

Domestic Politics and Ethnic Conflict

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Political conflict

- Academic research on the links between the political system of the state and armed conflict has a long history in the social sciences. The most prominent scholars of democratization and political transformation, such as *Samuel Huntington, Robert Dahl, and Edward Mansfield* have emphasized the significance of *strong political institutions capable of managing popular political participation* of newly enfranchised masses (Huntington 2006, Dahl 1971).

Definition

- **Political conflict** covers the political aspect of the state, it involves the concern about who should govern the state.
- *Leadership conflict* refers to a power struggle between different parties about the leadership of the state. This is especially true in case of weak states, when regional leaders and warlords gain in power and start a struggle for privileged position, autonomy, or even separation and independence.

Definition

- Political conflict is a broad term.
- - clash and violent attacks used by groups within a political community against political regimes and authorities (derived from Gurr 1970: 3-4).
- It is a conflict in which rebels target a political community or regime in a given state with the goal to achieve a degree of political change; a violent confrontation between political elites and counter elite ensues (derived from Eckstein 1980: 137).

- Harry Eckstein - *Handbook of Political Conflict Theory and Research* - the fundamental incompatibility in goals between conflicting parties is the desire to maximize influence or power over decision-making institutions in a state. In order to achieve this goal, collective political violence is a “normal” action, whereas violence is a matter of tactical considerations.
- Such tactical choice involves cost-benefit ratio calculations, which make cultural patterns less important (Eckstein 1980: 143), unlike, for example, in ethnic conflicts where the logic of violence is important.

Political conflict

- As we have witnessed, the causal connection between *democratization and conflict* has been significantly striking since the end of the Cold War.
- Ted Gurr's findings in the late 1980s and 1990s are embedded in the process of democratization (Gurr 2000: 163).
- Donald Horowitz - weak civil societies, lack of power-sharing commitments, sharp discrepancies between elite and non-elite groups all increase the probability of armed conflict (Horowitz 1985).

Political conflict and democratization

- “Democracy is about inclusion and exclusion, about access to power. ... In severely divided societies, ethnic identity provides clear lines to determine who will be included and who will be excluded” (Horowitz 1994).

Theories of rebellion - Civil wars

- Violence in civil wars may be affected by factors that include the
- specific profile of political actors and their political ideology,
- their organizational structure,
- underlying social basis and military culture, resources,
- their national and local leadership and strategies,
- the type of challenges they face and the assistance they receive from third parties,
- the prevailing international norms,
- the level of available military technology and factors such as geography and climate.

The role of Political ideology

- The function of ideology
- - “a set of systemic principles projecting and justifying a socio-political order” (Pravda 1998: 227).
- - moral basis to justify the use of power by elites. This means that in order to process power, it is important to have a moral and legal basis, doctrines, and beliefs that are accepted by the population.
- The function of ideology, in this sense, is to integrate the group and legitimize its normative order. It could be a tool used by conflicting parties to maintain or create such normative orders.

The role of Political Ideology

- Other scholars have explained ideology as a “myth“ that has supported and determined the group’s action in a struggle against other groups. Thus, ideology can have different roles, ranging from strengthening the ties within the group and its identity to aiding conflicting groups in their claims and interests to strengthening the will of particular members of the group to wage war against other groups (Larrain 1979).
- In some armed conflicts, the same ideology that strengthens ties within a group can also contribute to conflict behavior against other groups.

The role of political Ideology

- The linkage between ideology and armed conflict is profound in the states that emerged after the demise of the Soviet Union.
- The state ideology of Marxism-Leninism was pronounced defunct and Western neo-liberalism was introduced in order to assist the political transformation in the whole post-communist space.
- The crucial factor in this process was a *need to determine a new place in the “new order,”* to insure membership in alliances and access to foreign economic assistance, trade, and investments.

The role of political Ideology

- Following this logic, “ideology needs to be placed in a continuum of expression of political thought” and as a concept which provides a “systemic interpretation of the past and a programme or unfolding future” (Fawn 2004: 3-4).
- Ideology assists the understanding of foreign policy goals of countries and their aspirations in defining their roles on the regional and international level.,
- “An ideology provides the intellectual framework through which national roles, images, policy and moral and ethical beliefs are constructed” (Holsti 1974: 266-7).

