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Research for Action 36

# **Political Sources of Humanitarian Emergencies**

K.J. Holsti

Research for Action

UNU World Institute for  
Development Economics Research  
(UNU/WIDER)

## Research for Action 36

# **Political Sources of Humanitarian Emergencies**

**K. J. Holsti**

This study has been prepared within the UNU/WIDER project on the Wave of Emergencies of the Last Decade: Causes, Extent, Predictability and Response, which is co-directed by Professor E. Wayne Nafziger, Senior Research Fellow, and Professor Raimo Väyrynen, University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA.

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## FOREWORD

The incidence of humanitarian emergencies has increased dramatically in the past two decades. Many analysts have argued that the end of the cold war, in particular, has unleashed long-suppressed ethnic antagonisms that have resulted in war casualties, ethnic cleansing, and millions of refugees. These analyses see primordial ethnic hatreds as the main source of humanitarian crises.

This essay argues otherwise. Humanitarian emergencies are not random events in multi-communal countries. They are manifestations of a much deeper crisis facing post-colonial and post-socialist states. Colonial rule left a legacy of highly fragmented societies where previously unrelated people were arbitrarily brought together by the map makers of London, Paris, Brussels, Berlin, and St. Petersburg, or where organic societies were torn apart by arbitrary colonial boundaries. Most post-1945 states are fictions that have not yet been transformed into lasting political communities.

Instead, we have numerous forms of weak statehood, ranging from aborted states to 'phantom' states, where rule is through graft, corruption, clientelism and coercion. To maintain power, governments often exclude distinct communities from access to power and state services. Discrimination and exclusion are often enforced through means ranging from electoral fraud to politicides and ethnocides.

This study finds that in a majority of 17 cases of humanitarian crises, governments initiated the violence. Spontaneous outbreaks of ethnically-based violence are rare. Politicides and ethnocides, often planned and organized long before the event, result in far more victims than rebellions, civil wars, and secession wars. This study outlines a risk model to identify those types of states most likely to become venues of future humanitarian emergencies.

This study is a part of UNU/WIDER's effort to analyse the meaning and causes of these events. The paper is a part of a research project on the Wave of Emergencies of the Last Decade: Causes, Predictability and Response, which is co-directed by Professor E. Wayne Nafziger and Professor Raimo Väyrynen. The research project seeks to use economic and political analyses to explain factors contributing to humanitarian emergencies and to develop early warning and preventive strategies. Future researchers will look to this paper as a major effort in conceptualizing humanitarian emergencies. I strongly recommend this study to researchers and policy-makers with an interest in complex humanitarian emergencies.

Giovanni Andrea Cornia  
Director, UNU/WIDER  
May 1997





## ABSTRACT

This diagnostic study explores the political conditions that are associated with humanitarian emergencies. It employs a risk rather than cause-effect methodology.

Humanitarian emergencies are not random events. They occur most frequently in states having the following characteristics: i) more than two distinct ethnic, language, and/ or religious communities; ii) recent (since 1945) independence; iii) government exclusion and often persecution of distinct social groups; iv) rule by kleptocrats or entrenched minorities; and v) weak government legitimacy.

The study examines 17 non-random cases of humanitarian emergencies and finds a strong fit between the risk model and the patterns of armed violence. Contrary to many analysts who have emphasized 'ethnic conflict' as a major source of bloodshed, these cases show that it is governments rather than spontaneous explosions of ethnic hatred that usually launch the violence. In several cases, politicides and ethnocides had been planned and organized long before the humanitarian emergency began.

External agents often become involved in domestic violence, but in the 17 cases foreign intervention was a causal factor in only two. In one other, withdrawal of foreign aid after the end of the cold war precipitated an economic crisis that led to the collapse of political authority and to subsequent killing and refugee flows.

The study finds that organized politicides by governments have resulted in far greater casualties than civil wars, rebellions, and armed secessions. The presence of early warning indicators regrettably has not helped to mobilize the international community to prevent humanitarian emergencies.



# I INTRODUCTION

This is a diagnostic exercise to locate political sources of contemporary humanitarian emergencies. Several assumptions guide the inquiry. First, although the aetiology of each humanitarian emergency has distinct features, I reflect the bias of social scientists in holding that a comparative methodology can uncover commonalties and patterns. The second assumption is that even if such patterns should appear, they would help account for only some of the humanitarian emergencies. There should also be highly unique cases and some anomalies. Third, the task is to identify political sources of the dependent variable. This is a disciplinary convention that substantially simplifies the analysis, but it necessarily omits economic, demographic, geographic, cultural, and historical conditions, all of which may play relevant roles. I will abstract out of those very complex situations those political factors that seem particularly relevant. By political, I refer to structures, actions, practices, and norms that relate to access to, or allocations of, formal positions of authority within the society. Finally, a comparative study must be alert to non-events. It is important to know what conditions correlate with the incidence of humanitarian emergencies; it is equally important to acknowledge that humanitarian emergencies are not inevitable where certain conditions prevail. We need to ask, also, given that a number of conditions predisposing toward humanitarian emergencies exist in society or country X, why did not such an emergency occur? The entire discussion below is thus set in probabilistic terms. If, as I suggest in the body of the text, there are certain conditions and/or processes that increase the likelihood of a humanitarian emergency, there is no certainty that such an emergency will in fact ensue.

## II LOCATING THE POLITICAL: THE PROBLEM OF THE STATE IN MODERN HISTORY

A diagnostic exercise begins by hunting for clues among the numerous past cases of humanitarian emergencies. The common denominator in humanitarian emergencies is armed conflict and population displacement. Disease and hunger often accompany violence and forced population movements, but they are rarely by themselves sufficient conditions for a humanitarian emergency. Occasional natural disasters do play a role, and while the politics of relief efforts are ubiquitous and sometimes even prolong human suffering, the analysis will examine only those cases where violence and war are present.

Humanitarian emergencies do not occur randomly through time or location. For example, Gurr's study (1996) shows a clear and dramatic increase of the level of threat to endangered minorities through the 1980s and a slow decline beginning about the middle of the 1990s. More significantly, numerous data sources indicate that almost all such emergencies have taken place within relatively new states in the third world or in the post-Soviet republics. For the period 1993-95, for example, Raimo Väyrynen's study (1996) of humanitarian emergencies indicates that all of the cases have taken place either in what is known as the third world or in post-socialist states. Second, 75 per cent of the emergencies in Väyrynen's list of 24 incidents occurred in new states. Only six states in the list (Afghanistan, Myanmar, Colombia, Haiti, Ethiopia, and Liberia) have a history of statehood that precedes World War II. From these figures we can see the profile of societies that have some risk of enduring humanitarian emergencies. They are relatively new states located in the third world, in Central Asia, or in the Balkans.

A further characteristic of the states in Väyrynen's list is that they contain more than one significant ethnic group in the national population. Most of them, in fact, contain two or more ethnic groups, distinct cultural traditions, religions, and languages. Haiti and Colombia are the only exceptions. Both are relatively homogenous, although divided deeply by class and colour distinctions. There is substantial empirical support for the proposition that states with several distinct communities based on religion, language and/or ethnicity (fragmentation) have a higher risk of political violence, including civil wars, than more homogenous societies (Cf., Ellingsen 1996).

Standard income figures do not show similar commonalities. They range from per capita incomes of more than US\$3,000 in the case of Croatia and Bosnia, to less than US\$300 annually in Ethiopia and Haiti. While most of the locales of humanitarian emergencies are poor by Western standards, the great disparities in the sample suggest that degrees of poverty or wealth averaged out in per capita figures do not correlate strongly with violence and refugee movements. We must also consider the large number of countries with low per capita incomes where war and resulting refugee flows have not occurred. Income divisions within the societies might be more significant, however.

In the event that the years 1993-96 may not be typical, it may be useful to extend the time horizon. I do not have a list of humanitarian emergencies that go beyond those available in the Helina Melkas study (1996), but figures on wars involving over 1,000 deaths are available (Holsti 1996:ch. 2). Not including de-colonizing wars of national liberation, there have been 164 armed conflicts between 1945 and 1995, of which 126 (77 per cent) were internal. The remaining 23 per cent were wars or armed interventions between states, but a high percentage of these (e.g., Afghanistan, Vietnam) began as domestic wars. Virtually all of these wars resulted in very high casualty rates, as well as displaced populations and refugees. And when we look at the locales where these wars took place, the pattern in Väyrynen's data is reinforced. Countries with the highest risk of being the locales of wars and therefore of humanitarian disasters are overwhelmingly (i) new states with (ii) two or more major communities, religions, languages, and cultures.

