

The Inequality of Violence:  
On the Discovery of Civil War as a Threat to “the North” in the 1990s and the Debate  
over Causes and Solutions

Susan L. Woodward, The Graduate Center, City University of New York

There is a striking difference in the world as Americans see it in 2005 from the one they saw in 1989. Then, the threat came from the East. Now it comes from the South. Terrorists, civil war, refugees and asylum seekers, genocide and other atrocities, humanitarian emergencies, all located in the global South, have replaced communist revolution and Soviet military power in American minds.

There are many reasons for this change in perceptions. The obvious one is that the East has disappeared. The massive expenditures on armaments, militaries, nuclear deterrence, strategic aid and proxy wars in the third-world and to anti-communist counterinsurgencies are a matter of history. The US declared victory as the sole remaining superpower, and the Second World dissolved into a few lucky enough to make it into the First World (like Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovenia) and the rest who fell into the impoverished Third.<sup>1</sup>

Another reason, however, springs from Western disillusionment in the 1990s with the consequences of that victory. In place of the anticipated “peace dividend,” both financial and psychological, their television screens broadcast an explosion of civil war atrocities, massive columns of refugees, and civilians suffering war-induced famine, disease, and death. The problem was not a world divided into rich and poor, North and South – this would have been familiar – but one now divided into zones of peace and security for the wealthy and zones of violence and pervasive insecurity for the poor.

Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, East Timor, Haiti: by the mid-1990s, “close to one quarter of all countries in the world” was embroiled in a civil war (Humphreys 2003: 1). Statistically, there is a high, robust, positive correlation between global inequality and violent conflict. Civil wars occur in poor countries, and civil war makes countries poorer – much poorer.<sup>2</sup>

This new perception has had a profound influence on international order and US national security policy. One need only mention the International Criminal Court; treaty to ban anti-personnel land mines; NATO’s first actual military engagements and its shift from collective security in western Europe to global operations; and a growing consensus that the protection of human rights and humanitarian ideals required more “robust” (i.e., militarized) action, including “regime change” and the participation of US military in humanitarian and peace operations previously viewed as antithetical to their war-fighting mission, such as Macedonia, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Liberia. By September 2001, the conditions produced by civil war were perceived as a direct threat to American security, in providing sanctuary to terrorist networks. A new US national security

doctrine (September 2002), cabinet office, and a global anti-terrorist campaign targeted these conditions as the primary national and international security threat.

This new preoccupation with civil war and armed conflict had a profound effect on our understanding of economic inequality and difference in the developing world. Poverty and cultural diversity (particularly ethnic and religious) became the primary causes as two schools of thought took early precedence over competing explanations, but these explanations were universalizing and focused on threat. Cultural difference, ironically, became everywhere the same – a source of ethnic conflict. Poverty and programs for economic growth and development, in turn, became the subject of security studies and civil war. The evolution of this view of inequality and difference in the developing world from invisible or benign to dangerous had little to do with the facts. It also hid from view the real inequality of violence in the contemporary world. This paper traces the emergence of those two universalizing explanations, the subsequent academic critique, and the substantive trends in the study of civil war which that critique is now generating, above all the importance of political variables. The result is an increasing distance as well between that research and the public policies currently aimed at preventing or ending civil war.

#### The Bias toward Bad News and the Origins of a New World View

There was, indeed, an explosion of new civil wars in the early 1990s. Two causes dominated these figures: the wars generated by the collapse of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in 1991 and those due to the withdrawal of superpower support from countries which had been key in Cold-War rivalry, such as Somalia, Liberia, and even Indonesia. Over the entire decade, there is a peak in 1992, when there were 55 ongoing conflicts (Gleditsch, et al. 2002: 620). Nonetheless, while there was a slight increase in new wars in 1998, “on the whole this curve has been flat since 1995” (Gleditsch, et al. 2002, 62; also Sadowski 1998). “In 2002, there were 40 percent fewer armed conflicts than in 1992” and “the number of international terrorist attacks has dropped steadily since the mid-1980s – from over 600 incidents in 1986, to just 200 in 2002” (Mack 2005). Over the course of the last three decades, furthermore, if the data on death counts can be trusted (an issue that generates substantial debate), wars are becoming “less deadly” (Mack 2005).

Moreover, the probability that any particular country will be involved in armed conflict has been declining since the late 1950s or earlier. Between 1946 and 2001, this trend has seen five very visible, but “short-lived” reversals, and while all five have been in developing countries, each case was led by the United States -- the Korean War, Vietnam War at the end of the 1960s, the Gulf War of 1991, the international intervention in Kosovo (1999), and the war in Afghanistan (Gleditsch, et al. 2002, 621-22). In fact, the increase in total armed conflict worldwide is actually a combination of a *declining rate of new wars* with a failure to end long-running wars. This is not to dismiss the importance of the latter component, which deserves more public attention because research shows that the longer civil wars last, the harder they are to end definitively (Hartzell, et al. 2001; Fearon 2003; Fearon and Laitin 2003). Rather, it reflects a change

in the type of warfare over the postwar period, from interstate to intrastate: 95 percent of all armed conflict is now within countries. This change, moreover, is the positive result, as Robert Jervis writes in his 2001 APSA Presidential Address, of “a world in which war among the most developed states is unthinkable”<sup>3</sup> and a dramatic decline overall in territorial redistribution as a result of war (Jervis 2002; Zacher; Fortna 2004b; Mack 2005).

This dramatic contrast between what people thought they saw (and feared) and what was happening can easily be explained by the change in the international environment. The end of the Cold War clearly freed both governments and publics to *see* more civil war because they might now be able to do something about them. Not only was diplomatic and military assistance to end civil wars more possible – the number of peacekeeping operations deployed by the United Nations alone rose from 5 in the 1980s to an additional 35 in the 1990s (when there were 40 ongoing), and 7 in 2000-2005; there are 17 current missions in June 2005<sup>4</sup> -- but the information and will to be more proactive through early warning and monitoring by human rights organizations and “real-time” journalism also made it easier to think seriously about prevention (Boutros-Ghali; Annan; Carnegie Commission). This international change was also real: the secular decline in armed conflict since 1992 is the *consequence*, scholars argue, of the change in international politics and that new activism. Many former Cold-War client states and warring parties, deprived of external financial and military support, felt forced to negotiate a peace (Cambodia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, and others). At the same time, they were assisted in those negotiations as were many others. The greater freedom of the United Nations Security Council, UN agencies and programs, humanitarian organizations, and middle powers like Norway to mediate, send aid, and deploy peacekeeping troops to oversee and reassure parties that the ceasefire would hold actually worked to shorten and stop civil wars (Mack 2005; Fortna 2003 and 2004a).

Another explanation for this contrast between perception and reality, however, lies in the different speeds by which the two are produced. Events and public reaction ran ahead of scholarship. New media technologies were also widening that gap (Gowing). Even time-tested military procedures, in which one never trusted reports until four conformed, could not withstand the force of what came to be called the “CNN effect,” the tendency of live media coverage to create new facts on the ground (CNN itself, ironically, a product of live reporting from the first post-Cold War war, the US-led Operation Desert Storm in 1991) and the speed of real-time transmission.

