

**Conflict Prevention and Peaceful Development:  
Policies to Reduce Inequality and Exclusion**

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**Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict**

Chapter 13: Major findings and conclusions  
on the relationship between horizontal inequalities  
and conflict



# **HORIZONTAL INEQUALITIES AND CONFLICT: UNDERSTANDING GROUP VIOLENCE IN MULTIETHNIC SOCIETIES**

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## **Chapter 13**

### **Major findings and conclusions on the relationship between horizontal inequalities and conflict**

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#### **1. Introduction**

In this book we set out to explore the relationship between HIs and conflict: whether indeed such a relationship pertains in recent conflicts; which type of inequality is most important; and in which conditions conflicts are more likely to emerge. We did so by using case studies of countries in three regions of the world, West Africa, South East Asia and Latin America, and also through more global analysis, using political-economy, econometric, historical and anthropological approaches. Throughout we have aimed to contrast countries (and areas within them) that have managed to avoid serious conflict with those countries or areas that have experienced severe violent conflict in recent decades. The aim of this chapter is to bring together the main conclusions that emerge from these case studies. The next and final chapter of the book reviews policy conclusions that arise. Before coming to general findings the chapter first briefly reviews the nature of HIs and, drawing on material discussed in Chapter 1, explains why we believe they are likely to be important, and, in particular, to predispose countries to violent conflict. This and the following chapter thus contain the main ideas, findings and policy conclusions of the book as a whole.

## 2. What are horizontal inequalities?

Horizontal inequalities (HIs) are inequalities between culturally defined groups, such as ethnic, religious, racial or caste-based groups. The concept of horizontal inequality differs from the 'normal' definition of inequality (which we term 'vertical inequality') in that the latter type lines individuals or households up *vertically* and measures inequality over the range of *individuals* rather than *groups*, whereas HIs are *multidimensional* and encompass economic, social, cultural status and political dimensions.

- Economic HIs include inequalities in ownership of assets, incomes and employment opportunities.
- Social HIs cover inequalities in access to a range of services – education, health and housing – and in human outcomes (including education, health, nutrition).
- Political HIs consist in inequalities in the group distribution of political opportunities and power at many levels, including political bureaucratic and military power.
- Cultural status HIs refer to differences in recognition and (*de facto*) hierarchical status of different groups' cultural norms, customs and practices.

Each of these dimensions is important in itself, but most are also instrumental for improving performance on other dimensions. For example, political power is both an end and a means as people desire power in itself, and also for the economic and social benefits that it permits; control over economic assets is primarily a means to secure income but it is also an end; similarly, education is wanted in itself (as an important basic human right) and also as a means to enhance income. Recognition of different languages often affects economic opportunities, as well as being important for the self-esteem of the group.

By way of shorthand, we often merge the first two categories and refer to 'socioeconomic' inequalities, but there are important differences here. The social HIs are usually the outcome of the activities of the government (and NGOs), while the economic HIs arise from inherited inequalities in endowments and the workings of the economic system.

While outcomes such as health, income or political power are relevant across all societies, inputs can vary, so the relevance of some elements varies across societies, depending on their role in each society. For example, access to primary education is critical in very poor societies, but in more developed countries where this level of education is universally available, access to higher levels becomes more important. Equally, access to and ownership of land is of huge importance in regions where agriculture accounts for most output and employment, but becomes less important as development proceeds, when ownership of financial assets may become more important.

HIs matter because:

- Unequal access to political, economic, and social resources and inequalities of cultural status can have a serious negative impact on the welfare of members of poorer groups whose well-being is affected by their own relative position and that of their group.
- Severe horizontal inequalities may reduce the growth potential of a society, because they mean that some people, because of the group to which they belong, do not have access to education or jobs on the basis of their potential merit or efficiency. Access to employment for members of the more privileged groups is too easy for the purposes of efficiency, and for members of the deprived groups it is too difficult.
- Horizontal inequalities can make it difficult to eliminate poverty because it is often difficult to reach members of deprived groups effectively with programmes of assistance. This is

especially so because deprived groups face multiple disadvantages and discrimination and these need to be confronted together.

- Finally, this book has explored the hypothesis that high HIs make violent group mobilization and ethnic conflicts more likely, by providing powerful grievances which leaders can use to mobilize people, by calling on cultural markers (a common ethnicity or religion) and pointing to group exploitation. We return to this in the next section.

As analyzed in Chapter 5, it is important to monitor HIs in order to identify where they are severe, and in which dimension. It is desirable, if possible, to use a series of alternative measures, and different groupings, to see how robust the results are.