What political characteristics are commonly found in these states? The literature on state-making is extensive, and often comparative. A number of observers have, for example, compared the state-making process after 1945 to the pattern of developments in early modern Europe (Tilly 1990; Ayoob 1995). While we must remain sensitive to significant historical and cultural differences, there are suggestive points of comparison. The state-making process in Europe, as in the post-1945 world, involved the attempt to centralize authority, to extract resources from the population, and to constrain or destroy local rule-making individuals and bodies (Cf., Migdal 1988; Bereciartu 1994:ch.1; Young 1994:39-41). This process often undermined or destroyed local authority structures and incumbents, homogenized cultures, imposed national laws to replace local customs, diluted local languages, and not infrequently, as in the Sudan, led to the expropriation of lands and resources of indigenous and other peoples, usually designated a 'minority' so that they can be dealt with more efficiently.

The state-making process in Europe was punctuated by numerous civil wars, rebellions, armed resistance, and massacres. Hobbes, whose views of political life were particularly austere, was one observer of them. Given that Western imperialism had no intention of creating states, it is little wonder that the state-making project in the post-colonial territories really began only after independence and that political life in many of these states should resemble in some respects a Hobbesian state of nature. Colonial legacies vary between locations, but some of them are common and continue to have major impact on the character of political life and on the daunting tasks that 'state-building' demands. The legacies include, among many others, the following:

- artificial borders that do not coincide with demographic, cultural, or commercial characteristics;
- the creation of multi-cultural societies through the slave trade and settlers, where reasonably homogenous societies had existed prior to colonization;
- a tradition of 'politics from the top', with colonial authorities commanding and with limited, if any, local participation;

- exacerbation of class, ethnic, language, and other divisions, frequently anointing some groups with a preferred 'right to rule' while systematically excluding others;
- prohibition of indigenous political activities, particularly at the 'national' level.

From this list we immediately see major differences between Europe and many of the post-1945 states. In Europe, the shift of sovereignty from the dynastic figure to the 'people' took many centuries and, in many places, through violent revolutions. The processes of democratization did not even approach universality within Europe until the 1970s with the passing of military/authoritarian regimes in Greece, Spain, and Portugal. In contrast, the post-1945 states mostly began with democratic constitutions, and with an international set of norms that promoted and sustained self-determination, self-government, and democratic processes. Many of these paraphernalia of popular sovereignty were 'delivered' as part of the de-colonization process. But the problem was that many of the colonies-turned states were in fact fictions. They had the appurtenances of states – flags, armies, capital cities, legislatures, and ambassadors – but they did not have the other requisites that make modern states cohere. Most had only weak civil societies (Cf., Harbenson, Rothchild and Chazan 1994). Few populations had deeply-ingrained senses of national identity; most, in fact, remained primordial, fixed around clans, tribes, religious groups, or geographic regions. The fiat of the 'national' government often extended no further than the suburbs of the capital city, after which local leaders, based on a variety of claims to legitimacy, ruled. The modern symbol of sovereignty, a monopoly over the legitimate use of force, plus the effective disarmament of society, existed more in rhetoric than in fact.

These and other characteristics of new states constitute a syndrome which Barry Buzan (1983) has called the *weak state* and others (Cf., Jackson 1990) have termed 'quasi-states'. The terms may differ, but the phenomena to which they direct attention are similar. Weak states have all the attributes of sovereignty for external purposes – they are full members of the international community and have exactly the same legal standing as the oldest or most powerful states in the system – but they severely lack the internal attributes of sovereignty, including those mentioned above.

Weakness is a variable, not a teleological destination or origin. Throughout their history, states move back and forth along a continuum of weakness and strength. The comparative politics literature alludes to the various components of state strength, including capacity to extract resources, degree of social control, the extent to which the public is effectively disarmed, the provision of government services in exchange for tax extractions, and the degree to which national legislation is effectively applied throughout the designated territory. These are all material bases of state strength or weakness. However, the critical dimension of state strength is *legitimacy*, which is an idea or feeling. It is a measure of citizens' attitudes toward the state, whether they withhold or grant the 'right to rule' to those who act in the name of the state. Rebels and armed insurgents of various kinds often grant no legitimacy to the incumbent government. They challenge its 'right to rule', and take actions to replace incumbents with those who can make a superior claim. Others withdraw legitimacy from the state itself. Either they wish to change the entire constitutional order (not just incumbents), or

they wish to secede. Radical Muslim elements in Algeria are an example of the former; separatists in Québec today or in Slovenia in the late 1980s are examples of the latter. Their purposes differ, but they fundamentally make the same claim: the leaders of the state in which they reside do not have the right to rule, and so they want to rearrange matters either by changing the fundamental contours of the state or by creating a new state.

### III BORN TO WEAKNESS: LEGITIMACY AND THE COLONIAL LEGACY

We have seen that a very high proportion of recent humanitarian emergencies occurred in new states composed of multiple communities. These background characteristics by themselves do not predict to humanitarian emergencies because a significant majority of states which share these attributes have not faced internal wars, armed secessions, and various forms of insurgency. They have made a reasonably successful voyage along the state strength dimension. However, it is also the case that almost all cases in Väyrynen's list are new states with plural communities. States with these characteristics thus have higher risks than states that are older and contain a single or highly predominant community.

To locate the sources of declining legitimacy, we have to explore, first, colonial legacies, the overhang of the past that has contemporary consequences. The new states were not created as mature political entities. They began with certain fundamental weaknesses that have constrained and even prevented the development of strong legitimacy ties.

Colonies were never created in order to become states. Whatever the motives for colonization – and there were many – the colonizers never intended to convert their territories into states. Even as late as the 1950s, colonial officials in most territories denied that their native populations were ready for self-government. Although some of them had legislatures, courts, and police forces, colonial authorities on the whole proscribed or prohibited native political organizations, particularly those that spoke of independence as a goal. Colonial rule was based on a system of command, not participation. Moreover, in order to carry out administration, colonial officials usually had to co-opt or work through indigenous political structures and individuals. In this way, local chiefs, caudillos, effendis, mullahs, khans, and others were strengthened against the claims of authority and jurisdiction of post-independence governments.

The leaders of colonial independence movements never seriously considered alternatives to the Western state format. They rejected their own historical political forms and simply assumed that the *colony* – which was an imperialist-created fiction – should become the state. Few colonies made sense from a political point of view. They were administrative units created for imperialists' reasons and conveniences. Borders were usually artificial, and incorporated numerous groups of tribes, cultures, and religions whose members had never previously lived within a single political jurisdiction. Contrariwise, in Central Asia in particular, Russian colonial frontiers divided previously organic groups, interrupted ancient trade routes and demarcated zones of exclusivity that had never existed previously. In many mono-cultural islands, the importation of slaves and indentured labour from other regions of the world created



multi-cultural communities,<sup>1</sup> and in Central Asia Stalin forcibly removed populations precisely so that they would *not* constitute coherent societies.

Many colonies, then, were political fictions in the sense that they incorporated populations that had never existed previously as historical communities. Sudan, for example, had been a geographical expression designating that vast region that divides the headwaters of Muslim and Arabic cultures from black Africa. But a region may be a poor candidate for a state. Today, the Sudan contains a Muslim majority that is badly divided among itself, and a large Christian and animist minority comprised of 597 tribes speaking 115 different languages, and nomadic groups that move back and forth between the official Sudan and its African neighbours. If there is a Sudanese identity, it certainly does not extend to large numbers of so-called citizens. Sudan's situation may be extreme, but it is not unique. Like Sudan, the populations of most colonies at independence did not constitute nationalities. There was no reason why a Muslim Hausa in Northern Nigeria should feel any affinity to, or identity with, a southern Christian or animist Ongoni except that they had in common been colonial subjects of the British crown. Such diversity makes poor foundation for post-independence legitimate authority. There is nothing in the colonial history of Nigeria, Sudan, Cameroon, Burma, Central Asia or dozens of other territories that parallels the growth and evolution of national identities and affinities in Europe.

Yet, if the post-independence states were not to collapse (aborted state) upon the departure of the colonial authorities, there had to be some basis of legitimacy. Who claimed the right to rule, and on what basis? In some cases, claims to legitimacy were based on achievement or merit through colonial administrative or political institutions. Sometimes these claims were validated through elections or referenda. The constitutional order, the fundamental rules of the new states, were also validated through the wholesale importation of Western political 'rules of the game', assumed to be of universal validity and therefore acceptable to the post-colonial state. In many other cases, however, post-colonial legitimacy was based on warrior accomplishments, the oldest of the claims of 'right to rule'. The majority of colonies attained independence through peaceful means, but there were at least nineteen 'wars of national liberation' whose leaders, upon achieving victory, claimed the right to rule the post-independent state by virtue of their military victories. Many then turned themselves into Presidents-for-life and instituted one-party states to make certain that those who had different views of the requirements of presidency and leadership would not establish rival claims of a right to rule.