Careful scholarship is not only slower to yield results. In this case, it was also reacting to a demand for explanations and solutions in the public sphere. That demand had two characteristics that influenced the kind of knowledge first produced. One was the raw emotional reaction the violence evoked, heavily shaped by the graphic pictures and sound-bite labels that journalists provided. The public demand for some explanation had at least three consequences. It favored discussion of the onset of war over their settlements (Mack 2002) because the long slog and details of negotiations to end war required too much knowledge or were buried in back pages. But this focus on onset reinforced the view that matters were getting worse. Another consequence was what

anthropologists call a process of “othering”-- creating psychological distance with explanations that distinguish between the viewer and the viewed.<sup>5</sup> “We” are peaceful and “they” are violent, and because we are all human, it must be their culture. Third, this public demand favored an emphasis on motivations and choice – why would individuals and groups do such things? – and tended to ignore a literature that emphasized structural conditions, including history.

The second characteristic of this public demand was to “do something.” Pressure on Northern governments to act came from many directions, but their common trait was an aversion to complexity. The simpler the explanation, the better, because this was a general audience, not a specialized one; the forum was highly public, in the mass media and legislative hearings; and the goal was actionable knowledge for policy makers. If one could identify a cause, a solution would follow. Despite the enormous complexity of civil war and the tendency as well of civil wars to change character over time, policy discussion and options focused on single causes and what viewers could see. These rarely had much connection to what are often called “root causes” or with the conditions caused by civil wars, even though we know that the interests of warring parties who need to stop fighting (Keen 1998) and the economies and armed structures created by war tend to be far better guides to successful war termination (Zahar 2000; Rothchild 2002).<sup>6</sup>

Public debate about causes and solutions is also highly vulnerable to capture by interested parties. Although there is nothing new in partisans attempting to shape the outcome of their domestic struggle by lobbying the great powers (Finnemore 1996; Connolly 2002), the newly permissive international environment provided new opportunities. A new generation of human rights activists sought to put enforcement flesh on international norms by increasing public attention to violations of those norms. Warring parties incorporated skill in public relations and the media into their strategies for gaining external resources for their side and articulated frames aimed at winning resources, solidarity, and legitimacy for their cause, for example, by avoiding the discarded class ideologies of the Cold War and utilizing the resources of a more globalized world of communications found in ethnic diaspora, transnational networks, and universal religions.<sup>7</sup>

### “Ancient ethnic hatreds” and “identity wars”

All these public forces came together in an early focus on cultural explanations of violence. Elected politicians and journalists regularly spoke of “ancient ethnic hatreds” and conjured up an image of “violence-prone areas” with a history of atavistic (“tribal”) rituals and ready resort to guns in both political and family quarrels.<sup>8</sup> Academics, too, however, joined the fray. Samuel Huntington argued in a widely read article in Foreign Affairs, followed by a far more nuanced book that many fewer read, that the Cold War conflict was being replaced by an equally global conflict, a “clash of civilizations” defined by religion. Although focused on their settlement, Chaim Kaufmann insisted that there were only two types of civil wars – those driven by ideology during the Cold War and those driven by ethnic identity since then. Many students of formerly authoritarian regimes, particularly those in communist-ruled eastern Europe and the USSR, of whom a

very large number had already been specialists on nationalism and nationalities (for historical reasons particular to those countries), reinforced the public perception that the end of dictatorships had opened a Pandora's box of long-repressed and simmering ethnic hatreds and religious conflicts. Similarly, specialists on ethnic minorities persuaded the Office of the Vice President, Albert Gore, Jr., that their databases on "minorities at risk" and on rebellion and types of political violence, along with their statistical skills, could provide the US government with a more reliable basis for early warning of political violence.<sup>9</sup>

This cultural interpretation did have some apparent support in the facts. We now know that a growing percentage of civil wars in the post-Cold War period are secessionist conflicts – 52 percent as opposed to 34 percent before (Fortna 2004b, 33). Whatever their causes, struggles for territorial autonomy and especially secession need to be framed in ways that will gain international legitimacy. While the United Nations Charter grants the right of peoples to self-determination and does not specify how one defines "people" if there is a dispute, this right came during the 1990s to be called the right to national self-determination and encouraged claims to the status of nation. The concept of "ethnic outbidding" and the tactics of "ethnic entrepreneurship" are now well-researched forms of political competition and opportunity. In fact, in addition to the *other* 50 percent that are not secessionist, Fortna finds that "civil wars that ended in the post-Cold War era are no more likely to be identity [e.g., ethnicity or religion] than those that ended during the Cold War" (Fortna 2004b, 33).

Appearances generated another new concept that reinforced the culturalist explanation, that of "new wars" (Kaldor 1999). The civil wars of the 1990s were characterized, these scholars argued, by the high proportion of civilian deaths (up to 90 percent of all casualties). They were no longer classical (erroneously now called "Clausewitzian") "force-on-force" battles between professional armies or even the organized ideological party-militia of communist revolutionaries, but a new type – waged by a motley, undisciplined pack of warlords, militias, paramilitaries, and criminal syndicates (Kaufmann 1996; Kaldor 1999) who used strategic targeting of civilians based on identity, especially ethnicity (such that all forced displacement is now labeled "ethnic cleansing"). Despite a devastating critique of the empirical basis of this distinction between new and old wars by Kalyvas (2001), the concept is now part of the conventional wisdom and public vocabulary.<sup>10</sup>

This rush to view civil war as ethnic conflict may also have resulted from the disciplinary divisions within political science. Although scholars of international relations and of comparative politics had been speaking to each other since the late 1970s (Gourevitch 1978; Katzenstein 1985; Putnam 1988) and libraries are packed with studies of civil wars, the public framing of civil war in the 1990s as a threat to international (i.e., Northern) security caused a problem of disciplinary definition. Were they rebellions as studied by students of domestic politics and revolution, or were they wars as studied by international security specialists? In the first period of academic response, the security experts dominated, but they did so by seizing upon the long research tradition on "plural" and "divided" societies in developing countries (Geertz 1963; Horowitz 1985; Young

1976). Particularly influential was Barry Posen, who argued that the cause of civil war was no different than international war because ethnic groups (his primary actors) were in a condition of anarchy and thus faced a security dilemma that could easily spiral into violence and be very difficult to prevent or stop (Posen 1993; Walter and Snyder 1999). Similarly, Jack Snyder identified an historical association between war and nationalism which, when updated to the current international conditions and opportunities, warned that the processes of democratization – because they gave incentives to ethnic entrepreneurs – were highly vulnerable to violence and war (Snyder 2000; Mansfield and Snyder 1995). Although the security dilemma has become a staple of research and policy on civil wars ever since, this ethnic cast on democratization also introduced the long-running debate between pluralists and corporatists (consensualists) on democratic systems – can democracy be stable in a “divided” society? – into the world of international peace and security, to the advantage of the liberals (Dahl 1971 and 1989; Lijphart 1975 and 1999).

Academic political scientists thus reinforced the public’s gut reaction to Somalia, Bosnia, and Rwanda. Poor countries are characterized by ethnic heterogeneity, ethnic differences cause conflict, and stable democracy requires ethnic homogeneity. Both developing countries and democratization are dangerous threats to the peace and security of Northern countries.

The primary problem with this ethnic analysis of civil war is that it is based on a serious methodological error. James Fearon and David Laitin (2000; 2003) demonstrated that if one selects on the dependent variable -- countries engaged in civil war -- you might see (for reasons that still need to be explained) a lot of politicized ethnicity and ethnic diversity, but if one selects on the independent variable, looking at all ethnically heterogeneous societies to see if they are more vulnerable to war than ethnically homogeneous ones, as the argument goes, the result is the reverse. Multiethnic societies over the period 1945-1999 are more inclined to peace than to war. Nicholas Sambanis (2000) went further, showing that actual cases of partition, which ethnic-conflict theorists such as Kaufmann promote to create ethnically homogeneous territories and end the violence, are more unstable. More heterogeneous societies are more stable. The explanation for civil war as a result of cultural difference, particularly ethnic diversity, is wrong.