Some orders of magnitude of socioeconomic HIs in the particular countries studied were shown in earlier chapters. Some large HIs can be observed. For example, in Peru indigenous people have seven years of schooling on average, half that of whites, while the proportion with secondary schooling is only one-fifth that of whites (Chapter 10). The rate of extreme poverty among the indigenous population in 2002 was more than four times the rate among the nonindigenous (Chapter 11). In Bolivia, too, the sharpest HIs are between the indigenous and nonindigenous populations. For instance, in 2001 the indigenous population had on average almost four years less schooling than the nonindigenous population, and the infant mortality rate among the indigenous population was about 50 per cent higher than among the nonindigenous population (Molina, 2007). In Guatemala, a similar picture emerges. Even though literacy rates among the indigenous population have improved considerably since the end of the 1980s, there is still a significant gap between the indigenous and nonindigenous populations: in 1998, while about 58 per cent of the indigenous population was literate, among the nonindigenous population that figure was about 79 per cent (Caumartin, 2005). Twenty per cent of the indigenous population in Guatemala were in extreme poverty in 2000 while the rate among the

nonindigenous population was just 5 per cent (Chapter 11). In Ghana, the Northern Region's child mortality rate is nearly two and a half times that of Ghana as a whole, and three times that of the Greater Accra Region. Access to health services in the Northern Region of Ghana is less than a quarter of that in the Greater Accra Region (Chapter 4). In Nigeria, maternal mortality rates in the northeast are nine times those in the southwest. In Côte d'Ivoire, the literacy rate among the Northern Mande is just 23 per cent, half the rate among the Akan (Langer *et al.*, 2007). In Malaysia, despite considerable improvement, Chinese incomes were, on average, over 1.6 times those of Malays in 2005, while the percentage of professionals of Chinese origin was almost twice the percentage of Malays, even though they account for a much smaller proportion of the population than the Malays (Volpi, 2007). This summary focuses on groups where there are large socioeconomic HIs. There are, of course, situations where HIs are quite low – for example, as between the Ewes and the Akans in Ghana, or the Akan and Krou in Côte d'Ivoire, and some situations where HIs were large at one point, but have diminished sharply, as among some immigrant groups in the U.S. and between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.

### **3. General findings on the relationship between HIs and conflict**

This section reviews some general findings from CRISE research. These are based on our eight country studies from three regions of the world and some intercountry analysis of a broader range of countries. The in-depth country studies included:

- In Latin America: Bolivia, Guatemala and Peru;
- In Southeast Asia: Malaysia and Indonesia;
- In West Africa: Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria.

Each country is multicultural and one country in each region has avoided serious national conflict, while the other(s) has/have experienced considerable violent conflict in the recent past. Bolivia, Malaysia and Ghana are the countries that have succeeded in remaining broadly peaceful, while Nigeria has not had national-level conflict for several decades. Our intention was to learn from these contrasting situations and policies.

Here we elucidate the ten major findings that emerge from the analysis in this book, with supporting evidence drawn from other studies.

*1. The probability of conflict occurring rises where socioeconomic HIs are higher*

This is supported by intercountry analysis by Østby (Chapter 7) who shows a significant rise in the probability of the onset of conflict across countries, for countries with severe social and economic HIs, for 1986-2003. In her models she defines groups alternatively by ethnicity, then by religion, then by region and finds a significant relationship between HIs and the onset of violent conflict for each definition. Social HIs are measured by average years of education and economic HIs by average household assets. The effect of HIs is quite high: the probability of conflict increases threefold when comparing the expected conflict onset at mean values of all the explanatory variables to a situation where the extent of horizontal inequality of assets among ethnic groups is at the 95th percentile. In the case of the interregional HIs, the probability of conflict increases two and a half times, as HIs rise from mean value to the 95th percentile value (see also Østby, 2003, which comes to similar conclusions).

Other statistical cross work supporting this relationship includes Gurr's successive studies of relative deprivation and conflict (Gurr, 1968, 1993; Gurr and Moore, 1997), and Barrows' investigation of sub-Saharan African countries in of the 1960s. Gurr finds a positive relationship across countries between minority rebellion and protests and relative deprivation, defined in economic, political and cultural terms, with the precise definitions and relationship varying over

the investigations. Barrows (1976) finds that horizontal inequalities showed consistently positive correlation with political instability across 32 sub-Saharan African countries in the 1960s, with measures of inequality including share of political power and socioeconomic variables.

There are also intracountry studies showing a positive relationship between the level of HIs and the incidence (or intensity) of conflict. In Chapter 6, Mancini uses district-level data to examine the relationship between HIs and the incidence of conflict in districts in Indonesia. After controlling for a number of intervening factors including population size, ethnic diversity and economic development, he finds that horizontal inequality in child mortality rates and its change over time are positively (and significantly) associated with the occurrence of deadly ethnocommunal violence. Other measures of HI, including measures of HIs in education, unemployment, landless agricultural labourers, and civil service employment were also related to the incidence of conflict, but the effects were less than that of child mortality, and were not significant when the child mortality was included. Results also suggest that violent conflict is more likely to occur in areas with relatively low levels of economic development and greater religious polarization. Standard measures of (vertical) income inequality as well as other purely demographic indicators of ethnic diversity are found to have no significant impact on the likelihood of communal violence.

Studies in other conflict-ridden countries have found that the intensity of conflict is related to HIs. In an early study of the Moro rebellion in southern Philippines, Magdalena (1977) measures relative deprivation in terms of differential asset returns to education among Muslims and Christians at the municipality level, and finds this strongly related to the intensity of the conflict. In Nepal, Gates and Murshed (2005) analyze the relationship between 'spatial horizontal inequalities' and the intensity of the Maoist insurgency. Their analysis does not consider ethnic and caste groups *per se*, but rather focuses on regional differences. Using a 'gap' measure of



human development they find strong econometric support for a relationship between regional deprivation and the intensity of the rebellion, as measured by the number of conflict fatalities by district. A subsequent econometric analysis by Do and Iyer (2007) replicates this finding of regional deprivation – in this case measured by the regional poverty rate and the literacy rate – but adds additional variables relating to demographic characteristics. They find that caste polarization – the extent to which the provincial population is divided into two large caste groups – has an additional impact on conflict intensity, even when holding for the level of regional deprivation.