Whether through peaceful or violent means, the leaders of the new states claimed the right to rule on behalf of the 'people'. The people were the colonial populations, no matter how culturally diverse or socially incompatible. The 'people' claimed the inherent right of self-determination, a doctrine again imported from the West and thus one that

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<sup>1</sup> One African intellectual has commented: 'Are we really right to put faith in the Berlin Charter (1884), which established our present boundaries, and take for an African Bible a document whose stipulations were a mere arrangement of convenience between foreign powers?' (Uwechue 1972: 12). Uwechue might have added that no African was invited to attend the Berlin Conference.

could not be denied by the West. The 'people' were unified in their struggles for independence, but as the numerous instances of humanitarian emergencies since independence attest, once independence had been achieved, it was not at all clear that the 'people' of anti-colonialism would remain a 'people' for the purposes of governing the post-colonial state. Indeed, quite a few national liberation movements were divided by ethnic, religious, and/or language lines during the height of the anti-colonial struggle. The divisions between Muslims and Hindus which led to the bloody partition of India is the best known, but less dramatically, similar movements in, for example, Angola, Mozambique, Zambia, and Burma, had already divided these countries years before formal independence. There were many who wanted a Western-state format, but not automatically one defined in colonial terms. Many groups feared – often correctly, as it turned out – that there can be internal as well as external forms of colonialism.

Anti-colonialism settled the question of who should rule the post-colonial territories. The crude answer was 'indigenous' rulers. But it did not settle the question of over whom rule should be exercised. The question of *community* – who is a citizen, and what are to be the relations between citizens of different communities – was not settled. The failure to resolve this issue has been at the heart of erosions of legitimacy and the collapse of states since independence. Diverse peoples could come together to oust the foreigners, but once that was accomplished, how could these peoples, divided by religion, ethnicity, language, and culture, live in harmony in the post-independence state? A political diagnosis of weak states has to focus on the question of community and the relationship of community to rule. Many colonial practices, such as indirect rule by divisive strategies, helped to create or exacerbate social divisions within the colony. The range of these practices is wide and diverse, beyond the scope of this essay, but it is a prominent theme in post-colonial literature. The general rubric, however, is that the colonial 'state' was created in London, Paris, Brussels, Moscow, and other European capitals with scant attention to indigenous modes of rule, or to the mechanisms that had sustained in some places reasonable harmony among and between communities.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> One should not romanticize pre-colonial societies. Slavery, oppression, and genocides were not European inventions. The Europeans did not invent the Hindu caste system, nor were relations between Hindus and Muslims in that area always characterized by harmony and tolerance. However, as in the case of Rwanda, colonialism often buttressed the position of ruling groups and thereby helped sustain social divisions.

## IV WEAK STATES: TYPES

Weak and failed states have become the object of considerable attention during the 1990s. With the end of the cold war, analysts began to acknowledge that rebellions, civil wars, and massacres taking place in the third world and elsewhere were not just the manifestations of great power competition or ideological incompatibilities. Suddenly, observers discovered the phenomenon of 'ethnic wars', quite overlooking the fact that wars within states having nothing to do with cold war competition had been part of the third world landscape for many years. Civil wars and wars of secession in Myanmar, the Sudan, Eritrea, Nigeria, and elsewhere long preceded the collapse of the Berlin Wall (Holsti 1997). The list of humanitarian emergencies also goes back long before 1989 or 1991. What makes all the cases comparable is that in addition to being new, multi-communal states, most shared the characteristic of state weakness defined in terms of the erosion or absence of legitimacy. There are, however, different kinds of weak states. While many of them have been the sites of humanitarian emergencies, not all have been 'failed' states in the sense of collapsing totally, and not all entailed mass violence.

Jean-Germain Gros (1996) distinguishes between (i) anarchic states, (ii) phantom or mirage states, (iii) anaemic states, (iv) captured states, and (v) aborted states. While this is formally a typology, in fact, except for type (v), it is actually a continuum.

### 4.1 Anarchic states

Anarchic states represent one end of the continuum. Here, there is no central authority. There are no government services and no laws, and commands of the ostensible central authorities, if they exist, are widely ignored and ineffective. In the anarchic state, according to Gros (1996:457), there is an 'overall breakdown of the corpus of formal and informal rules governing society, accompanied by the disappearance of formal authority or its emanations'. Examples include Somalia by 1991, contemporary Liberia, and Sierra Leone between 1992 and 1996.

### 4.2 Phantom states

In the latter years of rule under Mobutu Sese Seko, Zaire was an example of the phantom or mirage state. There is a semblance of authority, with constitutions, incumbents, armed forces, police, national currency and the like. In fact, rule does not extend beyond the chief and his immediate entourage, and authority within society has devolved largely to local centres. The armed forces symbolize the vacuity of rule. They are often undisciplined and unpaid, thus resorting to widespread graft, extortion, and pillaging in order to survive. They are under no central control and in the event of

fighting, could not be counted upon to save the regime.<sup>3</sup> A former American assistant secretary of state for Africa (Cohen 1993, quoted in Weiss 1995:157) describes the essential attributes of the phantom state – in this case, again, Zaire:

To say that Zaire has a government ... would be a gross exaggeration. A small group of military and civilian associates of President Mobutu, all from the same ethnic group, control the city of Kinshasa by virtue of the loyalty of the 5,000-man Presidential Guard... This same group also controls the Central Bank which provides both the foreign and local currency to keep the Guard loyal. While the ruling group has intelligence information about what is going on in the rest of Zaire, there is no real government authority outside the capital city.

### 4.3 Anaemic states

Anaemic states, according to Gros, are characterized by the inability to deliver government services due to lack of infrastructure or the expenditure of a high proportion of government resources on fighting insurgencies. There is a semblance of state authority, but capacity does not meet demand. Gros makes the following symbolic distinction between the phantom state and the anaemic states: in the former, garbage never gets collected; individuals have to rely on themselves or move elsewhere as the garbage piles up. In the anaemic state, garbage is *eventually* collected.

The *captured state* is not, in fact, a different kind. Zaire is a captured state; indeed, most weak states are captured states, as we will see below.

### 4.4 Aborted states

An aborted state, according to Gros, is a type of political entity which never gets off the ground upon achieving independence. Its authority structures are never put into place initially, or the peaceful succession of power from colonial status is not achieved with independence. In 1918-19, the new ethnically-based states of Eastern Europe made a reasonably peaceful transition from their status as units in the Russian, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian empires, partly because the great powers insisted that they adhere to constitutional rule and respect the rights of minorities. Since 1945, the international community has been much less involved in setting stringent conditions for recognition of independence. States such as the Congo, which were patently unprepared for independence, were granted it solely on the grounds of colonial status. Upon reaching independence, several began to break apart into secessionist and civil wars. Examples in addition to the Congo include Mozambique, Angola, Tajikistan, and Georgia, the latter

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<sup>3</sup> The Zaire army in the last months of Mobutu's reign became primarily a marauding force. The few troops who actually engaged in armed combat against the Kabila rebel army admitted that they operated under no central authority and had not been paid for months. Mobutu had to use mercenaries to fly his few aircraft. Overall, the official Zaire army was as much a phantom as was the Mobutu state.

with the violent secession attempt of Abkhazia. There is a high risk of humanitarian emergencies resulting from aborted states.

#### 4.5 Collapsed (anarchical) states

Most post-1945 states began their independent life as relatively weak polities because of the legacies of colonialism. There was little or no sense of national identity, the bases of government legitimacy – anti-colonialism – were inherently of limited duration, and the foundations of strong economic performance were seldom laid or solid. But some states were able to overcome these conditions and to move along the trajectory of strength. Others remained weak, but managed to survive without major conflagrations. And finally, some moved along the trajectory toward greater weakness and, for a few, toward ultimate collapse. Some of the scenes of humanitarian emergencies have taken place within weakening or collapsed states.

In 1991, Somalia became the symbol of the collapsed state, ostensibly a new phenomenon in international politics. But state collapse long predated the event of 1991. Lebanon in 1976, Angola and Mozambique, perhaps more aborted than collapsed states (Gros 1996:461), and Chad between 1980 and 1982 all had the symptoms of the state moving toward collapse: the bankruptcy of the government, often caused by spending on the military to control insurgencies and rebellions; absence of central authority throughout much of the territorial configuration of the state; proliferation of states within states; lack of personal security except within the context of sub-national units, including gangs; and cessation or paralysis of government services, including essential police, education, sanitation, health, and welfare functions (Cf., Kaplan 1996). These services do not necessarily cease, but it is no longer the state that supplies them. William Zartman (1995:1) offers the following definition of the collapsed state:

State collapse is a deeper phenomenon than mere rebellion, coup, or riot. It refers to a situation where the structure, authority (legitimate power), law and political order have fallen apart .... On the other hand, it is not necessarily anarchy... {W}hen the state collapses, order and power (but not always legitimacy) falls down to local groups or are up for grabs. These ups and downs of power then vie with central attempts to reconstitute authority. For a period, the state itself, as a legitimate, functioning order, is gone.

