The Political Economy of Intrastate Conflicts

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Abstract

Political economy analyses of intrastate conflicts have focused on the links between resource scarcities, distributional inequities, and political marginalization. As well, scholars agree that institutions are vital in the attenuation, mediation, and mitigation of intrastate conflicts. This chapter captures the major explanations for intrastate conflicts and the institutional prescriptions to manage them. These studies include the modernization theories of the 1960s, the weak state literature of the 1980s and 1990s, and the recent theorizing on natural resources and conflicts. These studies share key assumptions about the centrality of socioeconomic inequities,
weak governance structures, and the availability of opportunities for groups to contest their grievances. The conclusion proposes that although civil conflicts are ending in most parts of the world, multilateral approaches and initiatives remain critical in tackling new intrastate fissures and regionalized conflicts.

**Keywords:** civil wars, developing countries, intrastate conflicts, horizontal inequalities, weak states, ethno-regional cleavages, resources wars
Introduction

Studies have identified resource scarcities, distributional imbalances, and political marginalization as some of the grievances that cause intrastate conflicts. In the same vein, most analyses stress the significance of institutions in the attenuation, mediation, and mitigation of these grievances. Centuries since Aristotle recognized that “extremes of wealth and poverty are the main sources of evil” (Politics, Book VI: 122), consensus has converged about the imperative of economic drivers of intrastate conflicts, particularly questions of access, allocation, and distribution of resources. Given that these questions are mediated primarily through modern territorial states, an understanding of states and their institutional foundations is vital to the appreciation of the sources and causes of intrastate conflicts. Most analysts have focused on the multiple obstacles that confront developing countries as they strive to create institutions to promote order and preempt civil strife. The literature on intrastate conflicts spans over five decades, from the traditional modernization literature of the 1960s to the debates on weak and fragile states in the 1980s and 1990s and the more recent conceptualizations that relate civil wars to natural resource abundance.
This chapter addresses the political economy of intrastate conflicts in developing countries since the 1960s. In our view, the core thread that permeates these theories is the persistence of socioeconomic inequities, weak governance structures, and the availability of opportunities for groups to contest and mobilize their grievances. In highlighting the structures of grievances that animate intrastate conflicts, we are also interested in the prescriptions different theorists have advanced for managing these conflicts. The chapter opens with an overview of the literature on modernization and how it articulated questions around the sources of civil wars; this literature is instructive because it informed subsequent discussions about the links between state formation and civil strife. Second, the chapter examines debates in the 1980s and 1990s about the nature and character of Third World states. In focusing on the lack of internal coherence, these studies highlighted the history of state formation as a variable in understanding the causes of civil conflicts. Third, we discuss the diverse literature that has emerged since the late 1990s that discusses the rise of new wars, the role of natural resources in conflict causation, and the significance of horizontal inequalities in comprehending intrastate conflicts. A brief discussion of political transformations in the Sahel and North Africa will illustrate the continuity between old ideas about intrastate conflicts and new conflict trajectories. The conclusion addresses lessons from the study with regard to institutional innovations and the vital role of collaborative
efforts between regional and international actors in helping states to prevent conflicts and mitigate their recurrence.

**Formative debates of the 1960s: Modernization and intrastate strife**

In the 1960s, modernization theories expressed widespread skepticism about the ability of developing states to maintain social and political order because of the absence of sturdy institutions to deal with the overwhelming demands produced by rapid social change. Steeped in the structural-functionalist paradigm, these studies viewed modernization as a disintegrative process that transformed traditional societies without providing capable alternative institutions to handle the emerging social and political strains. The result, as Pye (1963) suggested in the case of Burma, were tremendous social dislocations that led to political instability:

> People in transitional societies can take almost nothing for granted; they are plagued on all sides by uncertainty and every kind of unpredictable behavior. In their erratically changing world, every relationship rests upon uncertain foundations and may seem to
contain unlimited potential for good and evil. People are never sure what they should get from any relationship, so they are never sure whether they are getting what they should. (Pye 1963: 54–5)

