

Things Fall Apart



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"Iraq is rapidly descending into all-out civil war. Unfortunately, the United States probably will not be able to just walk away from the chaos. Even setting aside the humanitarian nightmare that will ensue, a full-scale civil war would likely consume more than Iraq: historically, such massive conflicts have often had highly deleterious effects on neighboring countries and other outside states. Spillover from an Iraq civil war could be disastrous." Thus begins this sobering analysis of what the near future of Iraq could look like, and what America can do to reduce the threat of wider conflict. Preventing spillover of the Iraqi conflict into neighboring states must be a top priority. In explaining how that can be accomplished, Daniel Byman and Kenneth Pollack draw on their own considerable expertise as well as relevant precedents. The authors scrutinize several recent civil wars, including Lebanon, Chechnya, Afghanistan, Kosovo, and Bosnia. After synthesizing those experiences into lessons on how civil wars affect other nations, Byman and Pollack draw from them to produce recommendations for U.S. policy. Even while the Bush Administration attempts to prevent further deterioration of the situation in Iraq, it needs to be planning how to deal with a full-scale civil war if one develops.

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