The exact details may differ from case to case, but the symptoms are remarkably similar. Central government withers away or suffers from paralysis; laws are not made, nor are existing ones enforced; the provision of security devolves to armed groups, whether ethnic, clan, religious, quasi-military, or just gangs. There may be *governance* within the collapsed state – local, contrived, often ineffective, and often also based on terror – but there is no government in the sense required by the concept of sovereignty. In Lebanon after 1976, authority devolved to numerous sectarian armed groups that themselves provided some semblance of governance. The central Lebanese government continued to exist on paper and in a few offices, but its fiat rarely extended beyond a few

kilometres in Beirut. Elsewhere, local groups ruled. In the absence of central authority, social groups or individuals may settle old scores, particularly if mobilized by local leaders and gangsters. We witnessed this phenomenon in Indonesia following the September 30 1965 counter-coup, and during the Bosnian war, particularly within the Bosnian Serb community. From the point of view of humanitarian emergencies, the problem is that spontaneous local 'authorities' may be more murderous than the predatory state whose power they inherited or grabbed. As one example, the infamous Serbian 'Arkan' (aka Zeljko Raznjatovic) controlled an 800-man paramilitary unit ('Tigers') who 'raped and tortured their way through Eastern Slavonia' in the Croatian war of 1991 (Ignatieff 1993:29). The civilian and military leaders of the Republica Srpska have been indicted for war crimes. The Aidid clan in Somalia ruled through localized terror, extortion, and systematic looting of international aid. Similar patterns have been observed in the collapse of state authority in Liberia.

We now have profiles of several high-risk types of states. All share the characteristic of weak legitimacy. Gros' concept of the 'phantom' state is difficult to deal with because while it suffers from all the symptoms of weakness, particularly predatory behaviour, it persists somehow. It is therefore a residual category that crosses the other types; since it is not mutually exclusive of the others, we cannot use it further. A state is classified as weak when its rulers govern without an articulated basis of legitimacy or when two or more major communities within the state deny each others' legitimacy within the political community (Holsti 1996:ch. 6).

We must think in terms of risks and probabilities. There may be cases where states with high risk profiles, including predation or social cleavages, do not lead to humanitarian emergencies. Why, for example, was there widespread bloodshed in 1965 Indonesia, or in Burma since 1962, but not in Malaysia or Singapore at the same time? Given similar profiles of state weakness, what transpires between high risk conditions in many states and actual war or other forms of domestic armed turmoil in only a few? Why do some weak, collapsing, or anarchical states lead to humanitarian emergencies, while others do not? At the level of the individual, how do we account for the transformation of ordinary citizens and neighbours into killers and agents of 'ethnic cleansing' or genocide?

## V SQUANDERING LEGITIMACY: PREDATION IN THE POST-COLONIAL STATE

Many weak states lack legitimacy because their governments are predatory. Rulers use the state to enrich themselves and to purchase the loyalty of groups which can help ensure their status and hold on power. Gros calls these 'captured' states, but this does not mean that they are necessarily phantom or anarchic states. Most, in fact, have well-articulated bureaucratic structures, domestic intelligence units, and a variety of police and armed forces that can root out resistance and opposition. Yet, they are weak primarily because they have forfeited the loyalty, trust, and affection of significant groups and individuals in the country. Under certain conditions, particularly with the removal from office of the predatory incumbents, the state may move toward anarchy. This was the case, for example, in Sierra Leone in 1992, when a military coup ousted a highly corrupt regime and then lost control of the troops who went on a 3-year rampage of looting, terror, and extortion throughout the countryside. The erosion of legitimacy through years of widespread corruption and government predation was the condition that led to the coup d'etat which in turn led to the development of the anarchic state.

In some post-colonial states, reigning regimes have become predatory. Predators 'capture' the state apparatus and practice two kinds of activities that seriously compromise their legitimacy. First, they systematically exclude specific groups in the society from access to policy-making positions and from equal access to government services. Supporters of the regime, in contrast, hold privileged positions in complex systems of patronage and clientelism. Second, the incumbents of the captured state use their positions and access to resources to plunder the national economy through graft, corruption, and extortion, and to participate in private business activities. Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg (1982) have termed these states 'kleptocracies'. In Africa, estimates of government-plundered wealth stashed in European banks up to 1986 amounted to US\$150 billion. The former president of Zaire, Mobutu Sese Seko, was reputed to have transformed more than US\$10 billion of his country's wealth into personal assets, all sent abroad (Ergas 1987:299, 320). When the funds transferred abroad by Mobutu's clients and entourage are added, one can only conclude that governance in Zaire was primarily a system of national looting. (cf., Callaghy 1984). During the height of his tenure as permanent president of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos looted the wealth of his country to the tune of about US\$12 billion.

The problems of 'capturing' a state and plundering are of course connected. Presidents-for-life, self-proclaimed emperors, and the founders of family dynasties and their one-party supporting apparatuses have to be paid for. Client loyalty carries huge costs. The post-colonial state in a poor economy is the main vehicle for status, prestige, jobs, and wealth. In cultures where there is no fundamental norm separating personal profit from public service, the latter becomes the means to the former. Long after the myths of anti-colonial struggle have worn thin, predatory regimes must rely increasingly upon clientelism and patronage as the sole basis of their 'right to rule'.

By definition, clientelism and patronage involve only small portions of a state's population. Those who are victims of graft and corruption, and those who do not have privileged access to centres of authority, are likely to form oppositions. A particularly high risk situation develops when a minority group captures the government and then systematically excludes a majority group from power and allocations (Cf., Ahmed 1996:25). This was the situation in Rwanda in the 1960s; it remains the case today in Syria, Iraq, Kashmir, and Burundi. Samuel Doe's regime in Liberia replaced the Afro-American elite with its own marginalized minority ethnic group, which in turn was overthrown by a warlord. A more primitive variant is where a small social segment, in many cases a single family, uses the state to build a virtual dynasty. The Duvalier family in Haiti systematically looted the country's wealth to ensure its perpetual power, a pattern observed in Somoza's Nicaragua and among the ruling families of El Salvador.

The regime of a predatory state, while squandering or lacking legitimacy, nevertheless controls means of survival. These include intelligence agencies, the national police, and the military. The military itself may be the prime engine of plunder, as in Burma during the 1960s and 1970s. Whatever the case, rule ultimately is based on a combination of purchased loyalty of a few, formal or informal exclusion of all who are deemed to be the opposition, and persecution of those who protest or resist. The policies used to maintain power and to silence the opposition range from informal means of exclusion, such as fraudulent elections, to formal means such as outlawing opposition political parties or *apartheid*, and coercive means such as expulsion of select groups from the country (New Win's expulsion of Indians from Burma in 1962-63, Idi Amin's expulsion of Asians from Uganda in the 1970s). Extra-legal policies include assassination and killing of dissidents and resistance leaders (death squads in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Argentina during the 1970s and 1980s), and organized massacres of identifiable social and political groups (the Hutu extermination of Tutsis in Rwanda in the 1960s, the Tutsi massacres of Hutus in Burundi in 1965, Macias Nguema's liquidation of 'disloyal' social elements in Equatorial Guinea during the 1970s, and Pol Pot's massacre of approximately 1.5 million 'class enemies' in Kampuchea in 1976-78). In the predatory state, there are likely to be mass exoduses of potential victims and their families (Haiti under Cedras, Liberia under Taylor, Rwanda throughout much of its history) as the state usually has a significant advantage of coercive power. In all these cases, most of which resulted in humanitarian emergencies, the state becomes the main threat to the security of individuals and often to entire social groups.

Predatory regimes sometimes set communities against each other as a means of mobilizing a modicum of popular support. This is 'playing the ethnic card'. In 1993, for example, Mobutu Sese Seko deliberately set communities in Shaba (Katanga) against each other, though they had lived harmoniously for generations. One-half million refugees fled the carnage (Lee 1996:38-9). In 1965, the military-dominated government that had crushed a coup attempt in Indonesia mostly stood by while at the local level individuals and groups slaughtered suspected communists and particular social groups. The killing went on for about 6 months, encouraged and tolerated, if not always organized, by government officials. These actions have the consequence of destroying



the ties of empathy, tolerance, and even common identification that bind multi-communal societies together.

Exclusion and discrimination are found extensively in most states, but their pervasiveness is notable in third world and former socialist states. These practices strengthen group identities, foster violent responses, and help begin a cycle of resistance and further oppression. Gurr's (1994:6) empirical work sustains this observation. In the period 1945-89, for example, 233 ethnic groups around the world experienced economic and/or political discrimination, and of these, 200 organized politically to defend their interests against the government or other communities. Eighty cases escalated to civil war. Extra-legal and extreme measures of discrimination and exclusion have been equally frequent, resulting in extraordinarily high numbers of casualties, usually much higher than those sustained through civil and secessionist wars. Since 1945, there have been nearly 50 episodes of genocide and politicide directed against more than 70 different ethnic and religious communities, resulting in at least 9 million and perhaps as many as 20 million civilian fatalities (Gurr 1996:65).