### Greed, not Grievance

A different critique of the ethnic conflict argument came from a group of researchers who were more interested in why such violence was increasingly concentrated in poor countries and why the robust association between global inequality and war. Were there instead economic causes of civil war? This question could be said to belong to the comparative-politics side of the political-science discipline, in particular an older research on revolution and rebellion which argued that economic inequality leads to anger and anger to violence (most notably the “relative deprivation” school of T. R. Gurr and Davies’ J-curve of rising expectations, but also the prominent attention in the literature on revolution to perceptions of injustice rather than objective inequality (e.g., Moore, Jr. 1978; Goldstone 2001). In fact, like the cultural argument, in the 1990s this

question was being posed first in the public sphere through the growing attention to the economic costs and consequences of violent conflict.

Not only were the costs of intervention rising – the “first-response” of humanitarian and refugee organizations, then assessments for the surge in UN peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions – but also the costs to development. The link between security and development became established in both policy and research circles during the late 1990s, and increasing numbers of international NGOs and development agencies (bilateral and multilateral) began to enter the “conflict” business. Particularly influential early on was the World Bank which, under a new president, James Wolfensohn, noticed that “the majority of countries in arrears to the Bank are countries in conflict” (World Bank, 8) and in no position to service their debts, shift public expenditures from the military to economic and social investment, or attract foreign investment. Among its many internal responses, the Bank initiated a large research project on the Economics of Crime, Violence, and Civil War, directed by a British economist with a speciality on Africa, Paul Collier.

Collier’s approach to the question was that of an economist – quantitative, large-N, econometric analysis based on the theoretical assumptions of rational choice and expectations. He relied on an existing database from political science, the Correlates of War created by Singer and Small, and asked whether there was any statistically significant correlation between economic inequality and the onset of civil war. Finding none, Collier argued that economic inequality was a proxy measure for grievance (as in theories of rebellion) and that grievance, therefore, did not cause civil war. Since the team did find a statistically high, positive correlation between civil-war onset and the dependence of a country on primary commodity exports, declining economic growth rates, low GDP per capita, and a large pool of unemployed young men (measured by low levels of male secondary education), they proposed that rebels must be motivated instead by opportunities for economic gain which those natural resources represented. Now commonly called “greed” or “resource predation,” this strange dichotomy -- “greed versus grievance” -- took hold (Collier and Hoeffler 2001; Berdal and Malone 2000).

The influence of the Collier research has been astonishing. All policy documents on conflict prevention, conflict assessment and early warning, working “in conflict,” and post-conflict reconstruction are now based on its findings.<sup>11</sup> They have become such conventional wisdom that their origins are rarely even cited or recognized. Academic research on the causes of civil war is also increasingly framed in response to their findings. Although much of this subsequent work is highly critical of the Collier research on both methodological and theoretical grounds,<sup>12</sup> its influence requires more discussion.

While there has been no change to the methodological approach of this research project, its theoretical reasoning has actually changed substantially over time.<sup>13</sup> In the first version (1996), the team found a negative correlation between economic inequality and civil war. Collier proposed that economic inequality actually *reduced* the risk or duration of war because the strategic calculation of potential rebels would be that the wealthy would be willing to pay additional taxes to prevent a change in the status quo and

thus the government had the resources to mount an effective response against them (Cramer 2003, 399, citing Collier and Hoeffler 1996). It is important to note that his reasoning depended greatly on the data set he chose to use; COW defines civil war as “an internal conflict between a government and an identifiable rebel organization that results in at least 1,000 combat-related deaths of which at least 5 percent must be incurred on each side” (Collier and Hoeffler 2003, Table A1). Civil wars are rebellions. This first argument was soon replaced with the claim that there was no relation between economic inequality and the onset of civil war and that thus the subjective evaluation of inequality (“grievance”) did not cause civil war. The stated reason was a change in their statistical results, but it is equally plausible, according to Cramer (2001), that this finding had become unpopular because economists were increasingly arguing, especially at the World Bank, that inequality was bad for growth and that redistribution for education and health services should now be supported.

The idea that civil wars were not related to grievances provoked an outcry from scholars. Soon Collier began to speak not of rebel motivations but the collective-action problem (Olson 1965). Under what conditions could rebels finance and sustain a rebellion against a government? Although many now associate this question with that of opportunity structures in social-movement and contentious-politics theory (Tarrow 1998; Tilly 1999; McAdams, et al. 2001), the Collier argument is limited to the selective incentives for rebel leaders of financial gain by war (looting, trafficking in illicit goods, diaspora contributions) and in the case of potential recruits – young men with little schooling in their analysis – a calculation of the opportunity cost of foregone present income for expected future income.

Given that their data were structural conditions and country-wide measures, this prediction was actually a probability assessment of the *risk* of a particular country facing civil war. Yet it is known in policy circles as the “resource predation” hypothesis – poor countries with “lootable resources,” such as diamonds, Coltrane, and timber, were most vulnerable to this rebel logic. It is interesting that at the time, the literature on the state in Africa, where Collier had himself done his work, was also using labels such as its “criminalization” (Bayart 1999) or its “shadow” character (Reno 1998) to emphasize the predatory behavior of politicians who sought power for personal economic advantage and used state power as a cover to engage in illegal or private activities with impunity.

This new argument resonated deeply in public policy circles. One of the primary international instruments to prevent or end civil wars is now “targeted” sanctions on “looting” leaders and trade regulations on the primary commodities that are said to fuel and finance insurgencies (for example, the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and related rules to regulate trade in rough diamonds, commonly called “conflict diamonds” [Smillie 2002] and similar “illicit” tradeables). A new literature on “resource wars,” from timber in Thailand and Burma to coca in the Andean ridge, furthers this view. It also coincides with the focus in the anti-terrorist campaign on criminalization and finance.

Why was this argument (or series of arguments) so influential? One can posit at least three reasons: (1) the simplicity of the quantitative findings from this econometric approach was clearly attractive to policy makers and the public; (2) the sheer financial and political weight of the World Bank lent powerful credibility; and (3) the treatment of rebels as criminals accorded with the recent emphasis internationally (especially from human rights circles and the United Nations Security Council) on legal categories and punitive instruments.<sup>14</sup> Like the ethnic conflict and hatred argument, however, a portrait of predatory rulers, criminal rebels, and economic greed may also have conformed so closely to popular beliefs about developing countries as well as the preoccupation of neo-liberal economic growth theorists with rent-seeking and corruption in developing countries that it was automatically plausible.

### The Critique

While these two arguments were reinforcing the public view of civil war, the production of academic research was becoming a virtual flood. Universities established new graduate specialties, such as the peace studies program at the University of California, Berkeley, the conflict resolution program at George Mason University, redirection from arms control to armed conflict at the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University, and most thoroughly, the program on order, conflict, and violence at Yale. Quantitatively oriented researchers produced a list of variables with some statistically significant relation to armed conflict and civil war so lengthy that it may well exceed the number of actual cases. At the same time, they focused on improving methodological standards in the collection, quality, and analysis of quantitative data. A younger generation of scholars began to do fieldwork in conflict settings, from El Salvador and Colombia to Bosnia, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda, with case studies of ongoing civil wars and international interventions, from the theoretically inclined (e.g., Kalyvas 2000 on the Greek civil war and Humphreys-Weinstein 2004 on Sierra Leone) to anthropologists (e.g., Ellis 1999 on Liberia) and the more policy-oriented (e.g., Adelman and Suhrke 1995; Jones 2001; and Uvin 1998 on Rwanda and Stedman, Rothchild, and Cousens 2002 on war termination).

