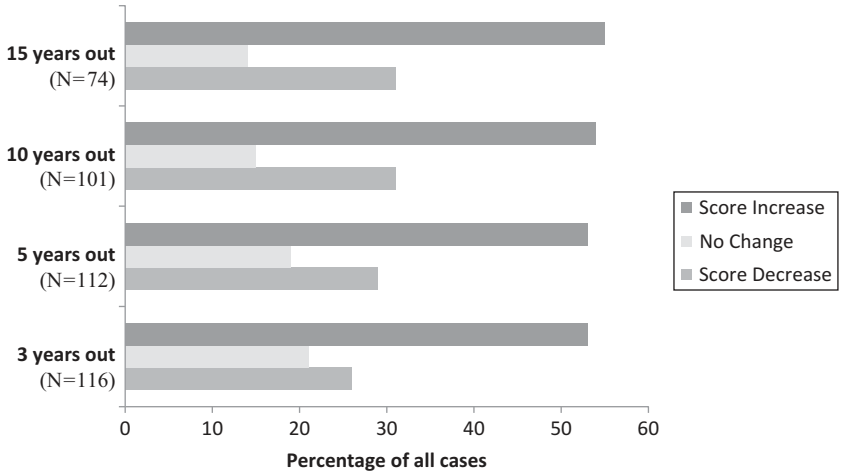

Figure 1.1 Prewar to postwar changes in Polity scores

(Israel's conflict against Palestinians and Britain's against Northern Ireland) confronting violent rebellion.

Using the Polity index, in Figure 1.1 I categorize the conflict states into those that saw regime *score increases* from before to after the war; those that saw *no score changes*; and those that saw *score decreases* from before to after the war. Prewar scores are measured just prior to the start of the war,[6] while postwar scores are measured at 3, 5, 10, and 15 years after the war. As the figure shows, not only is there variation in how regimes changed (or did not change) through the experience of civil war, but the majority of states saw score *increases*, irrespective of the postwar measuring point used. That is, over half of the states emerging from civil war displayed more democratic qualities *after* the war than they did just prior to the war.[7]

To omit the cases with negligible score changes, we might use a more stringent categorization scheme that requires a greater score change to count as a move toward democracy or autocracy. This is done in Figure 1.2, which breaks the states down into those that saw at least a three-point increase, those that saw less than a three-point change, and those that saw at least a three-point decrease in regime scores from

[6] More specifically, for each state I use the average of the scores from the three years prior to the start of the war. On this and other coding details used in this project, see Chapter 3 and 4.

[7] See Wantchekon and Neeman (2002) for a similar observation.

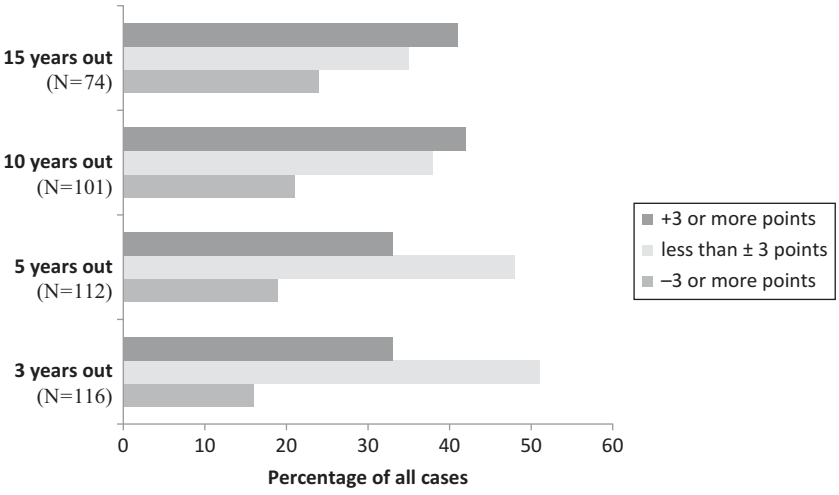

Figure 1.2 Prewar to postwar changes in Polity scores (minimum three-point change)

before to after the war. As shown, the proportion of states that saw little score change increases with this breakdown. Nevertheless, over one-third of the cases were at least three points more democratic in the war's aftermath than they were before the war. In contrast, only 16 to 24 percent of the cases saw moves toward autocracy. This pattern continues to hold using a five-point-change breakdown: 27 to 31 percent saw moves toward democracy as compared with 10 to 19 percent moving toward autocracy. Finally, in Figure 1.3, histograms of the prewar to postwar regime score changes at 3, 5, 10, and 15 years out show greater densities on the positive half of the regime change spectrum (i.e., democratization) than on the negative half in each of the four graphs.