The policies of exclusion, corruption, and playing the ethnic card, often organically related, destroy the foundations of legitimate rule within states. State agents become the main threats to the security and welfare of individuals and groups. As legitimacy is squandered, rule has to be based increasingly on exclusion, coercion, and theft. The post-colonial state, which was weak in many dimensions at birth, enjoyed a euphoric period of solidarity and hope. But states cannot be put along the trajectory of strength merely by getting rid of a colonial master or mouthing slogans of socialism and equality. Ultimately, the post-colonial states had to find new bases for legitimacy. Some succeeded – often on the basis of adequate or strong economic performance and/or deliberate policies designed to establish social harmony between groups (Malaysia, Singapore) – but many failed and resorted to policies of exclusion, plunder, and social division.

There is an inverse relation between legitimacy and the security of government incumbents. The rulers of predatory states tend to isolate themselves physically and socially from the societies over which they rule. They surround themselves with cronies and family members whose loyalty is often purchased. In this setting, the phenomenon of 'group-think' (Janis 1972) is likely to appear. Rulers see the external world as constituting threats; information is not processed to suggest a variety of policy options; emphasis is on group solidarity and defense rather than analysis; and those who raise questions about policy directions are expelled (or worse) from the group. The extreme insecurity of some tyrants helps to explain their brutal repression of even mild forms of dissent within the society.

There is little in the history of Western political thought that adequately analyses the origins and character of predatory practices. The nature of tyranny and the limits of political obligation are old themes in political philosophy, but most modern thinkers starting with Hobbes fail to describe states that parallel those found frequently in the twentieth century. Hobbes's *Leviathan* was a stern keeper of public order. But it was also a relatively disinterested mediator and judge of private conflicts. Subjects or citizens

could stand in 'awe' (to use Hobbes's term) of the state, but awe is not terror. The state had the means to punish, but it employed them primarily to maintain law and order so that people could go about their daily lives in reasonable security and peace. Similarly, nineteenth century liberals' concepts of the 'night-watchman' state bears no relationship whatsoever to the predatory Nazi, Soviet, Kampuchean and other murderous states of this century. Even Marx' bourgeois state, the executive committee of the capitalist class, was only a supporter of an exploitative economic system, not an instrument of mass murder. Marx' imagined 'dictatorship of the proletariat' could never have remotely resembled Stalin's state that, according to even conservative enumerations, killed more than 50 million Soviet citizens (Rummel 1994:7). Most post-1945 predatory states, with some significant exceptions such as Kampuchea, Vietnam, and Pakistan, have not reached such heights of human destruction. But many have gone far beyond the brutalities of state-making in seventeenth century Europe. When we examine individual cases of humanitarian emergencies, we necessarily come to the conclusion that few of them are caused by primordial ethnic hatreds or spontaneous communal violence.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to many Western media characterizations of recent humanitarian emergencies, they are not always 'ethnic conflicts' representing some sort of primordial hatreds between social groups (Cf., Schoeberlein-Engel 1994; Woodward 1995). Predatory states as a matter of policy undermine the sources of their legitimacy by plundering, threatening, and killing distinct communities of their own citizens. This results in extreme political insecurity which feeds further repression, and often massive retaliation against dissenters.

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<sup>4</sup> One of the few spontaneous acts of massive inter-communal violence followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984. Hindus in Delhi and elsewhere hunted down and killed thousands of Sikhs, purportedly to punish the Sikh community, two of whose members – the Prime Minister's personal bodyguards – assassinated her.

## VI TIPPING EVENTS

Russell Hardin (1995) has argued that 'tipping events' are critical in explaining the transformation of weakness to violence. These events are, speaking metaphorically, lit matches thrown into a pool of gasoline. There is a common structural dynamic here. It is the situation where individuals, often as 'representatives' of attribute groups, confront the situational logic of 'kill or be killed'. Contrary to many recent analysts of 'ethnic war', primordial ethnic hatred is seldom a sufficient explanation for violence. Nationalism is a means of group mobilization, not an inherent cause of conflict, as we can readily observe from the countries in which distinct groups coexist, work together, and intermarry for long periods of time. It takes a particular situation, usually driven by fear and insecurity, for leaders and followers to become killers. It is when violence becomes anticipated, when the risks increase, and when self-defense becomes a compelling necessity, that violence breaks out. Hardin (1995:143) describes the situation:

Self-defense against possible (not even actual) attack suffices to motivate murderous conflict. Risk aversion is enough. And the risk, unfortunately, of not pre-emptively attacking may be heightened by the fact that the other side ... cannot commit to not attacking, and therefore cannot be trusted beyond what can be inferred from their interests. An ethnic group that depends on relatively spontaneous organizations ... cannot make credible guarantees about what it might do. Indeed ... internal competition for leadership might make any commitment automatically the target of some faction among those supposedly making a commitment.

Events recently in ex-Yugoslavia, Lebanon, Tajikistan, Rwanda, and Burundi, among others, illustrate this logic. It is often but not inevitably associated with collapsing state authority, where increasingly there is a structural compulsion to attack pre-emptively, where the logic of 'kill or be killed' takes over. It was particularly the case in several domains of the secession wars of Yugoslavia, as well as in Somalia. Michael Ignatieff (1993:16) argues that in these circumstances, 'there is one type of fear more devastating in its impact than any other: the systemic fear which arises when a state begins to collapse. Ethnic hatred is the result of the terror which arises when legitimate authority disintegrates'. This is exactly the condition of anarchical and aborted states, and not infrequently in predatory states. It is a Hobbesian world where no disinterested Leviathan can provide security. Describing the situation in ex-Yugoslavia in 1990, Ignatieff writes:

No one in these (Yugoslav) villages could be sure who would protect them. If they were Serbs and someone attacked them and they went to the Croatian police, would the Croats protect them? If they were Croats, in a Serbian village, could they be protected against a night-time attack from a Serbian paramilitary team, usually led by a former policeman? This is

how ethnic cleansing began to acquire its logic. If you can't trust your neighbours, drive them out. If you can't live among them, live only among your own. This alone appeared to offer people security. This alone gave respite from the fear which leaped like a brush-fire from house to house.

But tipping events leading to humanitarian emergencies may occur also in states in which there *is* effective, if not always legitimate, authority. The massacres in Rwanda, 1994, in Kampuchea after 1976, or several times in Burundi, did not take place in a condition of collapsing or disintegrated state authority. Quite the contrary, *it was the state itself which launched the massacres and genocides*. The state used its superior coercive capacities, intelligence, and organizational capabilities to hunt down opponents and resisters, or it sat idly by after encouraging public pogroms against designated populations. Yet, 'tipping events', sudden and usually unexpected events or provocations, were usually used to justify government-sponsored mass killings. In April 1994, it was the downing of the aircraft that was bringing home the president of Rwanda from a peace conference in neighbouring Tanzania. In 1988, it was an armed incursion of Somali refugees from Ethiopia that led to Siad Barre's massive razing of two Somali cities, Hargeiso and Barao, resulting in 60,000 predominantly civilian deaths. A high proportion of government-caused humanitarian emergencies since the early 1960s were preceded by such 'tipping events'.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The role of propaganda and incitement in fomenting humanitarian emergencies is explored in Snyder and Ballantine (1996). They argue that in democratizing countries with weak civil societies, and where often the media are controlled in oligopolistic or monopolistic fashion, free speech can actually exacerbate relations between communities.

## VII THE POLITICAL PROCESSES LEADING TO HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

We are now in a position to argue that there may be patterned *processes* that precede humanitarian emergencies. The model appears in Table 1.

TABLE 1  
A PROBABILITY/PROCESS MODEL OF HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

Background conditions	Exclusion policies	Tipping event(s)	Outcomes	Humanitarian emergencies
new state	informal (e.g., election fraud)	death/assassination of leader	politicides	violent (war casualties)
multi-community state	formal (constitutional distinction among communities)	armed resistance	civil war	complex (casualties, refugees, disease, hunger)
colonial legacy	expulsion	riots	armed secession	
weak legitimacy	segregation	coup attempts	genocide	
	expropriation	elections		
	death squads	state collapse		

Risks increase as we move from column to column toward the right. We can predict with little accuracy any direct connection between background attributes and the incidence of humanitarian emergencies. The reason is evident. Numerous states – probably a significant majority – which share these background characteristics or attributes have not experienced humanitarian emergencies. States with these background conditions, however, are more likely to have a high incidence of informal and formal exclusionist policies, military government, and kleptocratic and dynastic practices that seriously erode the legitimacy of governments. Lacking legitimacy, and therefore politically insecure, governments are more likely to use coercive methods to maintain authority, thereby further eroding their legitimacy. They may also create or exacerbate social divisions as a means of gaining political support among certain groups. These are not, however, sufficient conditions. They do increase risks, but again because we have many instances where such policies did not result in humanitarian emergencies (Fiji 1988), there is no direct cause-effect relationship. Finally, if dramatic tipping events take place, then the probabilities of violent outcome increase dramatically. Do recent cases of humanitarian emergencies conform to this model?

