

Theories of Ethnic Violence I.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

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The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- From 1989 to 1996 there were 69 armed conflicts, of which only five have been between states.
- Most of these internal wars were about power struggle in which ethnic groups seek to gain control over their ethnic homes.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Theoretical framework for the study of intrastate conflicts
- International Relations theories
- Studying intra-state conflict through the lenses of IR theories. Several reasons:
 1. They make fundamental assumptions about human nature. Realists are pessimistic about human nature. Liberalists are optimistic - human beings are capable of learning from experience.

International Relations theories

- 2. IR theory leads to better understanding of intra-state conflict
- – empirically informed.
- One could notice that wars between states have dramatically decreased after the end of the Second World War and that wars within states are now one of the predominant challenges to international security. But it is a oversimplification of a much more complex matter. So-called internal wars, of which ethnic conflicts are but one form, may not be inter-state wars, but they are often not internal wars either in the sense that they are frequently not confined within the borders of just one state.

International Relations theories

- Georgia's two ethnic separatist conflicts – South Ossetia and Abkhazia – are marked by significant Russian involvement and support for the separatists, including their recognition as independent states by Moscow in 2008. The conflict in and over the Nagorno-Karabakh area has involved Azerbaijan and Armenia, and will not be resolved unless the two states find a mutually acceptable solution to their territorial dispute that also has the backing of three major regional powers – Russia, Turkey and Iran.

International Relations theories

- Thus, relations between states, continue to matter in the understanding of ethnic conflict. Yet there are important differences, too: rather than being fought exclusively between regular armies of recognized states, ethnic conflicts also involve non-state armed groups, defined on the basis of ethnic identities, which straddle state boundaries and give many of today's ethnic conflicts a distinct regional dimension.

International Relations theories

- 3. reason why IR theories are relevant for the study of intra-state conflict: external intervention by states and their regional and international organizations remains the predominant approach to conflict prevention, management and settlement.

International Relations theories

- Thus, theories of international relations offer useful tools and insights in the study of intra state conflict and conflict settlement. Yet, for a comprehensive analytical model to emerge, we need to integrate them within theories of ethnicity and inter-ethnic relations. After all, ethnic conflicts are distinct forms of conflict in which organized ethnic groups have recourse to the systematic use of violence for strategic purposes. Understanding the implication of this requires a more detailed engagement with the nature and characteristics of ethnic groups.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- No single theory exists that can comprehensively explain the multitude of internal conflicts across time and space.
- Causes of interstate violence “Why war?”
- It is really very hard to find one answer to this crucial question. One of the reasons for this is that war can have different forms: total or limited, world or regional, conventional or nuclear inter-state, civil or ethnic wars and it is impossible to explain these widely different activities in the same way. Besides, we have to distinguish between different types of internal wars. Chaim Kaufmann distinguishes between internal wars based on ethnic strife and strife which are fought over ideological issues.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Mass based – elite driven,
- Wars over territory – political control,
- Outside actor play a big role – the wars which are not influenced by outside players.
- Question “what are the causes of war” is a “cluster” question. It involves a number of different questions, such as “what the conditions necessary for occurrence of conflict behavior? Or “under what circumstance have conflicts occurred most frequently?” or how a particular conflict came about? These questions put together leads to complicated, ambiguous and unsatisfactory answers.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Jon Garnett divides these causes into four groups:
- **Human nature,**
- **Misperception,**
- **The nature of states and**
- **The structure of international system.**

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- **Human nature:** there are different interpretations of this aspect. Some tend to believe that human beings are genetically programmed towards violence, but there is an ongoing debate about whether armed conflict is a result of “innate” or “learned” behavior.
- According to social psychologists aggression is a result of frustration. Violence occurs as a result of failure of human being to achieve its goals.

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- **Misperception:** according to some scholars, conflict results from misperception, misunderstanding, miscalculation and errors of judgment. They consider armed conflict as a mistakes. This includes mistaken estimates of enemy intentions and capabilities, the failure to judge the risk and consequences of conflict in a proper manner. Thus, according to psychologists, armed conflicts occur as a result of unconscious drives and weaknesses in the human psyche.
- **The nature of states:** according to Michael Doyle, liberal states are more peaceful, because their governments are restricted by democratic institutions and have democratic values.

Typology of causes:

- **Immediate and Underlying** causes
- **Immediate causes** are events that trigger conflicts; it could be trivial or even accidental.
- **Underlying** causes are more fundamental causes, conflict occurs as a result of aggressive, thoughtless and irresponsible acts by statesmen.
- Thus we have to distinguish between underlying causes of conflict and the events that trigger them.

Typology of causes:

- A **necessary condition** for conflict is one that must be present if armed conflict is to occur. For example arrangements or organizational structures – individuals must be organized in groups that have the capacity of organized violence - states, nations, ethnic groups.
- **Sufficient causes** of armed conflict are those that guarantee the occurrence of war. For example, the conflict occurs if two states hate each other so much that they can not tolerate the each other's independence. But it is not necessary condition, as many conflicts occur without such a big degree of hatred and they tolerate the each other's independent existence.