The evidence points to two empirical observations. First, civil war and democratization have often come hand in hand; many states have in fact emerged from civil war more democratic than they were before the war. And second, there is variation in how political regimes change through the experience of civil war; some democratize, some autocratize, and some exhibit little change in their regime type. To be clear, the evidence does *not* show that states become full-blown democracies by the hordes following violent conflict. For instance, even among those making the greatest pre- to postwar leaps in regime scores, states such as Mozambique, Mali, and El Salvador bore a closer resemblance to "mixed"

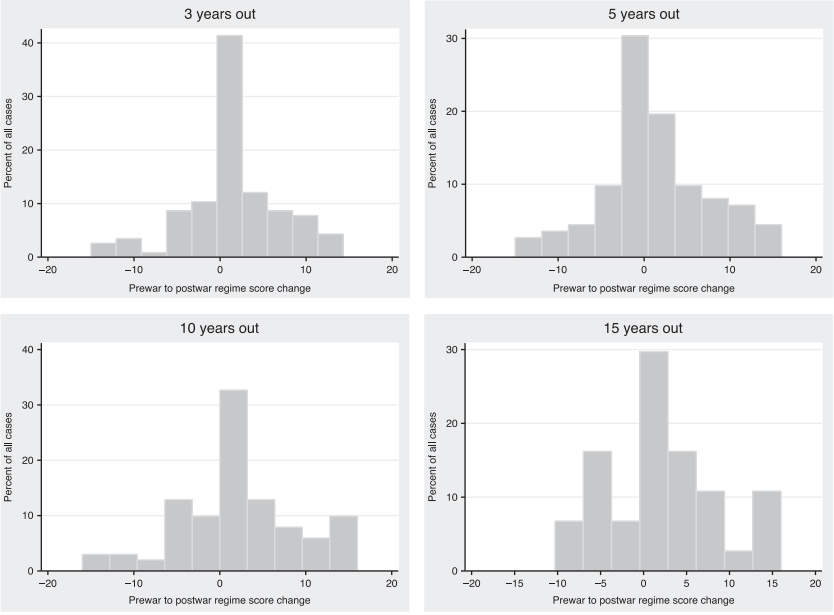

Figure 1.3 Histograms of prewar to postwar changes in Polity scores

regimes in the war's aftermath than to mature democracies.[8] Nevertheless, the evidence shows that a significant proportion of states that experienced the "chaos" and "anarchy" of civil war has historically democratized through the experience. Civil war has not incontrovertibly been a precursor to autocracy or state failure.

Can the puzzle be explained away by international peacekeeping and peacebuilding interventions? After all, since the end of the Cold War the UN and other international actors have fielded expansive peace operations aimed specifically at bringing democratic order to war-torn states. In the well-known cases of Namibia, Mozambique, El Salvador, Cambodia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Timor-Leste, and Sierra Leone, peacekeepers were tasked not only with keeping the peace but also with reforming the executive, legislature, police force, courts, legal systems, and other

[8] Indeed, five years following the conclusion of their respective civil wars, these states each had a regime score of 5 or 6 – lower than the score of 7 or higher that is usually considered to constitute a democracy in the literature. On mixed or hybrid regimes, see Levitsky and Way (2010). On the other hand, other states that made large score leaps, such as Guatemala (+11 points), Peru (+9), and Nicaragua (+16), each had a score of 8 or higher five years into peace time.

state institutions in accordance with democratic principles; organizing elections; and providing human rights training to members of the armed forces and civil service. If these interventions account for most of the variation in postwar regimes, we need not go any further.

Quantitative studies of the effects of peacekeeping on postwar democratization, however, have collectively offered conflicting results, with some concluding it has little discernible effect (Fortna 2008b; Fortna and Huang 2012) but others finding it can significantly help states move toward democracy under specific conditions (Doyle and Sambanis 2006; Pickering and Peceny 2006; Heldt 2011; Steinert and Grimm 2015). Case studies have generally offered bleak assessments of the track record of peace operations when it comes to promoting democracy (Paris 2004; Sens 2004). Given this, other studies question the very notion that democracy can be externally imposed on states torn asunder by civil war, at least not with the means commonly employed (Chesterman 2004; Marten 2004).

Meanwhile, a longstanding argument, discussed further in the next chapter, holds that there is in fact an intimate relationship between political violence and the emergence of democracy. "The history of almost all democracies has been filled with turmoil, conflict, and even violence," writes Berman (2007: 30). In England, for instance, "without the violence and disruptions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ... the peaceful development of democracy during the nineteenth century would not have been possible" (Berman 2007: 38). In more recent times, over half of the electoral democracies formed after 1945 emerged either in the immediate aftermath of war or as a means of bringing war to an end (Bermeo 2003b). These empirical observations are consistent with the idea, running through generations of political thought, that only popular struggle can pave the way to the establishment of a democratic government (Douglass 1857; Mill 1859; Walzer 1980: 220; Tilly 2004). These insights suggest that something other than the post-1989 spate of peacebuilding interventions – something more germane to conflict states themselves – is at work in generating the divergent regime trajectories among post–civil war states.