The result has been a substantial critique of both cultural and economic arguments. In sum, ethnic diversity alone explains nothing; ethnically (including language and religion) heterogeneous societies appear even less inclined to civil war than homogenous ones. Empirical evidence is overwhelming against the “resource-predation” argument: most statistical analyses find no relation at all, dependence on primary commodities does not create a motive to loot, the political consequences vary greatly among types of commodities, and access to such finance does not solve the collective action problem of rebel or militia organization (Ballentine and Sherman 2003; Ross 2004a and 2004b; Gutierrez 2004; Ward and Bakke 2005; Fearon 2005; Le Billon 2005). The critique has been both methodological and theoretical.

### *The Data*

Both arguments gained their strength from statistical analysis of large-N, quantitative data. Subsequent research, however, demonstrates the poverty of our current

measures of the crucial variables -- ethnic heterogeneity, inequality, and civil war. The index on ethnic heterogeneity (fractionalization) is old, relying primarily on static categories in the Soviet World Atlas of Peoples that were coded for different purposes and unrelated to lines of political cleavages in the country (Posner and Laitin 2001). The ethnic measures in most econometric analyses are objective, unchanging, and exogenous to the political, economic, and social context, whereas ethnic identity and relations are clearly subjective, depend on the lines of cleavage according to which people might fight in that particular society, and are thus endogenous to context, including the violence to be explained (Posner 2004; Davenport 2004; Humphreys and Mohamed 2003; Habyarimana, et al. 2004a and 2004b; Fearon and Laitin forthcoming). The data on economic inequality are remarkably recent, incomplete, and in most cases, unreliable. Moreover, the poorer the country the worse the data, and violent conflict interrupts nearly all data gathering entirely (Christin and Hug 2004; Milanovic 2002; Roberts 2004). One of the greatest problems facing post-war reconstruction is the absence of baseline data on which to plan assistance programs and development policies. The COW database used by Collier and his team ended in 1992 and had made very few coding changes appropriate to its inclusion of civil wars. Analysis of their data has revealed egregious coding errors as well (Suhrke, et al. 2004; Fearon 2005), but the complexity and intensely partisan nature of civil war means that even the most conscientious quantitative database will generate legitimate disagreements.

The result of this recognition of the poor quality and inadequate coding rules of the quantitative data has been very positive. A multitude of new techniques for measuring and analyzing ethnic identity and fractionalization are being developed.<sup>15</sup> Databases on civil war in particular are being revised and new ones created (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Sambanis 2003 and 2004a and 2004b; Gleditsch, et al 2002; Eck, et al. 2002), although we still have a long way to go in the data we need, especially for the dynamics of such violence, their termination, and post-war peacebuilding. The lack of statistical relationship between standard measures of economic inequality and civil war, in turn, has provoked a search for alternative ways to measure inequality than the standard, country-level GINI coefficient.

Two quantitative-data-related directions on inequality and violence are worth noting. One is a shift away from measures of “vertical (income) inequality” to the recently popular concept, “horizontal (group-based) inequality.” Developed most influentially by Frances Stewart, this concept emerged from her more general concern that cash income (even worse, GDP per capita) is a very poor measure of inequality in developing countries, including overall standards of living, because of the extent of subsistence, informal, and irregular economic activity that never enters either the cash economy or official accounts. Although the idea that conflict is about inequality between groups is hardly new – it is the core of Gurr’s work on minorities at risk and very similar to Tilly’s concept of durable inequalities -- the new label has been adopted widely (especially by economists) and is generating substantial new research, including Stewart’s center at Oxford.<sup>16</sup> Although the concept of horizontal inequality is even more vulnerable to measurement difficulties and the similarity with arguments about cultural difference is unlikely to persuade culturalists of an economic explanation of armed

conflict, it does have the advantage of persuading economists to take social and political context more seriously and to develop general measures of group dynamics. Stewart herself, however, has moved as a result of her case studies away from the idea that horizontal inequalities cause armed conflict and war to an explanation based on how a government manages such differences.

The second direction, reacting to the blatant fallacy of composition in the Collier research, has focused on spatial inequality. Why, for example, should a civil war, which is about a country's political, economic, or social order and thus is internal to that country, even if there are spillover effects and external actors, be analyzed with data that take the country as the unit of analysis? Clearly the cause reflects something at a less aggregated, subnational level (Alesina, et al. 2000; Fearon and van Houten 2002; Østby 2005; Sambanis 2004b; Vandemoortele 2002). Equally, how can an aggregate average, such as GDP per capita or the GINI coefficient, tell us about the distributional inequalities or perceived injustices that the debate over economic causes is testing? Disaggregation is needed.

Territorial variation in actual fighting suggests the most obvious candidate. Measures of spatial inequalities also allow some quantitative purchase on political variables such as different institutional arrangements seen to matter, such as federal, unitary, and decentralized government. Analysis by Murshed and Gates of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal is particularly skillful in demonstrating the virtue of disaggregated data on economic inequalities (and particularly, the UN's Human Development Index [HDI]) and change over time. Thus, they show that the regional GINI, and even more so the district-level GINI, worsened in Nepal in 1996-2000; that the most intense violence occurred in the poorest areas of the country; and that measures of horizontal inequality in Nepal demonstrate an overlapping of class, caste, ethnicity, and ideology in the insurgency. Notably, the statistical analysis of these spatial data is able to show that the strongest causal element of inequality is caste. Case knowledge of the role of caste in the Nepalese context leads one directly to its primary role in the organization of political power.

Similarly in Indonesia, measures of regional inequality point directly to the three to five known "conflict regions." In contrast to Nepal, however, these cases of separatist violence – Aceh, west Papua (Irian Jaya), Riau, East Kalimantan – are wealthier regions (higher GDP per capita income, lower poverty rates, and equal HDI) which nonetheless have equal rates of expenditure per capita with other regions of Indonesia. These data support the argument that their separatism is a protest against central policies of redistribution and an effort to control more of their local wealth locally. As elsewhere, inequality may just as easily provoke a revolt of the rich as a revolt of the poor.<sup>17</sup>

### *The Theory*

What is often ignored in these labels of ethnic conflict or resource predation is that these quantitative analyses are only statistical correlations; they are neither predictions (Ward and Bakke 2005) nor explanations.<sup>18</sup> The quality of such statistical

analysis alone depends on the prior existence of a plausible causal story – a theory – that the data analysis would test, and many of these studies including the Collier work are not much more than fishing exercises. The correlations alone do not tell us why ethnicity or greed should lead to violence, and, of course, we now know that more often than not, they do not.

Studies to explain why ethnic diversity should cause violent conflict are rapidly multiplying, but the effect thus far suggests its complexity and variation among cases. Some identify long-standing resentments<sup>19</sup> between ethnic groups in a country that can be triggered rapidly into actual conflict and even violence by some political change, particularly if the change involves status reversals (e.g., Petersen 2002). This desire for “dignity, self-respect, and recognition,” Varshney (2003) argues, can motivate one kind of violence, national resistance, but it cannot explain the violence that comes from a nationalism of exclusion. Others argue that such ethnic perceptions of injustice require a coincidence between patterns of economic inequality and ethnic difference (Gurr 1994). Massey, Hodson, and Sekulic (1999) argue, on the basis of Yugoslav samples, that the resentments that motivate ethnic conflict are based on “intolerance,” but that intolerance occurs under conditions of territorial separation. Both majority and minority ethnic groups exhibit such intolerance when they live in ethnic enclaves but not when they live spatially dispersed (and therefore in mixed communities). Varshney’s recent work on India, though focused on communal violence rather than civil war, demonstrates that ethnic differences can be organized in different ways. Local communities where there is substantial interethnic communication have demonstrable safeguards against the escalation of small incidents into major violence that do not exist in communities where groups form solely along ethnic lines and there is little or no communication across such groups.