Apter and Huntington attributed intrastate strife in the new nations to the “normative disintegration” of traditional structures and the increasing social uncertainties that led to violence (Apter 1965; Huntington 1965). To most modernization theorists, the imbalances and societal unevenness that modernization unleashed upset societal equilibrium to the detriment of social order. In a pessimistic vein, modernization theorists proposed that the expansion of political participation in states riven by the fissures of ethnicity, regionalism, and religion would ignite intrastate conflicts. For this reason, Huntington suggested that in the formative stages of political development, developing countries required “institutionalization” to prevent the instabilities occasioned by modernization. Thus in his famous essay on political development and decay, he observed that “rapid increases in mobilization and participation, the principal political aspect of modernization, undermine political institutions. Rapid modernization, in brief, produces not political development, but political decay.” (Huntington 1965: 386)
Similarly, some scholars saw modernization as the cause of rising expectations that induced revolutions born of rising frustration; from this perspective, new nations were susceptible to instabilities because they were confronted by resource scarcities and lacked the capacity to meet the escalating demands for goods and services. Olson (1963: 529–52) stated that rapid economic growth created marginalized classes who were often prone to revolutionary impulses. The idea of the revolution of rising expectations was linked to that of relative deprivation, which claimed that as collective economic expectations rose faster than the ability of states to meet them, a gap arose between expectations and achievements that produced intolerable political stress. In a prominent essay, Davies (1962: 5–19) argued that revolutions were motivated by frustrations stemming from an economic gap between individual aspirations and actual economic status; thus, individuals’ widespread discontent with their social situation triggered conflict, especially where modernization fueled “a revolution of rising expectations” (Davies 1962: 6–8).

Modernization perspectives contributed to the debates on the causes of intrastate conflicts by demonstrating the intersection between political and economic variables in intensifying the dilemmas of state and nation building, economic development, and constitutional development in developing states. Viewing these countries through the optic of advanced Western societies, these theories considered intrastate conflicts as transitional problems on the road to functional institutions that would balance order and prosperity. Moreover, these theories assumed that the processes of nation building would ultimately remove some of the drivers of conflict such as ethnic and communal identities (Ake 1974: 576–91; Kesselman 1973: 139–54; Welsh 1993: 44).

At the height of the Cold War in the 1960s and 1970s, theories of modernization furnished credence to Western policy interventions that sought to preempt the encroachment of the Soviet Union and its allies into developing countries. These theories justified a wide range of foreign aid policies that promoted building of strong political institutions that would manage the political dislocations produced by modernization. O’Brien (1972: 139–54) captured the links between American domestic politics in the 1960s and the scholarly prescriptions for authoritarian regimes abroad. He noted that the preoccupation of American political scientists with problems of political order at home and abroad was reflected in their singular support for authoritarian regimes that could maintain stable political institutions. Thus, the emergence of Western-
supported military and one-party regimes such as those of Mobutu Sese Seko in the Congo, Suharto in Indonesia, and Augusto Pinochet in Chile dovetailed with the prescriptions of modernization theorists. By the same token, the Soviet support to its client states enabled them to withstand the challenges of state-and nation-building that they faced.

From quasi-states to collapsed and failed states, 1980s–1990s

By the early 1980s, there were doubts about whether the policy prescriptions by modernization theories for strong institutions in developing countries had ameliorated the condition that caused internal conflicts. Continued political conflicts combined with global economic pressures seemed to undermine the ability of post-colonial states to enhance stability. These circumstances led to renewed interest in the nature and character of post-colonial states as a way to deepen insights into the sources of intrastate strife. Specifically, the new literature focused on the origins of states, their geographical and organizational reach, and conflicts surrounding state formation.

In the early 1980s, Jackson and Rosberg probed the causes of intrastate conflicts in post-colonial African states (1982: 1–24; 1984: 177–98). Seeking answers to the perennial political instability
in Africa, they concluded (1982: 1) that most governments exercised “only tenuous control over the people, organizations, and activities within their territorial jurisdictions,” and “had ceased to be ‘states’ in the empirical sense”—that is, “their central governments lost control of important areas in their jurisdiction during struggles with rival political organizations.”

Jackson (1991) further suggested the notion of quasi-states to understand the rebellions and insurgencies that bedeviled state and nation building processes in Africa and beyond. At the heart of the formulation of quasi-states was the distinction between empirical and juridical sovereignty: empirical sovereignty referred to the relative ability of state apparatus to control its people and territory, while juridical sovereignty denoted states that had international recognition but lacked effective control over national territories. As creatures of colonial partition, quasi-states were characterized by weak, ineffective, and unstable political institutions; equally vital, since they did not exercise effective jurisdiction over their territories, quasi-states experienced challenges to their rule from opposition claimants. This notion explained the civil wars that raged across the developing world in the 1980s, and in the 1990s, Eastern European scholars employed the concept of quasi-states to study the weak states that rose from the ashes of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia (Rywkin 2006: 23–6).
Ayoob (1984: 42–51) deployed the idea of quasi-states to study the security problems facing Third World states. In distinguishing between the external orientations of security in Western countries versus the internal orientation in Third World contexts, Ayoob claimed that the latter faced security threats that emanated largely from their national boundaries; hence, because of inadequate capacities to manage communal, ethnic, regional, and religious diversities, Third World states were prone to intrastate conflicts. Apart from the lack of administrative capacity for effective statehood, Ayoob postulated uneven economic development as one of the key factors leading to the absence of social and political consensus that fueled internal threats (1984: 46).