While higher HIs are correlated with a higher risk of conflict, not all violent mobilization in high-HI countries is primarily identity-driven, at least in terms of discourse. This was the case in the Peruvian and Guatemalan examples explored in Chapter 11, where the rebellions were presented in ideological terms and some of the leaders of the movements came from outside the deprived indigenous groups. In these societies ‘race/ethnicity’ and ‘class’ were virtually coterminous, that is, the societies approached complete ethnic hierarchical stratification, which Donald Horowitz has termed ethnically ‘ranked systems’ (Horowitz, 1985: 22). In such societies, mobilization by *class* may alternate or substitute for mobilization by ethnicity. In both Peru and Guatemala some of the prominent leaders of the rebellions were nonindigenous, and were motivated by ideology, not by ethnicity<sup>1</sup>. However, the willingness among indigenous people to be mobilized against the state and the victimization – indeed the almost genocidal targeting – of the indigenous peoples by the nonindigenous-dominated governments, points to the role of HI as an underlying element in these conflicts. The commission which investigated the historical origins of the Guatemalan conflict found that its roots lay in the ‘exclusionary, racist, authoritarian and centralist’ characteristics of the Guatemalan state, economy and society (Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH), 1999: 81). Francisco Bianchi, a government adviser in the

early 1980s, openly declared that ‘for the most part the Indians are subversives; and how can one counter this? Obviously by killing the Indians<sup>2</sup>’ (cited in CEH, 1999: 182<sup>3</sup>).

We should emphasize that what we (and others) have found are increased probabilities of greater incidence of conflict as HIs increase. Not all countries with high HIs experience conflict. Indeed in our own country studies, both Ghana and Bolivia have high socioeconomic HIs yet have avoided substantial conflict. It is therefore important to investigate when high HIs lead to conflict and when they do not. While a few of the studies cited above include political HIs, most do not. The nature of political HIs is one factor that determines whether high socioeconomic HIs lead to conflict.

*2. Conflict is more likely where political and socioeconomic HIs are high and run in the same direction, or are consistent. Where they run in different directions, conflict is less likely*

Where political and socioeconomic HIs are severe and consistent, both leadership and the mass of the population in the deprived group(s) have a motive for mobilization – the leadership because they are politically excluded (that is, they suffer from political HIs) and the population because they suffer from socioeconomic HIs, and these inequalities can be used by leaders to mobilize people. The Côte d’Ivoire story illustrates this. During Houphouët-Boigny’s time, there was political inclusion, and the country was peaceful, despite some severe HIs on a north-south basis, as shown by Langer’s analysis in Chapter 8. Nonetheless discontent with the socioeconomic deprivation and the lack of inequality in cultural status, particularly the lack of recognition of the Muslim religion, was articulated in the Chartre du Nord of 1992, which explicitly pointed to the unfairness of the system. But after the Houphouët-Boigny regime came to an end, much more explicit political exclusion occurred, as Alassane Ouattara, a presidential candidate from the north, was barred from standing in both the 1995 and 2000 elections. No concessions were made and violent conflict broke out in 2002.

The Nigerian Civil War (1967-70), which resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, also illustrates the importance of the coincidence of political and economic incentives and interests in provoking violent conflict. Politics in Nigeria's First Republic (1963-66) had a *winner-takes-all* character: 'the winners appropriated all the fruits of office to themselves, and excluded their opponents from them' (Williams, 1982: 38). In particular, the two relatively well-educated ethnic groups, the Yorubas and Igbos, were in competition with one another over high-level positions within the federation (Nafziger, 1973). The coup d'état of 29 July 1966, led by Lt Col Murtala Mohammed, a northerner, resulted in the exclusion of the Igbos from power and initiated an increasingly anti-Igbo climate (particularly in the northern regions). Due to the widespread anti-Igbo feelings and attacks in the period 1966-67, many Igbos migrated to their home regions in the eastern part of Nigeria. 'Civil servants and university lecturers migrating to the East, who had severed their previous employment ties, became a powerful lobbying group for an independent Biafra, in which they now had a vested economic interest' (*ibid*: 529). Both economic and political exclusion was compounded by the fear that, for those without political power in the Nigerian Federation, there would be an increasingly disadvantageous distribution of oil revenues, by then the most important source of government revenue.

Socioeconomic deprivation tends to affect the mass of the people. They thus have grievances which make mobilization for opposition or even violence possible. However, for effective mobilization both elite and mass participation is required, especially since most serious conflicts are organized, not spontaneous, and thus require strong leadership. The motives of the elite of a group, or its potential leaders, are particularly important, because the elite controls resources (including sometimes military ones), and they can rouse support by accentuating common identities, and that of the 'other', while increasing perceptions of intergroup inequalities. In Brass' terms, they play the role of 'conflict entrepreneurs'. However, where the group's elite enjoys

power, they are not likely to encourage or lead rebellion. This also holds true when they are politically included without being dominant, as they can still enjoy the 'perks' of office, including opportunities for personal enrichment and the dispensing of favours to supporters.