Typology of causes:

- A cause of armed conflict can be sufficient without being necessary and vice versa. A cause of conflict can be sufficient without being necessary.
- For example, the armaments are a necessary condition of armed conflict, but it is not a sufficient cause since the existence of weapons does not always lead to conflict.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- According to Using conflict theory: Conflict can occur for six main reasons:
 - 1. Incompatible goals,
 - 2. High solidarity,
 - 3. Conflict parties may have organized for conflict,
 - 4. Mobilize their conflict resources,
 - 5. Hostile toward each other and
 - 6. They may have sufficient material resources.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Conflict parties can have in Incompatible goals due to **contested resources** (such as wealth, power or prestige, or because one party believe that it is treated unjustly, one group in deprived in comparison to others or some believes that those who have power hold it illegitimately), or **incompatible roles** (they play in an institution or organization. *Vertical differentiation*: different roles and status within the power hierarchy. *Horizontal differentiation*: people playing different roles within organization relate to each other as a colleagues, not as superiors and subordinates, as it is in vertical system) or **incompatible values** (different structures create different types of values: communal values and industrial systems).

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- According to the “Using Conflict Theory” different conflict parties with incompatible goals are likely to engage in conflict if they are aware that their goals are incompatible with those of opposing group, if they have grievances and feel frustrated and if they have sufficient resources. The particular attention is paid to **conflict solidarity** and **sufficient conflict resources**.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- It is quite difficult to understand what is happening in various conflicts. Every conflict involves multiple parties, large number of people and complex organizations. In order to explain the causes of conflicts it is necessary to examine the roots of the conflicts, focus on the dynamics of the conflict and to make general analysis, as well as micro level analysis, such as “**conflict mapping**”. This method assumes the implementations of several basic steps: specification of contexts (history of conflict), the identification of conflict parties (primary and secondary), distinguishing the causes and consequences from the goals and understanding to dynamics and regulatory elements.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Michael E. Brown:
- **Structural factors:** weak states, national security concerns, ethnic geography.
Political factors: discriminatory political institutions, exclusivist national ideologies.
Economic and social factors: the economic problems, discriminatory economic systems, poor economic development.
Cultural and perceptive factors: cultural discrimination, problematic history.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Besides Brown himself underlines the fact, that while these factors could be the underlying causes of intra-state violence, it is hard to find a factor which triggers internal conflicts.
- Among these factors, Brown argues, that underlying causes of internal war lies on two factors:
- 1. A strong sense of **antagonistic group history** and 2. **Economic problems**. Besides he stresses the impact of **bad leader** and argues that when these factors come together, there is a high probability of intra-state conflict.
- This is an important argument. It underlines such factors as the level of economic development, modernization in countries, the strength of government and the importance of the decisions which are made by individual leaders and their central role in the outbreak of the violence inside the country.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Some theorists underline the importance of institutional organization and the state's system of government and claim that **autonomy** can be the source of the internal conflict. This refers to territorial autonomy, which gives some ethnic groups political authority over a certain territory. Autonomy is defined as “the granting of internal self-government to a region or group of persons, thus recognizing a partial independence from the influence of the national or central government.” According to this theory, autonomous regions are conducive to secessionism and may lead to the isolation of the minority and prevent its members from political and economic participation.
- “The institution of autonomous regions is conducive to secessionism because institutionalizing and promoting the separate identity of a titular group increases that group's cohesion and willingness to act, and establishing political institutions increases the capacity of that group to act”.

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- According to structural-sociological theories the outbreak of intrastate conflict is more likely in a situation when 1. state is in crisis, 2. elites are alienated from the state or each other and 3. there is a capacity for social mobilization.
- The emergence of conflict is usually caused by multiple, interconnected aspects. We can hardly find a conflict which has a single cause, quite the opposite is true. Conflicts have multiple causes.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- The first analytical level is international system – the highest conglomerate of non-subordinated units. It shapes the environment in which individual actors (states) exist. Conflicts that change fundamental aspects of the international system are referred to be **systemic** - it is conflict that fundamentally changed the relationship between most actors of the international system and changed the basic parameters of operation of the international system.
- The second analytical level involves states, corporations, various types of international organizations etc. The conflicts taking place between these units are known as **international conflicts**. International conflicts do not have the potential to change the structure, values and rules of international system.
- The third analytical level involves political parties, opposition, rebel movements, mafia, etc – organized groups of individuals within units, which affects the existence and the character of the units. Conflicts on this level are called **intrastate conflicts**.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Barbara F. Walter and Jack Snyder identifies four conditions that increase the likelihood that conflict can occur:
- The collapse of the government, weakening the central power of a state, disintegration of state institutions, which provokes the feeling of uncertainty in most of the population.
- The geographical isolation of minority groups – minorities, or some ethnic groups who are under real or imagined pressure can also initiate the spiral of violence.
- The requirement of power redistribution within state
- The requirement to change the unequal distribution of resources within the state – after the collapse of the state, every group seeks to enhance its status and position.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- There is a difference between internal wars and there is no single factor or theory to explain the causes and remedies of all internal conflicts. Different authors try to explain the causes of internal conflicts by stressing the different aspect.