

Evolution des conflits

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New wars are globalized wars. They involve the fragmentation and decentralization of the state. Participation is low relative to the population both because of lack of pay and because of lack of legitimacy on the part of the warring parties. There is very little domestic production, so the war effort is heavily dependent on local predation and external support. Battles are rare, most violence is directed against civilians, and cooperation between warring factions is common.

Many of the well-meaning efforts of various international actors, based on inherited assumptions about the character of war, may turn out to be counterproductive. Conflict resolution from above may merely enhance the legitimacy of the warring parties and allow time for replenishment; humanitarian assistance may contribute to the functioning of the war economy; peacekeeping troops may lose legitimacy either by standing aside when terrible crimes are committed or by siding with groups who commit crimes.

One of the key characteristics of failing states is the loss of control over and fragmentation of the instruments of coercion. A disintegrative cycle sets in. The failure to sustain physical control over the territory and to command popular allegiance reduces the possibility to raise taxes and greatly weakens the revenue base of the state. In addition, corruption and personalistic rule represent an added drain to the revenue. Often, the government can no longer afford reliable forms of tax collection; private agencies are sometimes employed who keep part of the takings, much as happened in Europe in the eighteenth century. Tax evasion is wide spread, both because of the loss of state legitimacy and because of the emergence of new forces who claim “protection money”. External actors may impede to cut government spendings, which may lead to further incapacities to control the territory. There is privatization of violence.

New wars are characterized by a multiplicity of types of fighting units, both public and private, state and non state, or some kind of mixture.

In many African and post-soviet state, soldiers no longer receive training or regular pay. They may have to seek out their own sources of funding, which contributes to indiscipline and breakdown of the military hierarchy. Often this leads to fragmentation, situations in which local army commanders act as local warlords, as in Tadjikistan. Or soldiers may engage in criminal behavior, such as in Zaire. At the end, Mobutu could rely only on his personal guard to protect him.

The paramilitary troops are composed mostly of redundant soldiers, or even whole units of redundant or breakaway soldiers which sometimes include common criminals, as in former Yugoslavia, where many were deliberately released from prison for the purpose, and unemployed young men in search of a living, a cause or an adventure.

Foreign mercenaries include both individuals on contract to particular fighting units and mercenary bands. For example, British and French soldiers made redundant by the post-cold war cuts, who did Bosnia and Croatia wars.

A new and growing phenomenon is private security companies, often recruited from retired soldiers from Britain and the United States, who are hired by governments and by multinational companies and are often interconnected. During the 1990s, a notorious example was the South African mercenary Sandline International. Sandline became famous as a result of the scandal concerning arms sales to Sierra Leone in early 1998. Executive Outcome has been credited with considerable success in defending mines in Sierra Leone and Angola.

While the small scale character of the fighting units has much in common with those involved in guerrilla warfare, they lack the hierarchy, order and vertical command systems that have been typical of guerrilla forces.

For the most part, light weapons are used – rifles, machine-guns, hand-grenades, landmines and, at the upper end of the scale, low-calibre artillery and short-range rockets. Although these weapons are often described as ‘low-tech’, they are the product of a long and sophisticated technological evolution.

The central objective of revolutionary warfare is the control of territory through gaining support of the local population rather than through capturing territory from enemy forces. The zones under revolutionary control are usually in remote parts of the country which cannot easily be reached by the central administration. They provide bases from which the military forces can engage in tactics which sap the morale and efficiency of enemy forces. Revolutionary warfare has some similarities with manoeuvre theory. It involves decentralized dispersed military activity, with a great emphasis on surprise and mobility. But a key feature of revolutionary warfare is the avoidance of head-on collisions which guerrilla units are likely to lose because of inferior numbers and equipment. Strategic retreats are frequent. According to Mao Tse-tung: ‘The ability

Counter-insurgency, which has been an almost universal failure,⁸ was designed to counter this type of warfare using conventional military forces. The main strategy has been to destroy the environment in which the revolutionaries operate, to poison the sea for the fish. Techniques like forcible resettlement developed by the French in Algeria, or area destruction through scattering mines or herbicides or napalm developed by the Americans in Vietnam, have also been used by, for example, the Indonesians in East Timor or the Turkish government against the Kurds.

An important difference between revolutionaries and the new warriors, however, is the method of political control. For the revolutionaries, ideology was very important; even though fear was a significant element, popular support and allegiance to the revolutionary idea was the central aim. Hence, the revolutionaries tried to build model societies in the areas under their control. In contrast, the new warriors establish political control through allegiance to a label rather than an idea. In the brave new democratized world, where political mobilization is based on labels and where elections and referenda are often forms of census-taking, this means that the majority of people living in the territory under control must admit to the right label. Anyone else has to be eliminated. Indeed, even in non-democratized areas, fear of opposition, dissidence or insurgency reinforces this demand for homogeneity of population based on identity.

Instead of a favourable environment for the guerrilla, the new warfare aims to create an unfavourable environment for all those people it cannot control. Control of one's own side depends not on positive benefits, since in the impoverished, disorderly conditions of the new warfare there is not much that can be offered. Rather, it depends on continuing fear and insecurity and on the perpetuation of hatred of the other. Hence the importance of extreme and conspicuous atrocity and of involving as many people as possible in these crimes so as to establish a shared complicity, to sanction violence against a hated 'other' and to deepen divisions.