Consequently, even in the presence of quite sharp socioeconomic HIs, people are unlikely to take to violent conflict if their own group leaders are politically included, and even less so if they are dominant politically.

This is exemplified by the experience of Malaysia and Nigeria. In both countries, the group that is economically impoverished is politically advantaged, in both cases accounting for a majority of the population. In Malaysia, the *bumiputera* account for roughly two-thirds of the population (depending on the precise categorization), while in Nigeria northern peoples are estimated to account for over 50 per cent of the population.<sup>4</sup> In each country, this numerical advantage has translated into dominance of political power (continuously in the case of Malaysia and for most of the time in the case of Nigeria). Having political power – and the 'pork-barrel' gains this confers – obviously greatly reduces the motive of a group's elite to lead a rebellion. It also permits action to be taken to correct other inequalities. In the case of Nigeria, such action has been mainly confined to the political sphere (including the bureaucracy and army through the Federal Character Principle), but in Malaysia systematic action has also been taken in the socioeconomic realm through the New Economic Policy.

At a local level, contrasting the experiences of two Nigerian cities – conflict-ridden Warri and more peaceful Calabar – in Chapter 9, Ukiwo also shows the importance of there being consistent HIs, in socioeconomic and political dimensions, if they are to lead to conflict. In Warri there were both political and socioeconomic HIs; but in Calabar, although the leaders of certain groups did feel excluded and tried to mobilize support, their potential group followers believed themselves to be well treated and consequently were not ready to be mobilized in protest. This

shows that consistent economic and political HIs are more likely to lead to conflict – but in the opposite way to the country examples just cited, because in this case there was socioeconomic inclusion but political exclusion.

Østby (Chapter 7) provides econometric support for the importance of consistency between socioeconomic and political HIs. She shows that while political exclusion on its own as an independent variable does *not* affect the probability of conflict, it has a strong interactive effect with interregional asset inequality. That is to say, asset inequality has a stronger effect in increasing the probability of conflict in the presence of political HIs. She finds a similar effect with educational inequality, but not a statistically significant one.

### *3. Inclusive (or power-sharing) government tends to reduce the likelihood of conflict*

This is really a development of the previous finding, since where power is shared, political HIs should be lower, hence making peace likely even where there are severe socioeconomic HIs. When there is genuine power-sharing, no single group dominates political power, but all (major) groups have some real sense of participation in government. Econometric evidence has shown that formal power-sharing arrangements do reduce the potential for conflict as argued by Lijphart (for example, Binningsbø (2005), explores the impact of proportional representation and territorial autonomy within countries; and Reynal-Querol (2002a) finds a positive impact of PR on the reduction of conflict-propensity). In the federal context, Bakke and Wibbels (2006) find that ‘co-partisanship’ between central and subnational governments, which implies shared political power (at least regionally) and consequently lower political HIs, significantly reduces the chance of conflict. In our studies, both Bolivia and Ghana have included deprived groups in government. In the case of Ghana, there is an informal tradition in the Fourth Republic that whenever a southerner is president, the vice-president is northern. In Bolivia, informal arrangements have involved the political participation of indigenous representatives for much of recent history. Côte

d'Ivoire had a similar arrangement under Houphouët-Boigny, but northerners were subsequently excluded and this was a major cause of the recent conflict (see Chapter 8). Guatemala, Peru and Indonesia, each conflict-ridden at certain times, practised exclusionary government prior to their conflict periods.

The implication of this finding, it is important to note, is that the political cooption of the leadership of disadvantaged minorities by the dominant group is often sufficient to prevent conflict without the necessity of undertaking policies to improve the socioeconomic position of these groups. This has arguably been the case with respect to the Indian population of Malaysia, which is represented in the governing coalition through the Malaysian Indian Congress, but which has received little in the way of targeted developmental aid, despite severe pockets of socioeconomic deprivation (Loh, 2003). Also in Nigeria, as noted above, while northern political power has helped avoid major north-south confrontations, the northern part of the country has remained seriously deprived in socioeconomic terms. It does not follow that this is a satisfactory situation, given that severe horizontal inequalities are undesirable in themselves, in addition to their instrumental role in fomenting violent conflict. Nonetheless, political inclusion does appear to play an important role in preventing violence, and may constitute an important step towards more inclusive development as ethnic leaders who do not 'deliver' development to their constituency are likely to be challenged in the long run by new leadership contenders more willing to press their group's developmental claims.

If political inclusion can reduce conflict, then the converse is also true; exclusionary political practices can provoke conflict. Historical examples of rebellion and genocide show the powerful role of the elite in this context. In the countries on which we focus here, this was exemplified by the role of ethnic leaders in forming ethnic militias in Nigeria (Guichaoua, 2006), by the elite's behaviour and its use of the media in Côte d'Ivoire (Akindès, 2007), and by the importance of

(sometimes nonindigenous) leaders in Peru and Guatemala, and of local leaders in the Indonesian separatist and communal conflicts. While political exclusion, as well as a shared sense of identity with the deprivations of their group, can constitute a powerful motive for elites, it is particularly likely to act as a trigger for conflict if there is a change in the political situation, as in Côte d'Ivoire, where the government moved from an inclusionary to an exclusionary stance, and in Indonesia, where the transition from autocracy gave rise to new opportunities for mobilization.