## VIII SELECTED CASES OF HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES IN WEAK STATES

We do not yet have a comprehensive list of post-1945 humanitarian emergencies. The studies by Melkas (1996) and Väyrynen (1996) launch important work in this domain, but their data cover the period only from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s. This was an era of increased incidence of emergencies and more international *responses* to them, but the critical variables are not incidence or responses. Humanitarian emergencies not related to international war or to wars of national liberation began in the early 1960s, shortly after the independence of most new states.<sup>6</sup>

I have selected 17 cases. This is not a random sample because the total population is not known. The choice was determined primarily by the documented and accessible facts and figures, and reasonable literatures that narrate the contexts in which the emergencies took place. The cases come from several regions.

Because this is not a random sample, no claims of precision can be made. However, the question is whether the probability/risk model outlined above reflects the processes that lead to humanitarian emergencies.

The profiles of the 17 cases in Table 2 conform well with the model. All the states, with the exception of Lebanon and Ethiopia (of which Eritrea was part of a United Nations-sponsored federation), are 'new', either as post-colonial states, or as successor states of the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia. All contain numerous language, religious, and ethnic groups. With the possible exception of Indonesia in 1965, where virtually all citizens were excluded at the national level from political participation under a scheme called 'guided democracy' (meaning authoritarian rule by Sukarno) and in Sierra Leone in 1992, in all the other cases a specific and identifiable social group or community was formally discriminated against or excluded from national political participation and/or from government allocations. In many instances, the forms of exclusion included physical threats to members of the community or to their institutions. A tipping event is a matter of judgement, perhaps easier to make *post-facto* than at the time of the event. But the events in these cases were so distinct and such marked deviations from the patterns of ordinary life in the communities, that they have a special political significance. In *all* cases, they preceded massive blood-letting that resulted in many thousands of deaths and large refugee flows.

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<sup>6</sup> The concept of humanitarian emergency is a social construct designed to deal with only a limited range of phenomena. The numbers killed or at risk do not seem to be the prime criterion for qualification as a humanitarian emergency. Massive killings and refugee flows have usually been dubbed a humanitarian emergency only when there is some prospect that the international community can do something about them. There was substantial if not entirely accurate knowledge about the massive starvation in China that resulted from Mao Tse-tung's 'Great Leap Forward' in the late 1950s and the Great Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s, but no one called them humanitarian emergencies. Similar comments would apply to the 1965-1966 events in Indonesia, Idi Amin's killings in Uganda in the 1970s, and the like.

TABLE 2  
STRUCTURE AND OUTCOMES:  
POLITICAL SOURCES OF HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

State year/type	Power holders	Excluded groups	Means of exclusion	Tipping event(s)	Outcomes	Victims
Ethiopia 1961-91 (weak)	Ethiopian monarchy	Eritreans and Eritrean autonomous status as part of Ethiopia-Eritrea federation	Steps to erase Eritrean autonomy, including dissolving legislature, banning trade unions, replacing president, removing flag, 1953-62	Formal dissolution of federation; attempts to impose Amharic as sole national language; first ELF military attacks, Sept. 1961.	War of secession, 1961-91	60,000 military casualties; 40,000 civilian casualties; 750,000-1 million refugees
Burma 1962 (weak/predatory)	Burman military élites	Shan, Chin, Indians, Mons, etc.	Rescind constitutional autonomy arrangements; expulsion.	Military overthrow of civilian, constitutional regime	Armed resistance; wars of secession by minorities	85,000 war casualties; 250,000 refugees
Rwanda 1962 (weak)	Hutu	Tutsi, moderate Hutus	Mass killings, executions, forced exile, imprisonment; total exclusion from power	Electoral victory of virulently anti-Tutsi Hutus in 1961; Tutsi refugees attempt military return, small incursions from Burundi and Uganda.	Politicide: mass killing of Tutsi civilians.	Up to 30,000 killed; more than 100,000 Tutsi flee to neighbouring countries
Indonesia, 1965-66 (weak)	Sukarno	Most organized opposition groups, particularly PKI (communists)	'Guided Democracy,' with only informal consultations at national level	Sept. 30 military coup, with PKI complicity, followed by military counter-coup.	Politicide: military and civilian slaughter of PKI members and a few minorities; govt stands aside while thousands of private scores are settled, October 1965-March 1966	250,000 to 500,000 killed; thousands displaced but few refugees
Burundi 1972 (weak)	Tutsi (military)	Hutu	Tutsi-dominated military takeover and cancellation of elections; subsequent Tutsi-dominated kinship alliances	Hutu small armed raid from Zaire on coastal settlements, with Tutsis targeted	Politicide: purge and slaughter of educated Hutus by military and youth-wing militia	100,000-200,000 Hutu deaths, about 750,000 refugees to Rwanda, Zaire, Tanzania
Nigeria 1966 (weak)	Majority of posts held by northern Nigerians	Ibos felt discriminated against, excluded from political participation	informal means, help to create Ibos as 'outgroup' par excellence	Military coup July 1966; rule by northerners; Mob riots directed against Ibos in northern Nigeria, Sept. 1966	'Thousands' killed in mob riots, more than 1 million Ibo refugees flee northern Nigeria; war of secession	1 million killed
Pakistan 1970-71 (weak)	Power sharing, but inequitable access to positions + allocations to Bengalis. Severe economic discrimination against Bengalis, failure to provide aid after 1970 hurricanes with many thousand casualties	Bengalis of East Pakistan	Cancel election results maldistribution of gov't positions and allocations	Dec. 1970 constituent assembly elections; subsequent meetings cancelled. Govt moves 70,000 troops into E. Pakistan with order to murder politicians, intellectuals, and Hindus.	Politicide: arrest of East. Pakistan leaders; massacres of Hindus and Bengalis; formation of 'Mukhti Bahini' secession mvt Reprisals against East Pakistani troops and sympathizers; Bengali murder of Bihari Muslims.	1 million to 3 million murdered; 6 million to 8 million refugees go to India for safety

Table continues...

Table 2 (continues)

State year/type	Power holders	Excluded groups	Means of exclusion	Tipping event(s)	Outcomes	Victims
Sri Lanka 1978- (strong)	Sinhalese	Tamils	Constitutional revisions reducing Tamil access to power and social services	Ambush of army troops by LTTE, with 13 casualties, 23/7/83, followed by anti-Tamil pogroms	War of secession (continuing)	Initial pogroms lead to 200-600 deaths, several thousand homeless; about 60,000 casualties since war began
Uganda 1976 (weak)	Idi Amin (Nubians/ Kakwa)	Acholi, Langi, East Asians	Rule by terror, no legal basis for exclusions and killings	Assassination attempt on Amin, June 1976	Politicide and partial ethnocide: slaughter of actual and potential opponents	50,000-300,000 killed
Lebanon 1976 (weak)	Political system dominated by Christian groups constituting a minority of pop.	Muslim groups, constituting a majority of Lebanese population	Refusal to alter 1942 constitution to better reflect population distributions		Civil/sectarian war	25,000 killed
Sudan 1983 (weak/ predatory)	Muslim domination of government	Southern animists, Christians, Africans, tribals	Reneged on 1972 decentralization agreements; undermine self-rule in south; impose Islamic criminal law on non-Muslim populations	Boor mutiny, by southern troops in Sudan army, violently repressed, 1983; 1988: gov't withdraws all constitutional proposals	SPLM-led insurrection to create a 'democratic, united, socialist Sudan	70,000 combat casualties; 260,000 deaths through starvation/disease; 400,000 refugees, 3.5 million displaced persons
Somaliland 1988 (weak/ anarchical)	Somali clan (Siad Barre)	Isaaq clan	Formal/informal exclusion from power and gov't allocations	Small armed incursion by Somali refugees in Ethiopia, into Somaliland	Reprisal, politicide: violent razing of Hargeiso and Barao by Barre (Somali) forces; followed by full secession war	60,000 civilians killed 400,000-500,000 refugees flee to Ethiopia
Croatia 1991 (medium)	Croatians	Serbs	Constitutional revision, dismissal of Serbs from official positions	Armed resistance, Serbian armed intervention	Territorial war and armed resistance	10,000 war casualties; 200,000 refugees
Bosnia 1992 (weak, aborted)	Power-sharing among social groups	Serbs (potential only)	(potential only)	April 1992 plebiscite producing Muslim-dominated independent Bosnia	Armed secession/ Serbian intervention	10,000-30,000 war casualties; ethnic cleansing; 906,000 refugees
Tajikistan 1992 (aborted)	Communist party	Clan-based leaders, Muslim organizations, democratic opposition	Party monopoly on participation, fraudulent elections	Collapse of USSR, opposition demonstrations, Feb. 1990 riots	Civil war	20,000-50,000 war casualties; 174,000 refugees
Sierra Leone 1992 (weak/ anarchical)	none	none	Massive corruption	April 1992 coup	Breakdown of civil authority; widespread army looting/killing	Unknown civilian casualties; 280,000 refugees to Guinea, 100,000 to Liberia
Rwanda 1994 (medium)	Hutu	Tutsi, moderate Hutu	Killing, forced exile, formal exclusion of all Tutsis from office and gov't allocations	Tutsi invasion from Uganda; shootdown of plane/ death of Hutu president, April 1994. Government radicals order militias to begin killing Tutsis and their sympathizers	Politicide/ethnocide	250,000-500,000 killed; 1.5 million refugees