Many who seek to explain why ethnicity appears so salient in civil war focus on organizational resources (e.g., symbols, loyalty, contiguity) that help to solve the collective action problem that Collier and Hoeffler privilege in their economic arguments. But this solution also has a local, community focus; for example, if ethnic identities are territorially concentrated, the barriers to collective action are said to be even lower. Measures of concentration or control at the local level by or among groups is also emerging as critical in explaining levels of violence, but they have nothing to do with ethnicity (Kalyvas 2003; Humphreys and Weinstein 2004).

The one conclusion that can be drawn is that the political salience of ethnicity varies according to the political dynamic of the conflict itself, including its specific history (Davenport 2004; Humphreys and Mohamed 2003; Posner 2004; Fearon and Laitin forthcoming). These theoretical findings reinforce the significance of the problems with existing datasets and measures of ethnic identity.

The political essence of civil war and armed conflict emerges clearly from an improved dataset and statistical analysis done by Fearon and Laitin, initially to study the economic causes. Along with Collier and his team, they find a strong relationship between low GDP per capita and civil war, but their interpretation is not rebel

motivations but governmental capacity. Poor countries, especially those facing economic decline, appear particularly vulnerable to civil war and armed violence, they argue, because such governments have insufficient resources to respond to incipient violence and prevent its escalation into serious armed conflict and even war. Their statistical finding that new governments are particularly prone to civil war has been strengthened by subsequent researchers and parallels the very robust statistical relation between regime type and state failure in all four of the State-Failure- (Political Instability) Task-Force panels. In contrast to both full democracies and full autocracies, partial democracies are politically unstable and violence-prone.

To translate these aggregate quantitative results into predictions and useful policy recommendations, however, research is needed on which state institutions and governmental capacities are most significant in preventing, defusing, or exacerbating violent conflict.<sup>20</sup> Even Varshney's story of ethnic (communal) conflict depends, in fact, on the critical role of state actors; the mechanism that makes his communities with intraethnic networks safe from serious communal violence is the assist they provide to the police.

#### *Joining Theory and Method: the shift to case studies and multiple methods*

Recognition of the fundamental political aspect of civil war has also led to a revival of interest in case studies. Fearon and Laitin are finding, for example, that their case narratives contradict many of the theoretical assumptions guiding their quantitative analysis (Fearon and Laitin forthcoming). Nicholas Sambanis, a former member of the Collier team, has demonstrated that our understanding of civil war is highly sensitive to the coding rules (and errors) in quantitative datasets; the same theory tested against 12 datasets on war onset and prevalence produce wide variation in estimated coefficients and for some variables, even the sign of the coefficient (Sambanis 2004a). In work that is seminal, he urges that quantitative research on political violence test any explanation against multiple datasets and in all cases be combined with qualitative case studies (Sambanis 2004b; 2004a; 2003). Second, as he and others have argued, the Collier team make a major methodological error in using macrostructural variables in support of a micro-foundations argument. Case studies are essential for the microanalytics.<sup>21</sup>

The shift to case studies in assessing the Collier work leads Sambanis to three major conclusions (2004b):

- (1) economic arguments are insufficient to explain civil war; political dynamics are necessary;
- (2) there are multiple types of political violence, and "economic models ... do not explain why violence will take the form of civil war"; we need to differentiate between types of political violence before we can explain it; and
- (3) civil war always has an international dimension that cannot be ignored.

#### Beyond Cultural Conflict and Greedy Rebels: 3 trends in our substantive understanding

The academic critique of the ethnic conflict and resource-predation arguments has not only generated methodological advances but also our substantive knowledge about civil war and political violence. Three trends are especially important: a recognition that violence has characteristics of its own that cannot be analyzed in the same ways as politics in peacetime; a search for alternative concepts and measures of inequality and cultural difference; and a move to political explanations and an analysis of power.

### *Taking violence seriously*

Most striking about the ethnic-conflict and economic causes schools is how little they understand violence. The violence of civil war cannot be analyzed in the same terms as international warfare between professional armies and sovereign states or as domestic politics and social movements in times of peace. Taking physical violence and violent means as central to the behavior to be understood reveals at least five more errors in the two dominant frames: the ideological assumption of individual choice, the concept of “onset,” the neglect of dynamics and evolution, a gender bias, and a class bias.

The individualistic bias is most obvious in the strategic-choice approach of the Collier project on economic causes, but it also characterizes the apparent *lack* of choice for the ethnic conflict school. Ethnic identities are considered individual traits, and those identities appear to oblige behaviors that erase choice.<sup>22</sup> Rather, they are fixed categories and boundaries driven by historical resentments and memories or inherited “tribal” antagonisms that are immune to “rational” incentives or persuasion. The public popularity of the ethnic-conflict argument may reside most in this aspect, as US Secretary of State Warren Christopher famously described Bosnia to explain the decision of the Clinton Administration not to act forcefully there in early 1993: “an intractable ‘problem from hell’ . . . a tribal feud that no outsider could hope to settle” (Woodward 1995, 307; Power 2002).<sup>23</sup>

As Gutierrez emphasizes from research in Colombia, as does Cramer from Angola and Mozambique, war is not equivalent to buying a car or even choosing to emigrate. The essence of war is the risk of death. Guerrilla armies do not survive on either selective incentives or ethnic solidarity; they require discipline and engagement, and they “have to mould and transform the preferences of their members.” Analyzing “rebel” behavior in terms of the “collective-action problem” in Olsonian terms completely misunderstands this. Indeed, “warriors are transformed by the very experience of war – they create strong social ties, and develop a specific know how that teaches them that survival depends on the precision and adequacy of collective tasks” (Gutierrez: 5). As for choice, Cramer writes, “research and analysis need to focus on relations of force rather than just choices of violence . . . [f]or instance . . . the possibility that violence is forced upon many people and that even if they are not directly press-ganged into militias, violence may represent a horrific last resort” (Cramer 2002, 1858). Indeed, the idea that violence is a choice, whether free or forced, ignores, as Crawford Young writes, the “profound craving for peace” and “desperate desire for renewed security” that characterizes both fighters and civilians in such wars (Young 2002, 557).

Second, such violence does not “break out” as the Collier research assumes and the COW dataset codes (Marshall 2004). Unlike interstate wars with their “declarations of war” and *casus belli* and the indices of GDP per capita, GDP growth rates, and school enrollments, as with other statistical analyses using GINI coefficients and static indices of ethnic fractionalization, civil wars are the outcome of long-developing processes of decay and breakdown in the socio-cultural and official institutional mechanisms that normally keep limits on the use of violence in a particular locality or country. Even where “triggers” can be identified, they rarely are related to the cause of the conflict and parties’ goals. Moreover, “if trigger factors are necessary to explain why a war erupts, quantitative studies suffer from an omitted variable bias” (Nkurunziza: 3).

Third, the human experience of violence and the organization of violence both generate their own dynamic. Violence causes group antagonisms and new loyalties. Outsiders often interpret this result as ethnic conflict when the causality actually runs the other way: “violence inevitably incorporates discourses of difference” (Young 2002: 556). Similarly, resources are clearly needed to sustain a war, but that does not make greed its cause (Keen 1998; Fearon 2005; Abdullah 2004). The economic requirements of war may even transform a conflict, leading some to argue that civil wars are difficult to terminate because individuals develop vested interests in war, including personal gain (Keen 1997 and 1998), but others to argue the opposite, that the tasks of resource mobilization, militia organization, and territorial administration create incentives to peace, if third-party negotiators are only willing to see this (Zahar 2000).