#### *4. Citizenship can be an important source of political and economic exclusion*

Citizenship brings a variety of economic and political entitlements, as Gibney showed in Chapter 2. Not only political participation but also entitlements to a range of social and economic benefits frequently depend on citizenship. Exclusion from citizenship is a form of HI in itself and also constitutes an important source of inequalities in other dimensions. For example, noncitizenship may deny people the right to work, to join a union, or to receive government assistance. Denial of citizenship is often a deliberate political act, taken for a variety of reasons, as elucidated by Gibney. Historically, indigenous groups in the Latin American countries were denied citizenship rights of both a political and economic nature. Moreover in some countries, there are, informally at least, local as well as national citizenship rights.

Sources of loss of citizenship rights vary. Migration (legal and illegal) is a common source, and in some cases the loss of citizenship is handed down across the generations. Less common are instances when states explicitly revoke citizenship rights, as happened to the Jews in Nazi Germany, and to the Asians in Uganda. A third way in which citizenship can be lost occurs when the state itself changes form. Gibney cites the case of the Roma population, who became stateless when the Czech Republic separated from Slovakia in the 1990s.

At a national level, denial of citizenship has been critical in inciting rebellion in the case of Côte d'Ivoire (Chapter 8). Similarly, in Nigeria, the settler/indigene distinction has been the source of many local-level conflicts (Bach, 2006; Human Rights Watch, 2006) while it has also been a major source of local conflicts in Ghana (see, for example, Tsikata and Seini, 2004; Jönsson, 2006).

Gibney suggests three principles upon which citizenship might be based: that everyone should be a citizen somewhere, and those without citizenship should be given it in the country where they are located; first, that *de facto* membership of a state should confer the right to citizenship, where *de facto* membership is defined by contributions and ties to the society; and that an extended period of residence should confer citizenship rights.

It is where any or all of these three principles are breached for significant numbers of people, particularly if they belong to a common ethnic or religious group, that denial of citizenship can provoke conflict. Moreover, given the close connection between citizenship and other economic and social benefits (such as the right to work, or access to state services or land), exclusion from citizenship can also be a profound cause of other socioeconomic HIs.

*5. Inequality of cultural recognition among groups is an additional motivation for conflict and cultural 'events' can act as a trigger for conflict*

Cultural status inequalities (explored by Langer and Brown in Chapter 3) can be extremely important. In the first place, culture (ethnicity or religion) itself is often the factor binding people together as a group. Hence the more important it becomes in the way people see themselves and others, the more likely it is that they mobilize along group lines. Cultural status inequalities can increase the salience of one's own and others' cultural identities. As argued in Chapter 3, there are three important elements involved in cultural recognition: differential treatment (formal and informal) with respect to religion and religious observation, language recognition and use,



and ethnocultural practices. In some countries, conscious efforts are made to give equal recognition with regard to each element. This is notable in Ghana, for example. In others, there have been periods of explicit cultural discrimination (for instance, against the use of indigenous languages in Peru and Guatemala), or informal discrimination (such as towards non-Muslims in Malaysia or non-Christians in Côte d'Ivoire). Such inequalities make other inequalities (socioeconomic or political) more powerful as mobilizing mechanisms. Culturally discriminating events are also frequently a trigger for riots and even conflict, as exemplified by the Orange marches in Northern Ireland, which set off the 'Troubles' in the 1970s, as well as by language policy in Sri Lanka, and the desecration of religious buildings and sites in India and Palestine, both of which have acted as triggers for major conflicts.

#### *6. Perceptions of horizontal inequalities affect the likelihood of conflict*

Much of this book has been concerned with reporting on observable HIs. Yet people take action because of *perceived* injustices rather than on the basis of data of which they might not be aware. Normally, one would expect perceived and observed inequalities to be related, so these 'objective' HIs are clearly relevant to political action. Yet it is also important to investigate perceptions and their determinants, since leaders/media/educational institutions can influence perceptions of inequality, even when the underlying reality remains unchanged. Chapter 10 reported on such an investigation in Ghana and Nigeria. The results were particularly interesting in four respects. First, of those questioned in both countries (608 people in Ghana and 597 in Nigeria, representative of three locations in each case but not of the country as a whole) the majority perceived very little difference in educational access according to group despite the fact that records of school attendance show large differences (Chapter 10). This may be because perceptions of difference are based on opportunities at the local level or within the region in which they live and much of the recorded difference is between regions. Secondly, in both countries, respondents considered their religion to be much more important than ethnicity in the

private sphere (for example, in relation to social interactions, including marriage) but ethnicity was much more important in the public sphere, in terms of their views on government job and contract allocation. This points to the importance of maintaining ethnic balance in the political-administrative sphere. A third significant finding was that, in general, Nigerians felt ethnicity to be more important to them than did Ghanaians, both in terms of their view of their own individual identities and also, they believed, as determinants of the allocation of government jobs and contracts. Fourthly, significantly greater numbers of respondents in Ghana stated that their national identity was important to them than in Nigeria. These last two findings may in part, be a result of Nigeria's more turbulent political history, but it may also be accounted for by national leadership and the way the political and educational systems have developed historically in the two countries.