The argument that insecure and weakly-legitimate governments rather than primordial hatreds or spontaneous communal strife are a main source of humanitarian emergencies is partly borne out by the data. In 6 of the cases, governments clearly initiated the killing. In the case of Pakistan in 1971 and Rwanda in 1994, the mass murders had been planned and organized by governments long before the bloodletting. In 6 other cases, relatively minor armed incidents organized by rebels or insurgents led to massive government-sponsored and/or organized reprisals against designated groups within society. In these instances, the government clearly used minor provocations as justifications to unleash 'politicides' against its own citizens. In the remaining 5 cases, armed secessionist movements began the killing (Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Eritrea, Croatia, Bosnia), but this had usually been preceded by government-sponsored or tolerated pogroms against the resisting or seceding communities. We must conclude, then, that it is usually the policies of governments, often lacking legitimacy and therefore highly insecure, rather than random or spontaneous violence between communities that precede most humanitarian emergencies.

Correlations and observation of common processes do not meet ordinary standards of causal analysis. Each of the cases in this account ended with a humanitarian emergency. Causal explanations, in these circumstances, would be self-fulfilling tautologies. For this reason I have avoided causal terminology and emphasized correlates, risks, and probabilities. To provide more than suggestive portraits of high-risk situations, we would have to include a number of states which share the characteristics of the sample, and yet which did *not* end with a humanitarian emergency. We would have to ask questions about non-events and entertain counter-factuals. For example, why did not Malaysia in the early 1960s break down into communal warfare or government repression? How did Singapore secede peacefully from Malaysia? Why was there no communal war or government-sponsored exclusion in Fiji in the late 1980s? Why has Guyana avoided major bloodshed, even though in the 1970s the government practised various forms of exclusion against the non-Indian population? Why was the secession of Slovenia relatively peaceful compared to the secessions of Croatia and Bosnia? Why have the Cameroons, with about 130 major ethnic groups and two official languages, managed to avoid humanitarian emergencies, while neighbouring Nigeria suffered a major war of secession and continues to practice systematic violation of human rights? In brief, to make statements endowed with a reasonable degree of causal certainty, a study of the political sources of humanitarian emergencies would have to include both states that were the scenes of disasters and states that somehow avoided them even in the presence of high risk characteristics.

Table 3 summarizes the facts in Table 2. If not certain causes, there are significant correlates of humanitarian emergencies. First, a high proportion of the cases take place in new states, all of which were or are socially diverse and often fragmented. Second, all but three of the cases occurred in states that were weak in terms of legitimacy and one of these, Rwanda, was certainly not a strong state (designated medium). Significant proportions of the national community did not extend loyalty to the state, usually because they were the objects of systematic discrimination and exclusion. Not

infrequently, they were also targets of organized violence. Sri Lanka is the possible exception. Here, discrimination and communal violence organized by segments of radical nationalist Sinhalese against Tamils were not sponsored by the government. The government in the 1970s was in fact a functioning parliamentary democracy, but was under severe pressure from radicals who wanted to create a state Buddhist religion, a single official state language (Sinhalese) and formal discrimination against Tamils in the field of education. Government leaders who resisted these pressures were often the targets of assassination attempts. I classify Sri Lanka as the only strong state, but it is a matter of degree. By the early 1980s, the state no longer commanded the loyalty of either the extreme Sinhalese nationalists or a significant proportion of Tamil separatists.

TABLE 3  
POLITICAL CORRELATES OF HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

State	New	Weak	Exclusion	Tipping	Gov't org. killing	Group org. killing	External involvement	Type of emergency
Ethiopia		X	X	X		X		C
Burma	X	X	X	X	X			V
Rwanda	X		X	X	X			V
Indonesia	X	X	X	X	X		?	V
Burundi	X	X	X	X	X			V
Nigeria	X	X	X	X		X		V
Pakistan	X	X	X	X	X			V
Sri Lanka	X		X	X		X		V
Uganda	X	X	X		X			V
Lebanon		X	X			X	X	V
Sudan	X	X	X	X		X		C
Somaliland	X	X	X	X		X		V
Croatia	X		X	X	X	X	X	V
Bosnia	X	X		X		X	X	V
Tajikistan	X	X	X	X	X			V
Sierra Leone	X	X		X	X		X	C
Rwanda (1994)	X		X	X	X		X	C

Note: V = violent humanitarian emergency C = complex humanitarian emergency

Formalized systems of discrimination and exclusion were in place in 15 of the 17 cases, a finding that is consistent with Gurr's conclusions (1996:65) based on a much larger universe of cases. Since 1992, Sierra Leone had a predatory and corrupt government but apparently did not select distinct groups for formal exclusion. Prior to the armed secession of the Republica Srpska in 1992, Bosnia had a functioning parliamentary system. There were undoubtedly unofficial forms of discrimination against Serbs, but no systematic exclusionist policies were institutionalized by the Muslim majority.

Tipping events were prominent in a large majority of the cases. Here it is important to point out that in some cases it was *elections* that led to the carnage. In Rwanda, 1961, the electoral victory of radical anti-Tutsi Hutus paved the way for subsequent mass executions of Tutsis and moderate Hutus. The 1970 Pakistan elections, in which the Awami League based in East Pakistan won a massive victory, led the federal

government under Yahya Khan to organize a plan to crush the Bengali separatists and to maintain the unity of the country through murder and violence. In 1992, the referendum validating a Bosnian declaration of independence from Yugoslavia turned the Bosnian Serbs from a majority in Yugoslavia into a minority in Bosnia. This was the signal to begin the armed secession of the Serbs, the creation of the Republica Srpska, and the subsequent ethnic cleansing of all territories under its control.

There are circumstances, then, when elections and referenda may help lead to humanitarian emergencies. This is particularly the case where social cleavages are deep and thus where elections amount to little more than a census. In fact, they may have the consequence of formalizing and perpetuating these cleavages by destroying cross-cutting loyalties that may have existed prior to the elections. Elections in weak, multi-communal states may also have a very different meaning than they do in liberal democracies, for they signify not the victory of a shifting coalition that can be unseated later, depending upon performance, but the virtual or real *perpetual* rule of one group over other(s). De Tocqueville worried about the 'tyranny of the majority' in early nineteenth century America, but in the United States there were checks and balances and a lively civil society. In contrast, in many of the scenes of humanitarian emergencies there are no checks and balances and the civil society, if it exists at all, has few means to deflect authorities who are bent on curbing the rights and opportunities of minorities and other groups (Cf., Young 1994). Whether justified or not, following the 1992 plebiscite validating independence from Yugoslavia, a number of Serbs in Bosnia suddenly perceived themselves to be a beleaguered minority within a Muslim-dominated independent Bosnia. In other words, their security as a community was threatened, if not undermined, by the ostensibly democratic device of a plebiscite. Elections in these circumstances are not instruments of conflict resolution, but tipping events that help transform social tensions into pogroms, armed combat, riots, and 'ethnic cleansing' (Holsti 1996:ch. 9).

In the other cases, tipping events provided justifications for taking up arms or implementing previously-planned government programmes of mass executions. Rwanda in 1994 is the most infamous recent case, but Pakistan in 1970-71 shows the same pattern, as does Indonesia in 1965. Attempts at secession, however weak, also often gave rise to massive government retaliation. Localized guerrilla operations in Eritrea starting in 1961 brought forth major armed reprisals from Ethiopia. Minor rebel incursions into Burundi in 1972 provided the justification for a government-organized slaughter of up to 200,000 Hutus. Siad Barre's response to an armed incursion of Somali refugees from Ethiopia into Somalia led to the razing of two cities with about 60,000 civilian casualties. And once Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia, its Serb population, primarily in Krajina, rose to secede from the new Croat state, ultimately to be physically removed by invading Croatian forces in 1995 in one of the last major acts of ethnic cleansing of the Yugoslav wars.