Along the same lines, Buzan (1985) viewed the prevalence of intrastate tensions as a general phenomenon of what he described as “societal insecurities” that afflicted peoples and states in the Third World. Lacking the essential variables of “sociopolitical cohesiveness,” Third World states were weakened by the lack of political legitimacy and limited economic resources. To cope with these problems, Buzan pointed out that “building stronger states is virtually the only way in which the vicious circle of unstable states and an unstable security environment can be broken.”
Drawing from the basic assumptions identified in the quasi-states and weak state literature, theorists of state collapse sought to broaden the descriptive variables; as Zartman (1995: 1) noted,

State collapse is a deeper phenomenon than mere rebellion, coup, or riot. It refers to a situation where the structure, authority (legitimate power), law, and political order has fallen apart and must be reconstituted in some form, old or new. On the other hand, it is not necessarily anarchy. Nor is it simply a byproduct of the rise of ethnic nationalism: it is the collapse of old orders, notably the state that brings about the retreat to ethnic nationalism as the residual, viable identity.

State collapse was a conceptual tool that tried to explain the large number of states facing civil turmoil from Africa, the Balkans, the Caucasus, Central Asia, South Asia, the Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean. In most of these states, collapse denoted the combination of governmental collapse, economic devastation, and societal fragmentation (Langford 1999: 64–5; Osaghae 2007: 691–99).
The popularity of state collapse yielded subsequent studies on state failure, articulated primarily by Rotberg and his colleagues (Rotberg 2002: 127–41; 2004). For him (2004: 5), the defining characteristic of a failed state is internal armed conflicts: “Failed states are tense, deeply conflicted, dangerous, and contested bitterly by warring factions which may consist of insurgencies, criminal gangs, militias, or other groups.” In making a distinction between collapsed and failed states, Rotberg noted that there was a continuum in terms of stateness from the extremes of weak states, failing states, failed states, to state collapse (Rotberg 2004; Kraxberger 2007: 1057–8; Widner 1995: 129–53; Brooks 2005: 1159–96). This continuum has contributed to the proliferation of policy indices that map levels of state vulnerability and failure, including the Fund for Peace Failed States Index and the German Development Institute and United Nations Development Programme (DIE/UNDP)’s Measuring Fragility (Fund for Peace 2005/2006; DIE/UNDP 2009).

Development finance institutions such as the World Bank, African Development Bank (AfDB), and Asian Development Bank (ADB) have also identified different stages of fragility in their intervention repertoires in post-conflict states. In helping to tailor their engagements, development institutions have distinguished four main levels of fragility: marked deterioration; active conflict, prolonged political crisis, or impasse; post-conflict or political transition; and
gradual improvement. These distinctions allow development institutions to help break the cycle of volatility by providing tangible assistance at different stages of fragility (DIE/UNDP 2009; Kraxberger 2007: 1059).

In the African context, theories of predatory rule reinforced studies of weak states. Predatory rule is characterized by personality rule that depends on coercion, material inducements, and dependence on patronage for political preservation. Elites extract immediate rents and transfers rather than providing incentives for economic growth leading to the plunder of the national economy through graft, corruption, and extortion (Ake 1996; Holsti 2000). According to Bates (2008: 6–7), predation leads to disorder: “When thinking about the origins of political disorder in Africa, I can find no way of analyzing insurrection without starting with the behavior of governments. The conditions that led to the breakdown of order in Africa include the authoritarian nature of its states and their ruler’s penchant for predation. By rendering their people insecure, they provoked insurrections.” Predatory theory is consistent with the findings by Herbst (2000) and Englebert (2002; 2009) who have argued that post-colonial African states lacked legitimacy because they were not products of legitimate social contracts; as a result, rulers consolidated power through patrimonial practices that enhance personal power at the expense of public institutions.
The literature on state collapse, state failure, and state fragility has occupied conceptual hegemony in the political economy of intrastate conflicts since the 1980s. Its policy prescriptions were also vital in the intervention strategies by international financial institutions (IFIs) to reverse the conditions of collapse (François and Sud 2006: 141–60). In Africa particularly, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) crafted and implemented structural adjustment policies (SAPs) to respond to the interminable economic crises faced by weak African states. In exchange for economic assistance, the IFIs compelled African states to undertake reforms such as privatization and deregulation that sought to roll back the state from the economy. As Mkandawire (2002: 15) has noted, one of the objectives of SAPs was to diminish the state, which was seen as the key problem to development: “African states which in the 1960s and 1970s had been hailed as the instruments par excellence for modernization were now seen as the incarnation of all the forces of retrograde tradition and underdevelopment.” While donor-driven policies attempted to create a balance between states and markets that would reverse the economic crises, critics charged that they further weakened the capacity of African states and impoverished the majority (Lubeck 1992: 519–40; Kelsall 1995: 297–309; Kayizzi-Mugerwa 1998: 219–25).
New political economy approaches since the late 1990s