Arguments in Brief

I make several key arguments in this study, ranging from the broad to the specific. At the broadest theoretical level, I argue that an understanding of post–civil war politics requires an understanding of wartime politics. Analysis of the immediate outcomes of the war, such as the form of war termination, terms of a political settlement, or the presence or absence

of third-party interventions, while important, provides an insufficient account of the type of political regime that emerges after civil war. Warfare generates political, social, and institutional legacies that can affect peacetime politics, making the political context in the war's wake endogenous to the war itself.

Second, post–civil war regimes have their origins in how rebel groups mobilize for war, and how this impacts societies and the ordinary citizens that comprise them. The varying *social* impacts of war help explain postwar regime outcomes. Rebel groups have choices in how to wage war: some choose to directly involve ordinary people to incite and encourage their active support; others choose to fight with little concern for popular involvement, whether because they have ready access to external patrons or to profits from natural resources that precludes the need to draw on civilian support, or because their political ideologies do not demand a popular focus, or because they lack the skill or capacity for mass mobilization. Depending on how rebel groups shore up resources for war, their relations with local populations will differ. This creates variation in what I call *rebel governance* – a political strategy of rebellion in which rebels forge and manage relations with civilians – across civil wars. The manner in which rebel groups secure their war-fighting resources therefore affects not only the state that is attempting to quash the rebellion, but also civilian populations, first in the areas where rebels operate, and, later, more widely. In short, rebel governance affects state–society relations. The nature of state–society relations, in turn, is what fundamentally characterizes a political regime.

Finally, I argue that democratization is more likely to follow wars in which the rebels rely heavily on civilians for war-fighting support. Conversely, wars in which the rebels find little need to draw on ordinary people are less likely to lead to democratization. Why might this be the case?

When rebels extract widely from civilians for wartime resources, a significant social change takes place: civilians become politically mobilized. Participation in the rebellion, whether voluntary or coerced, provides civilians with new information on their political rights, on ways the state is purportedly impinging on those rights, and on the availability of alternatives to the status quo. It also makes those alternatives appear to be within reach, creating expectations of radical breaks from the prevailing order in a new postwar regime. This mobilization of ordinary people places significant pressures on postwar political elites to cater to the bottom-up demands in order to ensure regime survival. In contrast, where rebels choose to invest less political capital in civilians, the latter remain relatively untapped as a political force (though they may certainly

be affected by the violence of the war). In this case, the end of the conflict is unlikely to be accompanied by widespread mobilization from below, making autocratic reinforcement less costly for postwar elites. I call this the *civilian mobilization theory*.

Yet, there could be an alternative pathway that links rebel reliance on civilians to postwar democratization. Drawing on existing studies, I consider, but ultimately refute both theoretically and empirically, a second causal explanation – the *rebel statebuilding theory*. This theory focuses on the transformative effects of conflict on the rebels themselves as potential members of the postwar political elite. Among rebel groups that come to depend on civilians for survival, many will develop wartime governance structures both to legitimate their authority and to regularize resource extraction from civilians. In effect, they may be building the microcosm of an incipient governance system based on a social contract with local citizens. Notably, many of these systems feature, however nominally, fundamental components of democracy, including popular elections, law-and-order institutions, and taxation. A hypothesis under this model posits that should these "statebuilding" rebels prevail in the war, they should have incentives to build on the wartime institutions and experience and continue to engage in social contractual, nominally democratic governance in the war's aftermath.

Empirically, through quantitative and qualitative analysis I find significant support for the bottom-up process of postwar democratization as embodied in the civilian mobilization theory. Postwar democratization, I find, is a result of a contentious popular struggle that arises out of mass-based rebellions. In contrast, I find no support for the top-down process captured in the rebel statebuilding hypothesis. Rebels' wartime relations with civilians matter for postwar democratization because they mobilize ordinary people to demand it, not because they make rebels-turned-elites more inclined to supply it. Where it occurs, postwar democratization, then, is the reluctant choice of elite powerholders who would rather amass power for themselves but are compelled to offer more political voice to the people in accordance with their demands. The findings further suggest that rebel statebuilding is more an exercise in violent and coercive control, and less a benevolent social contract between rebel governors and the governed. Rebel statebuilding may equip the rebels to build stronger states in the war's aftermath, but strong states are as conducive to authoritarianism as they are to democracy.

These arguments are inspired by, and build on, a confluence of ideas in international relations, comparative politics, and political sociology. Rebel war-making and postwar democratization are two concepts that are relatively distant in both time *and* substance. They link war time