The importance of the role played by perceptions in provoking action means that leaders, institutions and policies that influence perceptions can affect the likelihood of political mobilization. In Côte d'Ivoire, post-Houphouët-Boigny there was an active campaign by political leaders to 'market' identities and differences via the media (Akindès, 2007). In Ghana, Nkrumah himself, the first postcolonial leader, put a huge emphasis on national unity, in contrast to leaders in Nigeria who had a much more regional perspective. Educational institutions are relevant here too. In Ghana, boarding schools dating back to colonial times have brought the future elite together from across the country and have contributed to a national project. These factors may partly account for the findings of the perceptions surveys showing that Ghanaians valued their national identity more highly than Nigerians.

Alternative perspectives in turn led to different emphases on publicizing inequalities as well as different action towards them. Perceptions can also be influenced by a variety of actions (including symbolic ones). For example, both Nkrumah and Houphouët-Boigny initiated

programmes of investment in the deprived Northern regions with the intention of reducing inequalities. Although they were insufficient to close the gaps, these measures led people to believe that there was some attempt to produce a fairer distribution of resources. Moreover, the elites in the North benefited particularly from some of the programmes through, for example, the allocation of contracts and this reduced their incentive to mobilize their members for group conflict. The postconflict support for indigenous social and economic programmes in Guatemala, while also too small to make a major difference, has changed perceptions of inequality, with more people thinking the society is inclusive.

*7. The presence of natural resources can be a significant cause of separatist conflict, as well as of local conflict, often working through the impact this has on HIs*

There is a well-established econometric link between the presence of natural resources, such as gas and oil, and the incidence of conflict, but the precise causal mechanism is disputed (Le Billon, 2001; Ross, 2004; Humphreys, 2005). In addition to encouraging increased competition for power among the elite (because of the 'spoils' of controlling the state) our research suggests that the conflict-inducing potential of natural resources is often mediated through their impact on horizontal inequalities, and that this can translate into both separatist struggles and local-level conflict (Brown, Chapter 12; Tadjeddin, 2007). The discovery of natural resources can generate sharp increases in regional inequality, and where these resources are located in ethnically or religiously distinct regions of the country, separatist conflict may emerge, particularly if the groups are relatively underdeveloped or feel they are not benefiting from the exploitation of the resources.

In Brown's analysis of separatist movements in Southeast Asia (Chapter 12), he finds that the discovery of natural resources in the Indonesian province of Aceh was a vital step in the transformation of Acehnese discontent. Rebellion aimed at transforming the nature of the

Indonesian state turned into rebellion aimed at seceding from Indonesia altogether. This finding is backed up by Tadjoeeddin (Tadjoeeddin, 2007; Tadjoeeddin *et al.*, 2001), who argues that natural resources in Indonesia have generated an ‘aspiration to inequality’ in provinces where they are located. Similarly, Treisman (1997) argues that natural resources played an important role in stoking ethnic separatist claims in postcommunist Russia. In Sudan, the discovery of oil in the southern regions came after the first outbreak of civil war in the country, but its discovery nonetheless drastically affected the dynamics of the conflict. Indeed, the second outbreak of the civil war in 1983 came shortly after Nimeiri completed a ‘redivision’ of the south which created a new ‘Unity’ province that contained the oilfields.<sup>5</sup>

This is the source of a major dilemma, and the cause of much debate in places such as Indonesia and Nigeria. Do the people in resource-rich regions have some special rights over resources found in the region? If these are conceded, then HIs will arise as the resource-rich regions become much richer than others. Or, should the state redistribute the revenues (as for example with the INPRES programme in Indonesia under Suharto and the redistributive formula in Nigeria), which will moderate HIs, but may also lead to unrest (via Tadjoeeddin’s ‘aspiration to inequality’). Revenue-sharing agreements were vital to the successful negotiation of peace agreements in both Aceh and Sudan.

Natural resources are also often associated with local-level conflicts, as in the Niger Delta region in Nigeria. Here too, the distribution of the resources among local groups, or between local groups and companies, is often unequal and can consequently feed local-level conflict. Local conflict in the Indonesian province of North Maluku was also instigated by ethnic disputes over control of a gold mine (Wilson, 2005).

*8. The nature of the state is of enormous importance to whether serious conflict erupts and persists*

Although highly repressive regimes can prevent conflict (for example, the New Order regime in Indonesia was effective in preventing communal conflict in much of the country), an aggressive state can also fuel and sustain a conflict. In both Guatemala and Indonesia (with respect to separatist conflicts) the harsh and aggressive state reaction to rebellion sustained conflict for many years, causing deaths on a massive scale and provoking further rebellion. In Guatemala, state reaction to rebellion has been described as 'a campaign of state terror' (Caumartin 2005: 22) with massive killings, particularly focused on the indigenous population. In Indonesia, the viciousness of the Indonesian armed forces' response to the original, small-scale Acehese rebellion boosted support for the movement when it reemerged (Brown, Chapter 12; Kell, 1995).