Since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the international security umbrella that sustained weak states, there have been many studies that have tried to find explanations for the escalation of civil wars, particularly in Africa, the Balkans, and the Pacific (Reilly 2000: 263–73; 2004: 479–93). These theories operate within the conceptual rubric of weak statehood and the consequences of state fragmentation; they build on previous theories of weak and collapsed states while also enriching economic explanations for civil war causation. In most of these theories, the broad political economy causes of intrastate strife remain anchored in resource inequities, social exclusion and alienation, power asymmetries, and state fragility. In addition, there is consensus that in most developing nations, the old dominant fault-lines of ethnicity, regionalism, and class are coinciding with new conflicts around resources to heighten violence. Three schools—the new wars, the greed and grievances, and the horizontal inequalities literature—have dominated analyses of intrastate conflicts since the late 1990s.
**New wars**

Broadly characterized as “criminal, depoliticized, private, and predatory” (Kalyvas 2001: 100), new wars attracted the attention of scholars for several reasons. First, in the post-Cold War period, intrastate conflicts outnumbered interstate wars. Second, the duration of the new wars was much longer than that of previous wars: on average, the duration of intrastate conflicts outstripped that of international wars (Fearon and Laitin 2003: 75). Finally, the new wars exacted a heavy toll on civilians and communities. In summarizing the distinctive features of the new wars, Kaldor (2001: 6) contended that they were different “in terms of their goals, the methods of warfare, and how are they are financed.”

Unlike previous wars that were fought on the basis of political ideologies, new wars are marked by ethnic and religious mobilization. Closely linked to ethnic mobilization is the phenomenon of autochthony, whereby groups use violence to lay exclusive claims to territory and the dispossession of “foreigners” in their midst (Fearon 2004: 394–15; Boas 2009). The autochthony scholarship questions the role of localized identity narratives in the reformulation of national identities and ethnography of conflict. Autochthony claims have characterized political violence in Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Côte d’Ivoire. In the latter case,
the civil war that engulfed the country from the late 1990s stemmed from the disenfranchisement of northern migrants by southerners through an exclusionary campaign of “Ivoirité.” The civil war was sparked by the introduction of a new identity card system that discriminated against northern migrants (Marshall-Fratani 2006: 29–43). In the Great Lakes region, autochthony claims drove the 1994 Rwandan genocide and have been mobilized by local populations in the north and south Kivu provinces of Eastern Congo against the Banyamulenge, who are regarded as of Rwandese origin (Jackson 2006: 95–123).

The new wars literature also builds on the assumptions of state failure except that it places centrality on global forces that underpin failed states. Thus most scholars claim that the neo-liberal economic forces produced by globalization have eroded state capacity and authority and, in turn, created a vacuum that is filled by criminal networks (Duffield 2001; Jung 2003; Münkler 2005; Shaw 2000: 171–92). As Kaldor (2001: 70) has remarked, “the processes known as globalization are breaking up the socio-economic divisions that defined the patterns of politics which characterized the modern period . . . The failure of the state is accompanied by a growing privatization of violence . . . the new wars are characterized by a multiplicity of types of fighting units both public and private, state and non-state, or some kind of mixture.”
Another major assumption of the new wars literature is the impact on livelihoods. Most of the
writings highlight the social, material, and human impact of conflicts, particularly the patterns of
human victimization and human displacement (Newman 2004: 177; Franco 2011). In addition to
the forcible targeting of civilians, new wars are characterized by wanton and extreme violence;
as Snow (1996: ix) argues: “In places like Bosnia, Somalia, Liberia, and Rwanda, the armed
forces never seemed to fight one another; instead what passed for ‘military action’ was the more
or less systematic murder and terrorizing of civilian populations.” Kaldor (2001: 100) also
showed that “at the beginning of the twentieth century, 85–90 percent of casualties in war were
military. In World War II, approximately half of all wars were civilian. By the late 1990s, the
proportions of a hundred years ago have been almost exactly reversed, so that nowadays
approximately 80 percent of all casualties in wars are civilian.”