Acts of violence occur between and among individuals and in localities, and while political leaders build global narratives to fight and win, a retrospective analysis based on that global narrative will miss much of the dynamics that cause and prolong such violence. In Kalyvas’s rich empirical reconstruction of the Greek civil war, the explanation for specific acts of violence – denunciation or targeting for murder – can only be found in local (village, town) conflicts, largely “personal and prewar” (Kalyvas 2000, 33). It is “misleading” to posit “unitary actors, inferring the dynamics of identity and action exclusively from the master cleavage, and framing civil wars in binary terms . . . instead, local cleavages and intracommunity dynamics must be incorporated into theories of civil war.” At the same time, these local fights are not “random and anarchical private violence” but are “constrained by the modalities of alliance.” It “is the convergence of local motives and supralocal imperatives that endows civil war with its particular character and leads to joint violence that straddles the divide between the political and the private, the collective and the individual” (Kalyvas 2003, 487; see also Popkin 1988 on Vietnam).

Fourth, few assumptions about violence are more universal than the belief in its “masculine” nature – men are violent, women are peaceful. This gender difference is even built into the data selected by the Collier project, which analyzes the correlation (significant and positive) between civil war and a surplus of young males with low levels of secondary schooling. Programs for post-war assistance with disarmament and demobilization are designed for men. The facts, however, do not support this conventional belief. In Colombia, “female participation in both guerrillas – especially the

FARC – is very high” (Gutierrez, 2004, 2). The same is true in western and central Africa, such as Sierra Leone and the DRC, and there are gender-specific differences in the requirements of programs for postwar “reintegration” to civilian life. Wood (2003, 18) refers to the “insurgent armies” in El Salvador and Sri Lanka as “female-intensive.” To explain this pattern of variation in the gender composition of armies and militias requires its recognition, as does the variation that exists in the extent of sexual violence during wartime which Wood (2004) traces to variation in the sources of gender inequality in a particular country, group, or locality and in the breakdown in the regulation of sexual aggression during peacetime.

Finally, Sambanis’ call to recognize the variation in types of political violence, of which civil war is only one, brings attention to the kinds of violence that do not receive much public or research interest. The division of the world into “countries that are wealthy and largely peaceful and those that are poorer and for whom war provides the backdrop for daily economic activity” (Humphreys 2003, 1) that is of strategic interest in the North is replicated within poorer countries. In contrast to findings on civil war, there is a clear and robust correlation between income inequality and violent crime (Fajnzylber Lederman and Loayza 1998). Highly unequal countries have very high rates of homicide, for example, Brazil, Bolivia, Jamaica, Russia, and Zimbabwe. Indeed, the “Voices of the Poor” recorded in the three-volume World Bank survey in developing countries in 1999-2000 reveal a world where existential, physical insecurity is a greater concern of the poor than their poverty itself. Their everyday lives are at threat from the unpredictable but increasingly present criminal violence in poor neighborhoods and from the fact that not only do the police not protect them but that the risk is often most from *police violence* against them.

While governments in developing countries are increasingly under US pressure to develop capacity for the war on terror, such as counterterrorist police units, military, intelligence, and border controls, the provision of public security for the poor and middle class within their countries is increasingly deprived of the necessary financing by budgetary crises and the economic reforms and conditions required by international creditors and investors. Case studies document a growing inequality within these countries between those who can purchase private security and gated communities and those who must rely on cash-starved public security.<sup>24</sup> In this context the theoretical approach and argumentation of the World Bank project – although called the Economics of Crime, Violence, and Civil War – appears less interested in its subject matter and more at reinforcing, through its assumptions and proposed remedies, a neoliberal approach to economic growth.

### *Reconceptualizing Inequality and Difference*

A second trend in research on civil war and political violence, provoked in part by the findings of the quantitative research, is to question their concept and measures of inequality and cultural difference. What is it, Christopher Cramer asks, that lies behind these quantitative measures that might lead us to an explanation? “The answer might lie more,” he writes, “in the social relations within which economic inequality is embedded,

the relations that produce outwardly visible signs likely to be captured in household survey data, Gini coefficients and the like” (Cramer 2003: 403). Moreover, as the cases of Nepal and Indonesia cited earlier make clear, the distinction between ideological and ethnic conflicts (Kaufmann 1996) or between culturally based grievances and economic inequalities does not hold in actual conflicts. The social relations of inequality are both economic (class) and cultural (status) and the balance among these elements in a particular conflict depends on the organization of political power. Particularly important, according to the growing case literature, is how political power shapes peoples’ means and opportunities for satisfying their material needs.

In Elisabeth Wood’s analysis of civil war in El Salvador and South Africa, the cause of civil war was oppressive labor regimes. The goal of the FMLN and ANC insurgents was not to end all class inequality but to end the use of the state’s coercive powers to enforce those labor relations (and oligarchical economic power). Indeed, the civil war ends in El Salvador, she argues, when the violence has become so costly to landowners that they shift investments to activities less affected by the war (particularly export production) and no longer need state violence to keep labor bound to the land. The coalition between the repressive state apparatus and landowners falls apart, and business see in democracy a new way to preserve their capital and economic power. They can concede political equality to the insurgents – a democratic peace agreement – in exchange for continuing class inequality in the economy – private property and low levels of redistribution, as their failure to implement the land reform commitments in the peace agreement makes abundantly clear.

In Murshed’s analysis of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, violence is most intense in parts of the country where the population belong to the less privileged castes. They also belong to different ethnic groups than the economic and political elite; are economically “the most disadvantaged in terms of human development indicators and asset (land) holdings”; and subscribe to a class-struggle ideology (Maoism) which is, in fact, an historical “extension of political struggles against elite (Bahun-Chetri-Newari) domination of political and economic life.” In contrast to the rest of the country and despite country-wide measures of economic growth, inequality for them has been worsening, not only in purchasing power parity (PPP), GDP per capita, and income per capita but even more so in educational inequality. The introduction of democracy in the 1990s actually entrenched upper caste domination of the “upper echelons of the civil service” even more and introduced land reform which reduced the percentage of large holdings but increased the percentage of small-holdings and made one quarter of all households landless. In terms of statistical indicators, caste, ethnicity, residence, and landlessness all feed the insurgency, but the best explanation, according to Murshed, is the “invidious debt-trap nexus” and lack of alternative employment opportunities in the face of landlessness.

The role of land as security and landlessness also figures prominently in accounts of the civil war in Sierra Leone and Senegal, in the unresolved issues of the Lancaster Agreement behind growing violence in Zimbabwe, and worries about political stability in South Africa. In Afghanistan, back-breaking debt facing poor farmers is the primary

cause of poppy production, not profit (greed) as the choice theorists would argue, and also the reason that the drug eradication programs of NATO (the UK in this case) and the US military are so ineffective.<sup>25</sup> A critical cause of the violence in Rwanda in 1994, according to Storey, was “growing inequality in land ownership and, concomitantly, a growth in landlessness and poverty [compounded by the scarcity of non-farm employment opportunities]”(2001, 7). The lack of economic opportunity is the cause in Burundi (Nkurunziza 2004).