In contrast, the respective state's handling of disputes in Ghana and of some local-level conflicts in Indonesia has dampened some conflicts and avoided others. But in Nigeria, it seems, state action is often late and one-sided, making the conflicts more severe than they need have been. This is exemplified by recent events in the Middle Belt. The government's passive and late reaction to the emergence of the violence between Muslims and Christians on 7 September 2001 in the Jos area is illustrative in this regard. It took the Nigerian military and police forces more than 12 hours to arrive at the scene of the violent conflict and many areas were left without security for the first 24 hours of the crisis (Higazi, 2007). Moreover, the intervention of the security forces was perceived to be biased against Muslims and they alleged that police forces had killed innocent people, including women and children (*ibid*).

Local institutions are also important in determining the trajectory of violence. This has been shown by research in Indonesia, Ghana and Nigeria. For example, Asante (2007) has shown how in Ghana a conflict between adherents of the Ga traditional religion and some Christian

Churches over drumming (which forms an important aspect of the celebration of the 'Homowo' festival of the Ga people) was prevented from escalating by the way it was handled by local institutions, particularly through the adoption of several bylaws regulating noise-making in Accra by the Accra Metropolitan Authority. A similar pattern is found in many other incidents in Ghana (Tsikata and Seini, 2004). In the conflict in and around Jos in 2001, by contrast, local authorities did little to stop the conflict, and indeed may have contributed to it, leaving any solution to national forces (Higazi, 2007).

### *9. Some HIs are very persistent, even lasting centuries*

We showed how persistent HIs can be in Chapter 4. Many HIs have colonial origins, caused by colonial powers privileging some groups or regions (or both). This was the case in all our studies. In Latin America inequalities were caused by the privileged settlers taking the best resources for themselves and sustaining their privilege through discrimination and unequal access to every type of capital. Figueroa has shown not only that indigenous people in Peru have much less access to education than the *mestizo* population, who in turn have less than the whites, but also that for any particular level of education the *returns*, in terms of additional incomes earned as a result of such education, are significantly lower for the indigenous population than for the *mestizos*, which are again lower than the returns the whites secure. This is due to a combination of poorer quality education, less good social networks and discrimination in employment (Chapter 4).

In West Africa, the inequalities were partly due to geographical and climatic differences, but these were made worse by colonial economic policies that favoured the south of each country in terms of economic and social infrastructure. In Malaysia, the colonial 'ethnic division of labour' (Brown, 1997) ensured that the Malays remained in subsistence agriculture, while migrant Chinese came to dominate the domestic economy. The persistence of these inequalities is due

to the cumulative inequalities arising from unequal access to different types of capital – including financial, land, education and social capital. Asymmetries of social capital, in particular, arising because group members have stronger contacts within their group than across groups, have made it almost impossible for some groups to escape from these inequalities.

However, there are cases of ‘catch up’, where group differences are reduced over time, although differences are rarely completely eradicated. Mostly these are policy-related, where a conscious and systematic effort has been made to correct the inequalities, as in Malaysia after 1970. In a few cases, groups have succeeded in catching up without government support – Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants in the US are an example of this. Their success seems to have been partly due to the selective immigration policy – which only allowed the more educated to enter the US – and partly to the culture of work, education and achievement which they brought with them, cultural capital of a type which is typically absent in long-deprived groups. The nature of the interlocking forces which typically perpetuate HIs over generations implies that very comprehensive policies are needed if these multiple handicaps are to be overcome.

*10. International policies and statistics are too often blind to the issue of HIs, though national policies are often more progressive in this respect*

The international policy community is primarily concerned with poverty reduction and with promoting economic growth, and almost all policies are directed to these ends. Vertical inequality is beginning to be recognized as a problem (Kanbur and Lustig, 1999; Cornia, 2004; UNDP, 2005; World Bank, 2006) because inequality has risen in the majority of countries in recent years and because high and growing inequality makes poverty reduction more difficult. Even so, vertical inequality has not received serious policy attention, and there is still less attention paid to horizontal inequality. The growth and poverty reduction agendas are both blind to HIs.

Internationally advocated policies to support economic growth mainly involve macropolicies designed to secure economic stability and openness, and mesopolicies intended to support economic infrastructure and enhance the role of the market in order to improve efficiency. Poverty reduction policies are mainly derived from the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). These focus particularly on social sector expenditures and on some special schemes for the poor such as microcredit. According to a review, 'the participation of minorities or indigenous peoples is either often overlooked or simply regarded as impractical due to their marginalisation' (Booth and Curran, 2005:12). Analyzing the content of PRSPs shows universal inclusion of the 'normal' macro conditions, and policies to promote the social sectors. Gender equity is considered in a substantial majority of cases, but protection of ethnic minorities is mentioned in only a quarter of the cases. The cases where ethnic minorities were *not* mentioned include countries which are evidently heterogeneous, such as Azerbaijan, Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Guyana, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda (Stewart and Wang, 2006).

There is beginning to be more attention devoted to HIs in analyses of conflict-prone situations (for example, World Bank, 2005; DFID, 2007), but it does not form a systematic part of reporting, and rarely enters policy discussions, apart from the regional dimension. Indeed, national policies which are explicit in addressing HIs, such as the Federal Character Principle in Nigeria and the Malaysian NEP, are frequently criticized by international donors.

