

“European Civil Wars”: Patterns of Consolidation in Divided Societies, 2010–1800

On the 50th anniversary of October 23, 1956, the Budapest streets were immersed in turmoil, scandal, hooliganism and extreme rightist emblems instead of dignified celebration. Opening up to a broader picture, we can find symptoms of symbolic civil wars from the *Bronze Night* riots in April 2007 in Tallinn to the current turmoil in Athens. In connection with these it is almost irresistibly tempting to recall the painful memories of real civil war events from Jedwabne to Naoussa and from Londonderry to Srebrenica.

The divided symbolic public spaces and often antagonistic feast days and the competing victimologies and parallel collective memories are obviously present and sometimes overwhelming from Ireland through Spain to Greece, from Finland and the Baltic states through Poland to the successor states of former Yugoslavia, from the former Czechoslovakia through Hungary to Italy, and, of course, thought not at the same level, from Belgium through France to Germany. These European people, and, of course, certainly not only them, faced the disastrous individual and collective experiences during the last two centuries of traumas of different kinds of wars (wars of independence, wars for national unification, civil wars, colonial wars, world wars), revolutions, counter-revolutions, coup d'états, dictatorships, totalitarian systems, regime changes, territorial losses, ethnic cleansings, and exchanges of population.

Their historical experiences have included archetypical situations, often overlapping with each other. Many of them lived through the *transition* from one or another type of *dictatorship to democracy*. Large portions of these people shifted from centres, parts, or subjects of earlier empires, becoming part of medium- or small-sized *independent countries* as outcomes of a twofold process: the dissolution of empires and the establishment of nation-building projects. Some of them came out of *civil war to reconstruction*. All of them worked through the great transformation from *traditional societies to modern ones*. Each and every one of them was involved in competing and cooperating with each other and integrating into the European Union. In connection with these situations their political languages and narratives are influenced by and often rooted in the following collective transitional tasks: making democracy, fighting for national liberation, working on reconstruction, building up modernity, and forging collective identity in between nation-state, European cooperation and federalism. Their cohesive forces include elite created identity models, images of the previous conflict, the interpretations of the recent past, and the self and the inner alterity by narratives and the blueprints of memory building. They are part and parcel of patterns of consolidation, i.e. the underlying assumptions of making political community for divided societies and fractured political cultures. All of them participated in the “European civil wars”.

This is the point of departure for this research proposal. Its main focus is going to cover, deconstruct, reconstruct, analyse and interpret the similar and different patterns of consolidations/reconciliations/settlements in their contexts, and then compare them with each other. Defining them in order to discover their typologies and their similar and different characteristics can provide conclusions which give insights to the challenge of how and which ways modern democratic political communities can be constructed. The timeframes are different from country by country but by and large they are around the Napoleonic wars on one hand, and the present on the other.

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