

# CIVILIANS AND CIVIL WARS IN AFRICA: THE CASES OF LIBERIA, SIERRA LEONE, AND CÔTE D'IVOIRE

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Unlike traditional wars, which were typically fought between the armed forces of various states with civilians playing marginal roles, civil wars since the end of the Cold War have witnessed the increased involvement of civilians in multiple capacities: perpetrators, victims, local peacemakers, and war-time capitalists, among others. These roles played by civilians on both sides of the conflicts are complex, fluid, dynamic, and at times conflicting. This has transformed the nature and conduct of warfare in several major ways, and has profound implications for conflict management and resolution. This paper examines the multifaceted role of civilians in the first and second Liberian civil wars, the Sierra Leonean civil war, and the first and second Ivorian civil wars.

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## INTRODUCTION

With the increased incidences of civil wars in many regions of the world since the end of the Cold War, notably in Africa where the 1991 implosion in Somalia was followed by a wave of civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo), Guinea Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, and Sudan's Darfur region, scholarly interest in civil wars has been growing. As Kristian Skrede Gleditsch and Andrea Ruggeri observe, "the salience of civil war in the contemporary world has gained a great deal of scholarly interest in its causes. The theoretical literature on civil war has postulated a variety of explanations for why government and insurgents may resort to violence against one another."<sup>1</sup> The emergent corpus of scholarly

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