The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (4th edition) defines civil war as “a war between factions or regions of the same country.”

http://www.answers/topic/civil-war-1

Wikipedia

A civil war is a war in which the competing parties within the same country or empire struggle for national control of state power. As in any war, the conflict may be over other matters such as religion, ethnicity, or distribution of wealth. Some civil wars are also categorized as revolutions when major societal restructuring is a possible outcome of the conflict. An insurgency, whether successful or not, is likely to be classified as a civil war by some historians if, and only if, organized armies fight conventional battles. Other historians state the criteria for a civil war is that there must be prolonged violence between organized factions or defined regions of a country (conventionally fought or not.

West’s Encyclopedia of American Law states that a “Civil war exists when two or more opposing parties within a country resort to arms to settle a conflict or when a substantial portion of the population takes up arms against the legitimate government of a country. Within international law distinctions are drawn between minor conflicts like riots, where order is restored promptly, and full scale insurrections finding opposing parties in political as well as military control over different areas. When an internal conflict reaches sufficient proportions that the interests of other countries are affected, outside states may recognize a state of insurgency. A recognition of insurgency, whether formal or de facto, indicates that the recognizing state regards the insurgents as proper contestants for legitimate power. Although the precise status of insurgents under international law is not well-defined, recognized insurgents traditionally gain the protection afforded soldiers under international rules of law pertaining to war. A state may also decide to recognize the contending group as a belligerent, a status that invokes more well-defined rights and responsibilities. Once recognized as a belligerent party, that party obtains the rights of a belligerent party in a public war, or war between opposing states. The belligerents stand on a par with the parent state in the conduct and settlement of the conflict. In addition, states recognizing the insurgents as belligerents must assume the duties of neutrality toward the conflict.”