In the light of this recurring evidence, it is striking that the Collier project on economic causes would keep its quantitative “factors” distinct rather than see them as parts of a single complex of certain developmental outcomes -- for some, “failed development” (Vandemoortele 2002) and others, internally “uneven” development. The regional breakdown by the Political Instability Task Force of their analysis of political instability and violence finds unbalanced development to be the primary cause in Africa. By the end of the 1990s, 60 countries had declining per capita incomes and reversals in key socio-economic indicators such as hunger, primary school enrollment, and immunization (UNDP). Development assistance continues to be given without regard to its distributive consequences even though growing inequalities within countries as a result of the “hollowing out” of the middle class and the parallel decline of the wage-earning sector of labor in developing countries over the past 15-20 years includes growing inequalities in access to schooling, rising landlessness, and growing concentration of land holdings (Milanovic 1998, 2002, and 2003; see also Boyce 2002; Kanbur 2001). As Murshed emphasizes, where economic growth is pro-poor, it reduces inequality, but there are “no examples of this in the last 20 years”; at the same time, current trade policies create inequalities because they will always redistribute in favor of the most skilled.<sup>26</sup>

*To explain civil war, political dynamics are necessary*

As this discussion of inequality makes clear, the economic-causes argument of the World Bank research project is mislabeled and misleading (Collier 2000; Collier and Hoeffler 1998 and 2001). Whether its analysis is rebel motivations or collective-action problems, it is political. Which element of a complex of class, status, and ethnicity (including religion and race) is most prominent in the social organization of such political violence depends on what organizational and ideological means are available in a particular context and how political and economic power are organized. But the “resource mobilization” approach – presence of lootable resources or mountains, sources of government and rebel finance -- of both Collier and Fearon and Laitin also ignores the interactive dynamic that characterizes real civil war. In Nepal, for example, state strategies against rebels had direct consequences for its escalation; as Murshed writes, “Some of the fiercest Maoist guerrillas are women who have been raped by the Nepalese army or security forces” (2004, 4, note 3). For Kalyvas, the extent of control in a locality by one warring party in relation to the other directly explains the amount of violence that takes place there. In Rwanda, landlessness and growing discontent with the system of compulsory communal labor found “a channel through which popular discontent could be expressed” when international pressure on Habyarimana in 1991 led him to legalize

opposition political parties. This democratic channel, in turn, “raised the very real prospect of the *akazu* losing its grip on the organs of state power,” a threat which the demands of the internationally negotiated Arusha power-sharing peace agreement seemed to realize in 1993-4. They responded in turn by unleashing an orchestrated genocide.

In sum, the reason that political factors turn out insignificant in quantitative studies (such as those of Collier) is that “the proxies used to capture political factors are poorly measured” (Nkurunziza 2004, 3). The same is true of their concept and measures of inequality. Nonetheless, this dynamic of power relations, between the state (and the internal politics of repression, loyalty, and defection) and insurgents (and their collective mobilization, tipping points, and internal conflicts), between “local motives and supralocal imperatives,” within communities, among the many warring factions that emerge when a state loses its capacity or will to keep control, and always with neighbors and other external actors (whose military assistance to one party in a civil war is one of the primary *causes* of war or its prolongation [e.g., Humphreys and Mohamed 2003]), is beginning to get the direct attention necessary in theory and research on civil war and armed conflict. Only within that case-specific context of inequality in economic opportunities and in economic and political power can the new debate over the role of “partial democracies” and “democratization” and its sequencing as remedy or threat be productive.<sup>27</sup>

## Conclusion

This article began with the assertion that the interest, both public and academic, in armed conflict and civil war is being driven by the security concerns of governments and citizens in the United States and other wealthy, powerful countries of the North. The past 15 years have seen a transformation in the perception of the poorer, less powerful countries of the South as a threat to security in the North. We have seen that the data do not support that view; warfare has been declining since world war II – with the exception of wars instigated and led by the United States. Nonetheless, since the end of the Cold War, the primary form of warfare, intrastate war, is concentrated in the poorest countries, and the absolute number of such countries is still very large. In addition, a direct consequence of the documented rise in economic inequality within developing countries in the last twenty years is a rising level of criminal violence and declining public safety.

In efforts to explain this new global inequality of threats and violence, two schools of Northern scholarship fed and reinforced public reactions that made the difference even greater. The “imperialism of categories” dissected by Susanne Hoerber Rudolph in her 2004 APSA Presidential Address occurred here as well. “Ethnic conflict” is a distancing label: we are peaceful, they are tribal and violent. “Their” democracy will be more stable if it is ethnically homogeneous, while political tensions in Europe and the US over multiculturalism justify new restrictions on migration, asylum seekers, and refugees. Prescriptions for ending civil wars designed by diplomats, donors, and international organizations are minority rights, power-sharing, and autonomy or even federalism, despite their budgetary costs in an age of austerity and even though western Europe refuses itself to be bound by such minority-rights provisions and the US public is

in rebellion against quotas and reverse discrimination. When countries are reluctant to send troops and related resources to help stop the violence, they say the conflict is not “ripe” and outsiders can do nothing in the face of irrational, “tribal” and “ethnic” hatreds.

Similarly, the category “greed” or “resource predation” locates the cause of violence within countries of the South. Poor countries are vulnerable to civil war because the export earnings are so high in natural resources that both rebels and politicians seek war as a cover for their illicit gain. Few ask why these countries’ export profile is such or how that gain is realized, even though the demand for such commodities, the market links, and the marketing firms all come from the North. Solutions to civil wars are to be found in targeted sanctions against rebels and “rogues” and other financial regulations aimed at interrupting the flow of diaspora funding, money laundering, and “terrorist financing.”<sup>28</sup> Those who form the far larger part of the commodity chain are urged to consider their “corporate social responsibility (CSR).” Interdependence and globalization are categories reserved for trade and financial capital, not for the distributional consequences of dominant development models between and within countries.<sup>29</sup>

The influence of these distancing categories on public policy toward violence and inequality, despite their thorough discrediting by subsequent academic research, should be a matter of concern. But the influence also extends to academic research -- in the kind of political violence that receives attention, that which is seen to have externalities affecting the North. The political and criminal violence that affects daily lives in the former East and the South remains largely invisible in the study of conflict, separated from international relations by sovereign borders. The processes leading to the breakdown in security and the mechanisms for its restoration are little understood, left still to a security field that studies militaries or a public policy world focusing on police. A label, “new wars,” for civil wars fed by transnational networks, focuses on the targeting of civilians by “warlords,” while an old-fashioned invasion is called regime change and its subsequent occupation, a “post-conflict” operation.

## Countries with armed conflict/civil war since 1990

Afghanistan	Lebanon
Albania	Liberia
Algeria	Macedonia
Angola	Mali
Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh)	Mexico (Chiapas)
Bangladesh	Moldova (Transnistria)
Burma	Mozambique
Burundi	Myanmar
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Nepal
Cambodia	Nicaragua
Central African Republic	Niger
Chad	Northern Ireland
Colombia	Pakistan
Congo\Brazzaville	Papua New Guinea
D.R. Congo (Zaire)	Peru
Cote d'Ivoire	Philippines
Croatia (Prevlaka; Krajina; Eastern Slavonia)	Russia (Chechnya; north Caucasus)
Djibouti	Rwanda
East Timor	Senegal
Ethiopia	Sierra Leone
Ethiopia\Eritrea	Solomon Islands
El Salvador	Somalia
Fiji	South Africa
Georgia (Abkhazia; South Ossetia)	Spain (Basque country)
Guatemala	Sri Lanka
Guinea	Sudan (North/South; Darfur; East)
Guinea-Bissau	Tajikistan
Haiti	Turkey (Kurdish southeast)
Indonesia (Papua; Aceh; Moluccas)	Uganda (north)
India (Kashmir; Assam)	United Kingdom (Northern Ireland)
Iran	Uzbekistan
Iraq (Kurds; Shiites)	Western Sahara
Israel\Palestine	Yemen
Kenya	Yugoslav succession (Slovenia; Croatia; Bosnia-Herzegovina; Kosovo)

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<sup>1</sup> Already in 1990, Adam Przeworski famously wrote, "The East has become the South" (1991: 191). This is far more true now, looking at inequality (Milanovic 1998)

<sup>2</sup> It may, however, make them democratic, whatever that means under such economic conditions, according to the most recent discussion (Wantchekron).