Financing the war effort

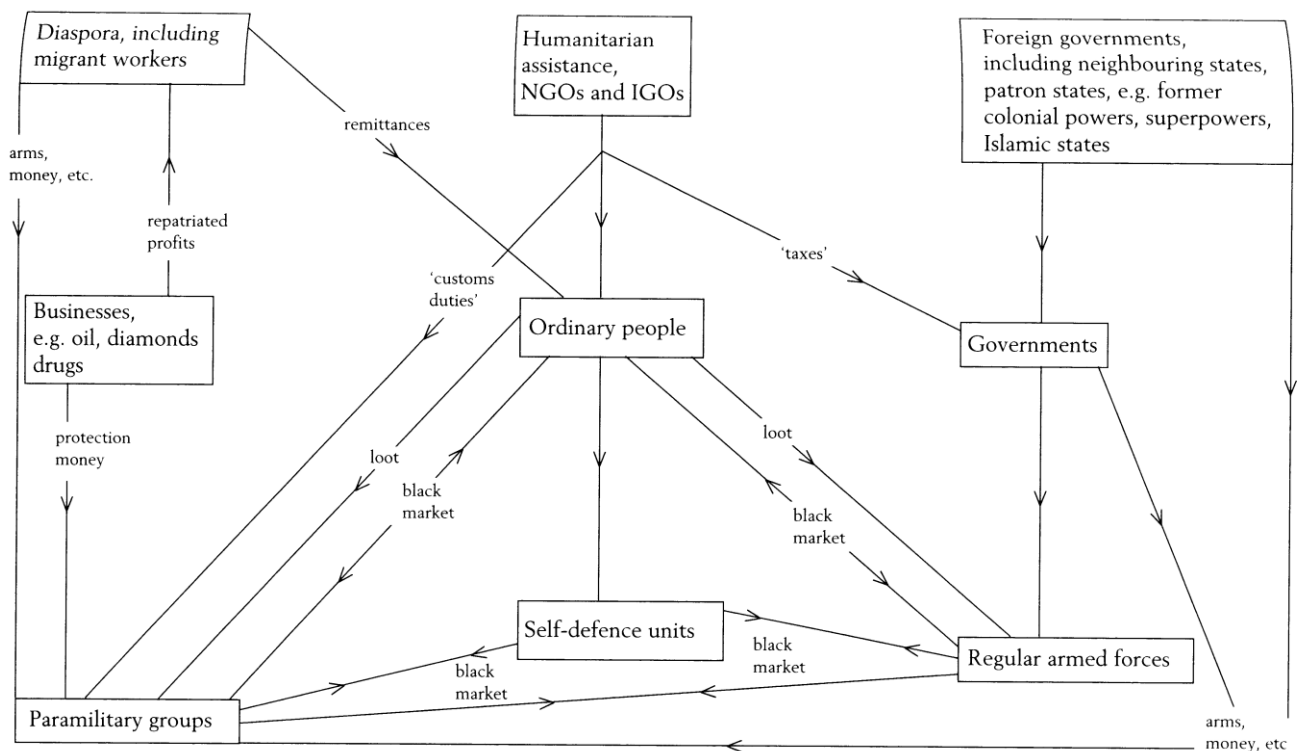


Figure 5.1 Resource flows in new wars

Contemporary civil wars are driven more by economic forces, as opposed to the usual political forces. These economic motivations tend to prolong civil wars, rather than seek opportunities for common agreement to end them. This argument is not new. It is, however, different in the sense that it challenges the general premise, as

David Keen states in Chapter 1 that, war is a contest between two sides, with each trying to win; and that war represents only a breakdown or collapse rather than the creation of an alternative system of profit, power and protection.

The role of globalization and transborder trade as external factors provide the mechanism that facilitates resource exportation and the barter exchange for arms and other goods, creating tremendous wealth for warlords, thereby threatening any initiatives or incentives for peace (69). There is also the need for war to legitimize actions [looting, drug smuggling, unjustified killings] that would otherwise be illegal in times of peace. The resource curse, of African countries endowed with a wealth of natural resources, conveys that these assets may act as stimulants for civil wars, as we see in diamond rich Angola, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. In Liberia, the former warlord leader of the NPFL, Charles Taylor, now president, is estimated to have made more than US\$400 million per year from the war in the years between 1992 and 1996, from selling diamonds, timber and mining equipment. War in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has enabled DRC neighbors, Rwanda and Uganda, to become major exporters of raw materials, including gold and cobalt-materials that these countries do not naturally possess.

Collier

Greed: avidité

Grievance: revendication

The evidence as to the causes of civil wars lies in the motives of the parties of civil wars, greed and grievance.¹

Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler wrote one of the seminal pieces defending greed over grievance. They found that factors that increase the military or financial viability of rebellion correlated with more instances of conflict than factors leading to grievances. Lootable natural resources such as diamonds, drugs, and timber were specifically cited as sources of financial wealth that cause conflict; thus confirming that countries with **abundant natural resources have a higher risk of conflict**.^[1] Collier and Hoeffler also make an important distinction between preferences and constraints in terms of circumstances that favor rebellions. **Societies can be more prone to conflict because preferences for rebellion are unusually strong (→ grievance) or because constraints on rebellion are unusually weak (→ greed)** – the former being aligned with grievance and the latter with greed.^[2] These variables are important to establish because a potential rebel group might have grievances that align with rebellion, but if they are in a state with excessive constraints on rebellion there is little chance at success.

¹ Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoeffler. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War, 2002