Despite attempts to carve out a distinctive analytical terrain for civil war causation, the new wars
literature has been criticized by scholars who assert that the claims for novelty are exaggerated
(2003: 480) criticized what he termed the “totalizing pretensions” of the assumptions of the new
wars because of the vagueness in the definitions of core concepts such as globalization. He noted
that “much of the writings on the so-called New Wars of the 1990s typically proceed from a
loose understanding of globalization as ‘the widening and deepening of economic, political, social and cultural interdependence and interconnectedness’” (Berdal 2003: 480). Newman (2004: 179) has also charged that what passes for new wars is not new: “all of the factors that characterize the new wars have been present, to varying degrees, throughout the last 100 years. The actors, the objectives, spatial context, human impact, political economy and social structure of conflict have not changed to the extent argued in the new wars literature.”

**Greed versus grievances debates**

This literature puts emphasis on economic agendas in the causation of civil conflicts, including poverty and inequalities. Some of the literature on grievances claimed that African conflicts had increasingly become apolitical as politics, ideology, and ethnicity were replaced chiefly by economic interests. Keen (1998: 11) sparked the debate by noting that “war is not simply a breakdown in a particular system, but a way of creating an alternative system of profit, power, and even protection.” Although conceding that most post-Cold War conflicts were driven by economic agendas, Keen emphasized that some conflicts that often started with political motivations “mutated into conflicts in which short-term economic benefits are paramount” (1998: 12).
Collier and his colleagues at the World Bank’s Development Research Group made major contributions to the debate on greed versus grievances (Collier 1999, 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 1998, 2000, 2002). Their primary assumptions were that while group grievances can be traced back through history, they are not a good predictor of conflicts; instead, economic agendas are important and economic opportunities are far more likely than social or group grievances to cause wars. Using statistical data of civil wars since 1965, Collier and Hoeffler (2000: 26) found “little evidence for grievances as a determinant of conflict. Neither inequality nor political oppression increases the risk of conflict.” Furthermore, in comparative studies of civil wars in resource-rich countries—Angola, Colombia, Cambodia, and Sierra Leone—, Collier and Hoeffler concluded that the narrative of grievances was important in maintaining a sense of group cohesion, but the core motivation was greed fueled by the existence of resources. In later writings, Collier and colleagues offered a modified version of the primacy of greed, focusing more on the opportunities for organized violence and how access to financing (including natural resources and diaspora remittances) increases the chances of rebellion (Collier and Hoeffler 2000: 14).
The greed versus grievances debates inspired subsequent studies that focused not just on Africa but on wide-ranging conflicts in Bougainville, Cambodia, Nepal, Kosovo, Sri Lanka, and Burma (Berdal and Malone 2000: Ballentine and Sherman 2003). These studies were enriched by empirical work that concentrated on the characteristic of natural resources, their geographical location, and typologies of conflict. Le Billon (2001a: 561–84) and Ross (2003: 47–70; 2004a: 337–56; 2004b: 35–67), for instance, focused on links between natural resources and separatist conflicts. Le Billon (2001a: 561–84) proposed that secessionist wars were more prevalent where a resource is physically concentrated, appropriated by the local population, and demanding foreign investment. But if the resource is not geographically concentrated and does not require foreign investment, local populations would support local warlords instead of fighting for secession. In a study of conflict diamonds in Angola, Le Billon (2001b: 55–80) revealed how alluvial diamonds facilitated civil wars by making it easier for rebels to have access to them. Advancing on these arguments, Ross (2003: 47–70) emphasized that the role played by any natural resource depends largely on its lootability, the ease with which a resource can be extracted; obstructability, the extent to which authorities can block the transportation of a given resource; and legality, the extent to which a resource can be legally sold on the international market.
Research and policy analyses since the late 1990s have produced important findings on the political economy of contemporary armed conflicts and highlighted avenues for improved policy intervention by international, regional, and local actors. As Berdal’s chapter (in this volume) reveals, the new knowledge on intrastate conflicts has influenced the design of intervention mechanisms aimed at conflict prevention, peacemaking and peace building. Most of these policies also pay attention to post-conflict reconstruction, including disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration; economic recovery; and service delivery. Given the appreciation of the links between natural resources and conflict, post-conflict reconstruction efforts have incorporated components of management of natural resources to build the capacities of states and communities (Schnabel 2002: 7–30). In addition, African countries that have recently discovered natural resources have shown increasing interest in learning international best practices about managing these resources to prevent future conflicts.