International policies towards political systems also tend to ignore the question of HIs. Thus advocacy of multiparty democracy can lead to exclusionary politics in heterogeneous societies. Indeed this has been used to defend one-party systems in many multicultural societies. In some postconflict societies, the issue is so obvious that power-sharing arrangements have been



supported by the international community, as in Bosnia Herzegovina and Lebanon. But wider acknowledgement of the need to rethink the design of democratic systems is rare.

A dearth of international statistics on the issue reflects this lack of focus. For example, neither the World Bank nor the UNDP includes statistics on ethnic, religious or regional HIs in their well-known datasets, although some national-level Human Development Reports, such as those on Kosovo and Nepal, have provided ethnic or religiously disaggregated data. A notable exception is the Demographic and Health Surveys (to date covering 77 countries) funded by USAID with contributions from other donors. These contain ethnic and religious variables in quite a number of cases, permitting the investigation of relationships across countries, as has been done by Østby. But these surveys do not cover all countries, and are not carried out at regular intervals. Nor do they include political variables or other variables of obvious interest, such as household income.

As far as national policies are concerned, there is a much higher consciousness of the importance of HIs in many heterogeneous countries, and a vast array of policy approaches have been adopted, as will be indicated in the next chapter. Nonetheless, by no means all culturally diverse countries acknowledge the importance of HIs, or take policy action towards them, some because, like the international community policies they often adopt, they are blind to these issues, while others are deliberately exclusionary.

In the countries studied in this book, among the Latin American cases deliberately exclusionary policies were practiced in colonial times and carried over into independence. More recently, formally policies have been inclusionary, but informally there is a great deal of inequality and no conscious effort to correct this, especially in the cases of Peru and Guatemala. Bolivia has been more inclusionary politically, but not in terms of economic approaches. After the conflict in

Guatemala ended, some of the country's high inequalities, notably with regard to education and culture, have begun to be tackled. In West Africa, policies have varied over time. As in the case of Latin American, the colonial governments created HIs. Since independence there have been weak attempts to correct socioeconomic HIs, but these have been largely offset by macroeconomic policies which have pulled in the opposite direction. On the political front, Ghana has generally adopted informal inclusionary policies, and Côte d'Ivoire had a similar stance for several decades until exclusionary policies were adopted after Houphouët-Boigny. Nigeria, in contrast, has made a conscious attempt to correct political HIs via the Federal Character Principle (Mustapha, 2007) (but has done little to correct socioeconomic HIs). The Federal Character Principle was partly a response to the devastation of the 1967-70 civil war and the determination that this should not be repeated. In Southeast Asia, Malaysia has been most explicit, systematic and effective in correcting socioeconomic HIs via the NEP. A national coalition government involved all groups in society and thus, although Malays predominated, political HIs were kept largely in check. In Indonesia, there was a conscious but limited attempt to secure regional equity via the INPRES programmes, but political HIs were sharp under Suharto. Since democratization, extensive political and fiscal decentralization has effectively reduced these problems by making the district the main object of political power. An equalization formula is also in place to ensure that poorer districts receive a greater proportion of central funds.

#### **4. Conclusions**

In summary, this book has elucidated the meaning of HIs, pointing to the multidimensionality of the concept. We have shown that severe HIs can be an important source of conflict, especially where they are consistent across dimensions. While socioeconomic HIs generate generally fertile ground for conflict to emerge and cultural status inequalities act to bind groups together, political HIs provide incentives for leaders to mobilize people for rebellion. In conditions of

severe HIs, abrupt changes in political HIs, or cultural events in which important cultural or religious symbols are attacked, often constitute powerful triggers to conflict.

In the introductory chapter we put forward four hypotheses about the relationship of HIs to violent conflict. Evidence in this book has supported the first three:

- that conflict is more likely where there are significant political or economic HIs, or both;
- that political mobilization is especially likely where HIs are consistent;
- and that cultural recognition or status inequalities are also provocative.

We were unable to explore the fourth hypothesis systematically – that political mobilization and possibly conflict is more likely to occur when HIs are widening – because of a dearth of accurate evidence on HIs over time, although evidence for districts in Indonesia (in Chapter 6) supported the hypothesis. Thus this hypothesis remains a presumption, supported at present by piecemeal evidence.

Other factors are, of course, also important in determining whether a conflict emerges. One is the nature of the state and its reactions, another is the role of local institutions in pacifying or dynamizing conflict once it has started, a third factor is the presence of natural resources, often working through the impact this has on HIs. For the most part, especially among the international community, little attention is paid to the issue of horizontal inequalities, and the policies advocated can sometimes accentuate them. This is true both of economic policies, such as structural adjustment, and political policies, such as multiparty democracy. The next chapter discusses what policies would be appropriate once the importance of the issue has been acknowledged.

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<sup>1</sup> Ideological motivation was also much more common in the Cold War era, with leaders often adopting Marxist positions. Following the demise of most communist regimes, ethnic mobilization has become more common.

<sup>2</sup>*‘por lo tanto los indios son subversivos. ¿Y como combater la subversión? Evidentemente matanda a los indios’* (Francisco Bianchi, spokesman for the governor of Rioiss Montt).

<sup>3</sup> Caumartin (2005: 28).

<sup>4</sup> Political resistance to censuses in Nigeria casts doubt on all population estimates.

<sup>5</sup> P. Verney, ‘Raising the stakes: Oil and conflict in Sudan’. *Sudan Update*, December, 1999.