The role of political Ideology

- The demise of the Soviet Union and the collapse of its institutions were followed by the displacement of universal values, the task of state-building, and the rise of nationalist movements. All of these factors contributed to the significance of a new ideology in post-communist states. The foreign policy goals of these states cannot be understood without a discourse of belief structures, their system of values, and the perception of the population's and the political leaders' ideological orientation (even if it is in the process of formulation) and their place in the world.

Theories of rebellion

- According to **traditionalists** civil wars are the ultimate manifestations of the collective grievance of a people and are caused by inequality, political oppression and competition over scarce resources.
- According to **grievance theory** the outbreak of civil war is linked to the deprivation of a particular group by another group and those underprivileged and deprived groups strive to attain relative equality.

Theories of rebellion

- There are two dominant models that explain the behavior of rebel groups: one approach treats rebel organizations as **social movements** and the other as if they were **states**.
- 1. rapid structural changes in a society.
- 2. rebellion is the result of security dilemma.

Weinstein

- Weinstein - the initial endowments to which rebel leaders have access shape the organizations that emerge and the way in which different rebel group ultimately use violence.
- Rebel group that emerge in *environments rich* in natural resources or with the external support of an outside patron tend to commit high levels of *indiscriminate violence*,
- rebel movements that arise in *resource-poor* contexts perpetrate far *fewer abuses* and employ violence selectively and strategically.

Democratization in the new world order

- Since the time of Woodrow Wilson, President Bill Clinton – central theme of his foreign policy – global transformation in which peace and democracy are mutually reinforcing.
- Conventional wisdom – spread of democracy – promoting peace and security in the world.

Democratization in the new world order

- Francis Fukuyama – “**End of History**” – peaceful, liberal democracy in all the most significant countries. This vision was tarnishes by bloody nationalist conflicts in former communist states and in Central Africa.
- Huntington: “**Clash of Civilizations**” better captured the mounting anxiety. Fixed civilizations locked in struggle did not adequately describe a rapidly changing world in which many of the worst conflicts were within, rather than between civilizations.

Democratization in the new world order

- Thomas Friedman's "**The Lexus and the Olive Tree**" – better described the dual trends in 1990s (globalization and parochial backlash) – conclusions exaggerated the chances of economic success in the developing worlds and underestimated the degree to which political rivalries could overshadow potential gains from economic liberalization.

Democratization in the new world order

- Zakaria – “**Illiberal democracies**” failed to deliver freedom and prosperity to their population. Democracy often gave vent to “hypernationalism” and ethnic conflict.
- It is confirmed empirically that incidents of violent conflict is much higher in democratizing or semi-democratic states than in either autocracies or consolidates democracies.

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- What is the causal connection between regime type and the causes of ethnic conflict?
- Democracy – war?

Democratization - war

- Link between democratization and nationalist war- “third wave” of democratization in 1980s and 1990s consolidated democratic regimes mainly in the richer countries of Eastern Europe, Latin America, Southern Africa and East Asia.
- Ted Gurr: societies in newly established states were especially war prone to ethnic violence. A fourth wave – more challenging cases: countries that are poorer, more ethnically divided, ideologically more resistant to democracy, with more entrenched authoritarian elites, and with a much frailer base of governmental institutions and citizen-skills.

Democracy as a cause of war

- Chance of bellicose behavior arises in those transitional states:
- Lack of the strong political institutions: effective state, the rule of law, organized parties that compete in fair elections and professional news media.
- Nationalism – ideology with tremendous appeal for elites whose positions are threatened.
- More important cleavages are those that divide nations, ethnic groups or races, than cleavages between the privileged and the masses.

Democracy as a cause of war

- Nationalism – right to self-rule of the people, but not necessarily promise that the government will be accountable to the average voters through democratic process governed by the rule of law.
- Nationalist rhetoric – “government for people”, but not necessarily by the people.
- Nationalistic appeals are more likely when states attempt to transition to democracy lacks institutional and public accountability.

Democracy

- President Bush:

“It is the practice of democracy that makes a nation ready for democracy”.

Democratization

- Ill prepared attempt to democratize weak states- such as in the former Yugoslavia, Caucasus, Pakistan, Rwanda and Burundi – may lead to costly warfare.
- In the wake of Soviet collapse, popular sentiment expressed in the streets and at the ballot box fueled warfare between Armenia and Az. over the N-K.