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<sup>3</sup> He continues: “this is a change of spectacular proportions, perhaps the single most striking discontinuity that the history of international politics has anywhere provided” (2002: 1).

<sup>4</sup> Data and details are available from the website of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations ( [www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/home.htm)). The number of military and civilian police personnel in these missions ranged from a low of 12,084 in 15 missions in June 1999, after a high of 68,894 in 16 missions in August 1995; the total for the 17 missions in June 2005 is 66,058, representing a new surge in peacekeeping operations after the noted decline over the second half of the 1990s.

<sup>5</sup> The volume edited by Das, Kleinman, Ramphela, and Reynolds (2000) grew out of an effort by anthropologists to examine this tendency toward othering in portraits and analyses of such violence; this process is not so different, in fact, from what happens in the wars themselves, as Kai Erickson, using the sociological concept of “species differentiation” argues in his explanation of the ethnicized, *post-war* identities of former neighbors in a central Croatian community.

<sup>6</sup> In commenting on an earlier version of this paper, William Quandt noted another difficulty with this single-minded focus on the outbreak of civil wars, given the substantial variation within the Middle East and North Africa between those that resolve quickly and those that become institutionalized and very difficult to end. His suggestion that the explanation lies in the structure of the groups at war gets substantial attention by Jones on Rwanda; Humphrey and Weinstein on Sierra Leone; and Gutierrez on Colombia.

<sup>7</sup> By placing the warring parties at the center of this action, I do not mean to imply that all such wars are local; scholarship now emphasizes their transnational character and, for example, the often vital role of diaspora in initiating some of these conflicts.

<sup>8</sup> This inclination of journalists to portray African wars that way, creating along the way a new reality in the minds of observers that was unrelated to the actual conflict, provoked Stephen Ellis, in fact, to produce one of the finest studies of contemporary civil war that we have (1999).

<sup>9</sup> The CIA Directorate of Intelligence began to fund this massive data collection and analysis initiative, called the State Failure Task Force (later renamed the Political Instability Task Force), in 1994; instigated by Ted Robert Gurr and colleagues at the University of Maryland and a contract with Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), the task force joins more than a dozen scholars from universities in many parts of the US; it is currently in Panel V and under the research direction of Jay Ulfelder. The task force website ([www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/peace.htm](http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/peace.htm)) will move at the end of 2005 to George Mason University where Jack Goldstone and Monty Marshall maintain it.

<sup>10</sup> Kaldor herself has now changed the label to “network wars” to capture their transnational character as the essence, but this, too, may not be so new, and it is probably too late to change the adopted term.

<sup>11</sup> This is especially noticeable in the new conflict-assessment methodologies developed and adopted by most bilateral development agencies (e.g., USAID, the UK’s DFID, the Norwegian government) since around 2000 and in the national security assessments of states “at risk” and “crisis states” since 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Particularly insightful critiques of the Collier, et al. work are Cramer (2001) and Ballentine (in Ballentine and Sherman 2003); see also, Marchal and Gutierrez. On the methodological errors, see Suhrke, et al. (2004), Fearon and Laitin (2003), Fearon (2005), and Sambanis (2004).

<sup>13</sup> I was first alerted to this by Karen Ballentine; she and Chris Cramer have demonstrated this most fully.

<sup>14</sup> On this tendency to criminalize political violence, see also the article in this volume by Bronwyn Leebaw.

<sup>15</sup> The work of LiCEP, the Laboratory on Comparative Ethnic Processes, which began meeting in April 2000: [www.yale.edu/ycias/ocvprogram/LiCEP](http://www.yale.edu/ycias/ocvprogram/LiCEP), is particularly significant.

<sup>16</sup> Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE) at Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford; current case studies are on Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria, Malaysia, Indonesia, Peru, Bolivia, and possibly Guatemala.

<sup>17</sup> For example, Slovenia and Estonia in the conflicts that provoked the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, respectively.

<sup>18</sup> Ward and Bakke go further: “The basic problem is that the scholarly literature continues to worry about which variable is significant, while actually predicting none of the events correctly. . . . Unfortunately, the empirical literature on civil war has mistaken the methods for the goal. As a result there is an enormous mismatch between what we know and what we could know” (p. 12)

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<sup>19</sup> The concept *ressentiment* is associated with Greenfeld's analysis of the origins of nationalism, independent of violence; it arises out of a psychological state of envy where a belief in equality (in her case, between nations) confronts an actual state of inequality that prevents achieving that equality.

<sup>20</sup> Jennifer Gandhi and James Vreeland reinforce the importance of this need to measure and specify institutions in their work by demonstrating that one type of partial democracy, or "anocracy," as the SFTF labels them, "dictatorships with nominally democratic institutions ... are actually less prone to civil war than other regime types" and thus they "find little support for the famous inverted U-shaped relationship between regime and civil war" identified by the SFTF, Hegre, et al., and others.

<sup>21</sup> The paired comparison of Senegal and Mali by Humphreys and Mohamed is a particularly fine example of the use of case studies to test the arguments that have been coming out of the quantitative literature, as their summary on page 74 demonstrates elegantly.

<sup>22</sup> Jonathan Spencer's analysis of the repeated acts by a Sinhalese friend in Sri Lanka to resist the requirements (both implicit and explicit) of his "ethnic identity" would come as a surprise to much of this school of thought (in Das, Kleinman, Ramphela, and Reynolds).

<sup>23</sup> Even more notorious in this regard is the widespread belief that President Clinton's shift away from more assertive campaign rhetoric was due to his reading, at his wife's suggestion, Robert Kaplan's Balkan Ghosts. I think this accusation completely misunderstands Clinton's policies in 1993, but the resonance and long legs of this story are a measure of the primordialist pull. Christopher's language did not help.

<sup>24</sup> The growing privatization of security in general, within countries and by international operations, is a huge subject worthy of its own discussion and recently receiving increasing public and research attention.

<sup>25</sup> Personal communication from Barnett Rubin.

<sup>26</sup> Personal communication from Mansoob Murshed. Notice that the current rage among donors, poverty-reduction policies, including the requirement that poor countries prepare a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) as a precondition for World Bank loans, also neglect inequality and thus are not pro-poor. Milanovic's recent analysis (2002), based on household budget surveys, argues that globalization in terms of trade openness (but not foreign direct investment, which has no effect) benefits the rich in poor countries, increasing inequality, but begins to benefit the poor and middle class in relation to the rich (reducing inequality somewhat) in rich countries and the transition economies (with no effect in Asia and worsening inequality in Latin America and Africa).

<sup>27</sup> The relation between partial democracies or democratization and violence is beginning to attract greater scrutiny (e.g., Klopp and Zuern; Gandhi and Vreeland).

<sup>28</sup> See the article in this volume by Kiren Chaudhry on the effect these regulations have had also on the large population of migrant labor in the Middle East of losing their remitting mechanisms.

<sup>29</sup> See the articles in this volume by John Echeverri-Gent and Leslie Armijo.