*New horizontal inequalities perspectives*

Some critics of the greed and grievances theories have proposed the return to conceptions of intrastate strife that privilege the role of horizontal inequalities. Instructive to this research is the resurrection of the pioneering work on relative deprivation by Gurr (1970) and Davies (1962)
that argued that economic inequalities increased the risk of internal conflicts (Stewart 2008; Gurr 2000; Langer 2005: 25–44; Cederman, Weidman, and Gleditsch 2011: 478–95). Linking grievances and conflict, relative deprivation theory continues to lend powerful insights into how differences among politically relevant ethnic groups spark widespread violence. In this vein, Stewart (2008) has contrasted vertical (individual-level) inequalities with horizontal inequalities which denote political, economic, and social distinctions among culturally defined groups. Noting the centrality of horizontal inequalities in conflict causation, she has argued that “the majority of internal conflicts are organized group conflicts—they are neither exclusively nor primarily a matter of individuals committing acts of violence against others. What is most often involved is group mobilization of people with particular shared identities or goals to attack others in the name of the group.” (Stewart 2008: 11)

Other scholars have expanded on the notion of horizontal inequalities to understand how conflicting claims to scarce resources, notably power and wealth, lead to ethnic conflicts. In an empirical comparison of economic horizontal inequalities around the world, Cederman, Weidman, and Gleditsch (2011: 478) assert that “some of the most intractable and damaging conflicts afflicting the Sudan or the former Yugoslavia are to a large extent about political and economic injustices. It is very unlikely that such conflicts can ever be understood, let alone
durably solved, without taking seriously the claims of marginalized communities.” Likewise, Langer (2005: 25–44) has stressed the role of horizontal inequalities in the eruption of civil war in Côte d’Ivoire. Although Côte d’Ivoire had a long legacy of severe horizontal inequalities between the north and south, violent group mobilization occurred in the face of the deterioration of the economy in the 1980s and the democratization pressures of the 1990s.

Sustainable conflict prevention mechanisms for managing horizontal inequalities are both short- and long-term; the dilemma is often how to sequence and balance such policies. Long-term measures include fostering economic growth alongside distributive policies that target marginalized communities. But long-term policies require peace and stability in the short term, forcing difficult choices by political elites in violence-prone societies. Constitutional reforms, including power-sharing agreements and electoral reforms, have become the standard prescriptions for countries seeking inclusive governments that accommodate aggrieved constituencies while also laying the political foundations for stability. In Africa, for instance, power sharing arrangements have become a popular mechanism of dealing with post-electoral violence that derives, for the most part, from horizontal inequalities. In cases such as Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Zanzibar, power sharing arrangements have compelled elite coalescence around
constitutional reforms that would check the dangers of state failure (LeVan 2011: 1–35; Matlosa, Khadiagala, and Shale 2010; Mehler 2009: 2–10).

**Mapping future sources of conflicts**

To stimulate strategic thinking about future insecurity trends and trajectories, some recent studies have used modeling methodologies based on events data to identify factors that cause insecurity. These models or projections include (among many others) the Millennium Project’s State of the Future Index (SOFI); the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Global Trends 2030; and the Peace and Conflict Instability Ledger developed by the Center for International Development and Conflict Management, which ranks states on future risks. These forecasts suggest that future vulnerabilities to civil conflict will hinge on the capacity of states to mitigate the pressures of increased globalization; the intersections of climate change, migration, and security; competing and conflicting energy, food, and water security concerns; and the overlapping challenges of weak governance, maintenance of the rule of law, and economic fragmentation.
Future conflicts are increasingly going to draw from the current conflicts whereby spillovers from intrastate conflicts engulf regional neighborhoods. Conflict spillovers are not new, as demonstrated by the regional insecurity dilemmas caused by state implosion in Africa’s Great Lakes region since the early 1990s. Spillover conflicts are nonetheless growing in geographical zones where weak states are incapable of controlling border areas and where there is an escalation of new insurgencies, rebel movements, and terrorist and criminal organizations. Previously used to depict the insecurities occasioned by state collapse in Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa, the concepts of “ungoverned” and “ungovernable” spaces now refer to the new arc of instability in the Sahel, a strategic region that straddles North and sub-Saharan Africa with long-standing trade and migration routes. The core countries—Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger—have tenuous control over their vast territories. Furthermore, the Sahel borders countries such as Algeria, Sudan, and Nigeria with serious internal problems that often spill over in the neighborhood (Cline 2007: 889–99; Lohmann 2011).