Democratization

- Violence in some unstable democratizing states also spilled across borders during the 1990s.
- Democratization played a catalytic role in the horrible slaughter in Africa.
- The 1993 elections in Burundi intensified ethnic polarization between Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups, relating in some 200 000 deaths.
- Democratic transformation coincided with renewed or intensified secessionist wars. Russia fought two wars against its breakaway province of Chechnya.

Democratization

- Danwart Rustow – addresses question of process and sequence.
- the stability of democratic consolidation depends on the sequence in which the requisites appear on the historical stage.
- “The ingredients (of democracy) must be assembled.”
- Democratization causes war when it precedes the emergence of a consensus on national identity.

Democratic transition

- Robert Dahl, Eric Nordlinger, Samuel Huntington, Jack Snyder, Edward Mansfield
- democratic transition are most successful when strong political institutions are developed before popular political participation increased.

Democratic transition

- Conflict is more likely under following conditions:
 - a transition toward democracy that is incomplete;
 - where institutions are too weak to manage the upsurge in the political power of newly enfranchised masses;
 - where the elites use nationalist card in attempt to preserve in power.

Democratic transition

- Regime types most likely to experience ethnic war in a mixed regime, one that is partly democratic and partly autocratic, with poorly developed state institutions – serious institutional deficit.
- Weak institutions per se do not increase the chance of the war; they do so only during the early phase of an incomplete democratic transition. In this case political leaders frequently turn to ideological or charismatic appeals to bolster the rule.

Democratic transition

- The contest over national self-determination takes place as the fortunes of both elites and mass groups are shifting. Elites left over the old regime are seeking strategies that will prevent their fall, while rising elites are trying to muscle in, and both are scrambling for allies among the newly aroused masses.

Democratization

- Elites are trying to solve political problems by invoking nationalism, the doctrine that a distinctive people deserve autonomy in a state that protects and advances their distinctive cultural or political interests.
- Nationalism helps to define the people who are exercising self-determination. Nationalism is attractive to rising groups, who use it as a populist club that can be wielded against elites who are insufficiently zealous on promoting the interests of “the nation.”

Democratization

- A common side effect of state weakness during early democratization is a poorly defined sense of the “nation.”
- Democratization requires national self-determination, but people in weak states who are just emerging into political consciousness often lack a clear, agreed answer to the question: “who are we; what is our nation?”

Democratization

- The probability of a political system development in a non-violent, nonauthoritarian, and eventually democratically viable manner are maximized **when 1. a national identity emerges first, 2. followed by the institutionalization of the central government, and 3. then the emergence of the mass parties and mass electorate.**

Political transformation

- Although some democratic transition is risky, there is no alternative
- political change cannot be frozen.

Democratization

- The first step towards democratic self-determination must be to define the boundaries of the nation in a way that broad legitimacy. National legitimacy can only be achieved by constructing effective state institutions that begin to meet a people's needs for security – to strengthen the ability of the administrative apparatus of the state to act rationally, consistently, and impartially in implementing the policy of the regime.

Democratization

- Why do citizens in well-established democratic systems vote for government that rarely wage upon each other, while electorates in transitional democracies so often support aggressively nationalist policies, even against democracies?
- Three main lines of explanation:
 - 1. Institutions
 - 2. Norms
 - 3. Information.

1. Institutions

- Effective democratic institutions make the government accountable, through regular elections, to the average voter who bears the costs and risks of war. Democracies choose their wars more wisely;
- tend to win and suffer fewer casualties
- are less likely to initiate crises
- tend to prevail in the crises that they do initiate;
- rarely fight preventive wars;
- are more astute than their non-democratic counterparts.
- Mixed regimes have won only 58% of the wars they have started, as compared to 93% for democracies and 60% for dictatorship.

2. Norms and Identities

- Share democratic liberal identity and common norms that govern appropriate political behavior.
- Country should have deeply ingrained civic norms such as rule by consent the governed, free speech, due processes of law, fair electoral competition, and the settlement of political disputes by peaceful means.
- States in the midst of democratic transition are the most war-prone type of regime , more than authoritarian states, which should be even less constrained by norms.
- In a mature democracy, norms and institutions are mutually supportive. Fair elections, the rule of law, and other building blocks of democracy dependent both on institutions and on norms – that is, standards for what behavior ought to be. People believe, moral obligation, - democracy – the only way to be effective.