In the post-colonial period, the failure by governments in Mali and Niger to address the long-standing grievances of the minority Tuaregs sparked rebellions against political and economic marginalization. The discovery of important natural resources such as uranium in the Tuareg regions magnified the stakes between central governments and the rebel movements. Over the
years, Tuareg separatism coexisted alongside a combustible mix of drug and gun smuggling, human trafficking, and Islamic vigilantism. In the 1990s, the Algerian civil war worsened the instability in the Sahel after a minority of Islamists, who had been deprived of election victory, regrouped in terror networks across Algeria’s border with Mauritania and Niger. Initially organized in 1998 as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), the former Algerian Islamist insurgents regrouped in 2007 under the label of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). With links to Afghanistan, northern Nigeria, and the Horn of Africa, AQIM sought an Islamic safe haven in the Sahel-Sahara, emerging as a major terrorist group in the region (Mann 2012a).

The aftermath of the 2011 Arab Spring gave new impetus to Tuareg separatism after former Tuareg fighters in Muammar Gaddafi’s Libyan army overran the weak government structures in northern Mali. Taking advantage of political and military disarray in the central government in Bamako, in March 2012 the loose alliance of Tuareg separatists and AQIM fighters declared an independent state of Azawad. Although denying attempts to annex territory belonging to neighboring countries, Mauritania and Niger watched the insurrection with trepidation because they have large populations of Tuaregs within their borders. The collapse of the initial alliance between Tuareg separatists and AQIM in northern Mali sparked a new war that forced thousands
of refugees to flee to neighboring countries. The humanitarian crisis occurred against the backdrop of deteriorating economic, social, and environmental conditions in a region that is prone to perennial droughts and famine (Mann 2012b).

Managing the specter of un-governability in the Sahel recalls the post-Cold War coalescence of regional and international intervention efforts to check the disruptions caused by state failures in Africa and the Balkans. Through the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), regional actors have contemplated an intervention force supported by the United Nations that would help reclaim northern Mali. Mali’s neighbors recognize the enormous consequences of the regional destabilization wrought by the Tuareg uprising, but the dilemma is whether they can mobilize sufficient regional and international resources to check Mali’s fragmentation. Previous experiences of external efforts to prevent state failure reveal that a durable solution will need to be crafted through a combination of military pressure and political compromise among the parties to the conflict.

The change in regimes in North Africa and the Middle East through popular uprisings has also driven political forecasts that seek generalization that can inform future assessments of civil and political convulsions. Grasping these trends stems from the fact that the momentous political
events in North Africa caught most observers by surprise, and therefore lessons from these events can produce a set of useful generalizations for predicting future intrastate wars (Hewitt 2012: 4–18). Equally germane, it is significant to determine whether these changes are going to result in democratic consolidation or state fragmentation across the region. Gurr, Hewitt, and Wilkenfeld (2012) have developed a set of hypotheses with regard to the drivers of regime collapse, including: 1) the nature of the regime: regimes with a mix of democratic and autocratic features such as Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen are more unstable than governments that are either consistently democratic or autocratic; 2) regional diffusion effects: armed conflict and massive protests such as in Tunisia increased conflict risks in neighboring countries; 3) urban youth grievances and broadened civil society: marginalized youth has been an important revolutionary constituency in spearheading the uprisings alongside other civil society groups that arose in the confines of autocratic structures; and 4) autocratic fatigue: the longer leaders such as Hosni Mubarak and Muammar Gaddafi stay in power, the more likely they will be challenged and ousted (Gurr, Hewitt, and Wilkenfeld 2012: 1).

Forecasts for future stability in the region revolve around whether there is a transition from autocracy to democracy. Frantz (2012: 19) has proposed that democratic consolidation seems more likely in Tunisia and Egypt, countries that had a mixture of democratic and autocratic
systems prior to the uprisings, than in Libya, which was a pure autocracy. With respect to the links between democratization and economic growth, Koubi (2012: 26) has forecast that higher economic growth will occur only once the elites initiate far-reaching reforms that introduce checks and balances, create economic institutions, and enshrine secure property rights.