3. Information and credibility in bargaining

- Greater transparency of democratic politics makes it less likely that democratic leaders will bluff or renege on agreements. With two parties transparency about the expected costs and benefits of fighting, there should be little guesswork about which side has the greater resolve, and a bargain can be struck that avoids the costs of fighting it out.
- Transparency and smart bargaining should lead to a peaceful settlement.

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- Do all regime transitions, whether democratizing or not, increase the risk of war?
- Why should transition toward democracy exert a stronger effect than other kinds of transitions?

Democratic transition

- Instability of the political elite, which may be characteristic of various kinds of transitions, combines with the expansion of mass political participation in democratizing states in distinctively explosive ways.
- This situation creates strong incentives for elites to mobilize popular support through nationalist appeals, which tend to raise the risk of war.

Democratic transition

1. Countries undergoing incomplete democratization with weak institutions are more likely than other states to become involved in war.
2. Countries undergoing incomplete democratization are more likely than other states to initiate war.
3. Incomplete democratization where institutions are weak is especially likely to lead to war when powerful elites feel threatened by the prospect of a democratic transitions.

Democratic transition

- 4. Countries undergoing complete democratization have a higher risk of involvement in war shortly after the transition, but no elevated risk of involvement in war shortly after the transitions, but no elevated risk once democracy is consolidated.
- 5. The increased risk of war for countries undergoing complete democratization mainly applies to states already involved in enduring rivalries whose nationalist and militarist institutions and ideologies were forged in earlier phases of democratization.

Democratic transition

- 6. Politics of democratizing states that initiate war are likely to exhibit some or all of the following characteristics: exclusionary nationalism, pressure-group politics, logrolling among elite factors, weak brokerage of political bargains by the ruling elite, contradictory and unconvincing signaling in foreign affairs, the use of aggressive foreign policies by declining elites gambling for domestic political resurrection, the use of media dominance to promote nationalist ideology, and nationalist bidding wars between old elites and rising mass groups.

Political conflict

- The role of domestic élites has a big impact on evolution of intrastate conflict. Governmental politics has an impact on the pattern of intergroup relations. Different national governments utilize different instruments according to the nature of the political institutions of the state. Policy programs of educational, language and economic aspects have a significant impact on the status of particular groups inside the state. Success or failure of governmental policy determines the creation of tension and emergence of violent conflict.

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- Do increases in ethnic tensions coincide with democratization? Are the differences in ethnic unrest among democracies due to variations in political institutions?
- Are presidential systems more prone to ethnic conflict than parliamentary democracies? Does the electoral system matter? Does federalism cause more problems than it solves?

Political system

Nature of the executive, type of electoral system and distribution of power.

Presidentialism vs. Parliamentarism

- Ethnic conflict is more likely in Parl. than in Pres. system

Electoral system

Plurality system causes ethnic conflict

Federalism

Depends of the size of ethnic group

Political conflict

- Causal chain of political conflict is following:
There must be one pre-condition present
 - Political system of the state is going through a transformation state. Most dangerous time for bad government is during the period when it tries to transform itself.

Causal mechanism

- The conflict becomes violent through following mechanism:
 - The lack of elite legitimacy results in discriminatory and weak political institution leading to instability.
 - When authoritarianism collapses and is followed by ineffectual efforts to establish democracy, the interim period of relative anarchy is ripe leadership confrontation.
 - Countries that have undergone a recent political transition are more likely to experience violent conflict.

Conclusion

- The bigger is the decline of state power the more significant are the incentives of the elites to provoke ethnic conflict as a strategy to maintain in power.
- The more some groups are excluded from state power, the greater is the risk of ethnic tensions.
- The likelihood of ethnic war in semi-democracies remains higher than in other regime types, even after a regime change.

Conclusion

- A more fruitful avenue of inquiry than focusing our research on the “causes” of conflict and the “conditions” of peace is to uncover significant characteristics directly relevant to political consolidation and struggle.
- In order to explain political conflict, it is necessary to operationalize those aspects by which two or more politically defined actors learn that their goals could be achieved only by armed confrontation. The long-term political relationship becomes increasingly conflictive and hostile when (1) political change is used as a tool to mobilize masses; (2) there are conflicting visions about the political arrangement of a state, and (3) incompatibility of goals rests upon a change of political regime.