The analyses that seek to comprehend political trends in North Africa and the Middle East do not depart substantially from prior comparative knowledge about the causes and consequences of intrastate wars. Instead, by borrowing from the rich tradition of how socioeconomic grievances are transformed into revolutionary impulses, they reveal the continuities that have marked the study of intrastate conflicts. Thus, as Gurr, Hewitt, and Wilkenfeld (2012: 1) argue, pro-democracy protests against autocratic rulers are the “latest manifestation of a historically familiar but also rare phenomenon.” They have included, among others, food riots in eighteenth-century Europe, the decolonization process after the end of World War II, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s.
Conclusion

The dominant theories of development and international relations since the 1960s have contributed to an appreciation of the causes and sources of intrastate conflicts. This has been possible in part because the basic assumption of these theories is the centrality of the modern territorial state as the organizer of order, prosperity, and dignity. By the same logic, states can be sources of insecurity, misery, and poverty. A good starting point for understanding why intrastate conflicts occur is, therefore, to probe the nature of post-colonial states and whether they furnished the conditions for improving livelihoods and meeting security needs. The nation and state building objectives of the 1960s in the developing world sought to lend some coherence to states that existed only in name. This is why the structural functionalists were pessimistic about the ability of the post-colonial state to extend its political authority and overcome the demands from society. The civil wars of the 1960s and 1970s confirmed this pessimism, but except for Bangladesh, most of these wars did not lead to widespread state disintegration in the developing world.

The post-modernization theories of weak states recognized the continuing dangers posed by economic inequities, authoritarian leadership, and ethnic nationalism to the construction of states
that would better prevent civil conflicts. Jackson’s delineation (1991) of quasi-states was accurate in revealing the international actors and forces that sustained the majority of weak states; this depiction was also relevant in the aftermath of the Cold War, when most of these states faced the biggest challenges to their internal cohesion. The intrastate conflicts of the 1990s were essentially the implosion of quasi-states in the developing world and the brittle Soviet and Yugoslav states. The civil wars of the 1990s also resonated with Huntington’s earlier injunction (1965) about the dangers of popular mobilization on the basis of weak institutionalization. The emergence of competitive politics in the 1990s compounded the internal pressures on weak states, leading to the disintegration of state institutions and the emergence of warlord politics. These conflicts also had economic dimension as regime challengers took advantage of weak internal controls to garner valuable resources in contesting their grievances.

Innovative research on conflicts such as those in Sudan, Angola, Sierra Leone, and Cambodia are part of the broad consensus that underscores the need to address the political economy of conflict in improving conflict analysis and policy responses. These studies have contributed to the advancement of knowledge about the centrality of institutional regeneration along social, economic, and political lines, and to greater attention to conflict mediation and reconciliation. Since the 1990s there has been a relative decline in intrastate conflicts across the developing
world, attributable largely to creative efforts by feuding parties to find negotiated settlements and
the sustained engagement of international actors in these conflicts. The once-raging intrastate
conflicts in Angola, the Balkans, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, Indonesia, Liberia, and Mozambique
have dissipated as parties have latched onto alternative institutional mechanisms for co-existence
and amity. In other cases, some of the long-running secessionist conflicts in Ethiopia and Sudan
have been resolved through the creation of new states; in turn, the new states have had to find
their own institutional feet to preempt the beginning of new intrastate conflicts.

But even as most of these conflicts have ended, the conditions that reproduce weak states (and
potentially lead to state failure) have not gone away. In this respect, the “insecurity dilemma”
that characterizes most developing states endures, underlining the importance of building
effective but accountable and participatory states in managing political change. In most of these
states, the sources of intrastate conflicts have remained fairly constant: poverty,
underdevelopment, youth alienation, growing class differentiation, and ethno-regional cleavages.
Adding to these grievances are the new demands around competitive political process that often
exacerbate the management of diversity in the circumstances of horizontal inequities and weak
state institutions. Much of the current literature on early warning, democratic inclusion, and the
management of socioeconomic strains is relevant in highlighting the fragilities that propel intrastate conflicts.

International efforts to manage intrastate conflicts remain relevant, particularly where multiple international agencies work with regional organizations to mobilize resources toward conflict prevention and post-conflict transitions to mitigate the recurrence of conflicts. The necessity for collaborative engagement stems from the conviction that no single organization has a monopoly of knowledge on dealing with the challenges of intrastate conflicts. Moreover, in countries facing numerous vulnerabilities, collaborative interventions and coordination of energies often foster more effective approaches to promote reforms, revitalize institutional capacities, and rebuild legitimacy.
References