## IX THE INTERNATIONAL FACTOR

To this point, the diagnosis has isolated states from the international environment in which they exist and interact. States are frequently the targets of actions by others. Some are designed to sustain and strengthen them; others may have the reverse effect. Let us examine some of these external sources of strength and weakness. The literature is robust with hunches, speculations, and generalizations. It is less impressive from an empirical point of view. The statements below offer only a checklist of *possible* or *potential* influences rather than firm causal connections.

### 9.1 The international system as a sustainer of state strength

European powers, including the United States, did not abandon their great colonial projects easily. All of them expended lives and considerable fortunes after World War II in efforts to maintain the integrity of their respective empires. The French paid the highest costs, the Belgians the lowest. However, under prodding from the United States, from such newly-independent countries as India, and the non-aligned such as Yugoslavia, the imperial powers ultimately ceased to resist the principle of self-determination which was, after all, of their own making. Once the principle of independence was granted, the former imperial powers, supported by a number of smaller countries with no imperial history (Canada, the Scandinavian countries), joined with the increasing majority in the United Nations in the great 'nation-building' (sic) project.

This was fundamentally an enterprise to sustain and help develop the 'peoples' and territories that had been emancipated from colonialism into something akin to modern Western states. Like the anti-colonial leaders, the former imperial powers never considered alternatives to the state. The colonies, no matter how fictional, were simply to be transformed into carbon copies of France, Denmark, or the United States. In short order, developed United Nations members quickly helped to transform colonial institutions into state institutions. Hordes of Western and socialist advisors, including missionaries and private experts, descended upon the new states to help develop their bureaucracies, to write constitutions, to organize elections, to train police, and above all, to help create modern military forces. In the economic realm, technical assistance, loans, grants, and educational exchanges (usually only in one direction) were all designed to assist in the process of 'modernization' and economic 'takeoff'.

The new states were welcomed to the rapidly-growing network of international institutions, often without requiring any credentials for membership such as effective sovereignty. Where former colonies, upon achieving independence, began to disintegrate – as in the Congo – the United Nations intervened militarily to prevent successful armed secessions. The United Nations also passed resolutions underlining the view that the act of de-colonization was an expression of self-determination and that any

subsequent attempts 'aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national [sic] unity and territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter (UN Document A/4684, 1960). The colonial populations, in brief, constituted a 'people' for purposes of self-determination, and any groups within the new territorial states that might seek independence on the basis of ethnicity, language, or religion, would not have a valid claim.

The former imperial powers' commitment to the success of the 'nation-building' exercise is measured in part by the money they were willing to spend to strengthen the new states. A very rough figure of US\$60 billion annually (not including aid from socialist countries) in foreign aid is one indicator. Another is the grant (not sale) of weapons and the provision of training facilities. In some new countries, as much as fifty per cent of the government budget came from external sources. And for the militaries, frequently 100 per cent of their arms came from abroad. No doubt a large part of these massive expenditures can be explained in terms of the strategic interests of cold war participants. Others would claim that the funds were spent primarily to maintain the coherence of the world capitalist system, and were thus just features of neo-colonialism (Cf., Galtung 1971). The great powers certainly intervened to support indigenous regimes (France in West Africa, the United States in Central America), or to topple them if too radical (the British and Americans in Iran, 1951, the United States crusades against Guatemala, Cuba and Nicaragua, the Soviet Union in Afghanistan), but their purpose was to support or sustain government personnel, not to weaken the state. The consequences of these armed interventions might very well have been to prolong civil wars and, ultimately, to weaken the state, as in Afghanistan, but that was not the original intention.

On balance, then, the actions, policies, and norms, such as the entitlement of the poor to receive from the rich and the prohibition against granting recognition to sub-national self-determination movements, were designed to support, sustain, and strengthen states.

## **9.2 External forces that weaken states**

But there is a case to be made that sometimes the support did in fact weaken the state, whatever original intentions. The charge that the Western powers were overly sympathetic to, and supporting of, odious regimes so long as they paraded strong anti-Communist credentials, has foundations. The same charge can be levelled against socialist governments which spent considerable fortunes supporting the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia, Siad Barre in Somalia, Fidel Castro in Cuba, and Pol Pot in Kampuchea. Many of these regimes had terrible human rights records and in their predatory and exclusionist practices, they undermined their fragile legitimacy. When they had run the gamut of policies to kill their opponents, and when the foreign assistance dried up or was switched elsewhere, the states broke down into civil war and some, such as Kampuchea and Somalia, collapsed. The values of 'stability', anti-communism, and 'socialist solidarity' appeared to override more democratic values, or values that promoted harmony rather than strife between communities in weak states. Finally, great power armed intervention to support or topple regimes frequently prolonged rather than shortened the agonies of weak states. It was not by chance alone that with the end of the cold war, peace was made swiftly in Angola, Mozambique,

Ethiopia, and the middle east, all areas of great power rivalry and occasional armed intervention.

These are all cases of overt state-weakening actions. There are also more subtle international forces that may work to weaken states and, hence, to increase the risks of humanitarian emergencies. The international arms trade certainly has to be considered. Today, unlike the 1960s, even though major weapons producers do not actively promote arms sales, the availability of weapons on international markets is unlimited and unregulated. Predatory regimes no longer need foreign military aid to exclude and threaten their populations. It is the case, nevertheless, that a large portion of the official grants and sales of arms to weak states were made in the full knowledge that those arms would probably be used against civilians and domestic insurgents rather than against external enemies--if there were any. It would be stretching credulity, for example, to believe that Indonesia or Burma, which purchased arms from a variety of external sources, would use them against some external threat in the 1960s.

But arms are symptoms, seldom causes. It is the fundamental nature of the international system and the values, practices, and structures that were implanted in the non-Western areas of the world through imperialism and colonialism that fundamentally created the dilemmas of many weak states. The colonial legacy has already been mentioned, particularly in relation to the construction and destruction of communities. The imperial system also deeply affected the nature of statehood. Dependency theorists have noted, for example, that the structural relationship between local and metropolitan economic and political élites led to 'disarticulated' economies and weak states that were cut off from the masses (Wendt and Barnett 1993:331-32). These élites were integrated into the world system and ultimately came to depend on foreigners for developing coercive capacities with which to rule over their restive populations. Rather than make compromises with those populations, they resorted to coercion, usually backed by external parties. This is a plausible account for the development of weak states, but it is not a universal one. It would not, for example, cover the numerous cases where a nationalist and a populist such as Nehru, Sukarno, Nkrumah, and Nasser set his own terms for collaboration with the West. If their states were weak, it was not because of their very thin integration into the world capitalist system.

Finally, recent critiques of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund suggest that some of their policies fundamentally diminish the legitimacy of loan and credit recipients. The imposition of severe austerity measures within states that already suffer from a legitimacy deficit may help provide conditions for armed resistance. Some, for example, have noted a correlation between the successes of the Sendero Luminoso in Peru and the imposition of severe economic retrenchment policies in that Andean country. Susan Woodward (1995) has noted the role of the IMF in helping to weaken the federal state in Yugoslavia when it was faced with increased fragmenting pressures from the constituent republics in 1989-90. There was no intention on the part of the IMF to bring about the weakening of the federation – actually quite the reverse was intended – but the orthodox formulas for transition from a socialist to free market economy helped undermine the legitimacy of the federal authorities and provided increased leverage among republic political leaders for demanding the dilution of federal powers.

It is difficult to offer any generalizations about how the international system and external actors impinge upon the problems of weak states. There is much evidence that can be marshalled on either side of the argument. We can suggest, however, that the international community in general has provided strong support for the juridical status of states; that is, it supports their sovereignty in law, and the practice for the most part has been to withhold support from secessionist groups. Even the Soviet Union, a champion of 'national liberation' of colonies, scrupulously avoided providing material support for secessionist movements in post-colonial states. Alex Heraclides (1990) found on the basis of seven in-depth case studies that on balance the forces favouring state integrity have prevailed.

On the other hand, foreign powers and arms merchants have frequently intervened in weak states to help undermine the legitimacy of regimes. It is a generalization, perhaps, but the United States has with considerable consistency favoured Pinochet-type regimes, those committed to economic orthodoxy and anti-communism at the cost of political pluralism and social experimentation. The Soviet Union's record of support for murderous regimes, such as in Ethiopia during the 1970s and 1980s, is well-chronicled. The French have frequently intervened in the internal affairs of francophone African regimes to protect their interests. Questions of democracy, human rights, political pluralism, often promoted by weak but budding indigenous civil societies, have seldom been encouraged when they might oppose regime interests. But these are general observations that await empirical validation. For clues to the role of the external environment in individual cases, we need to examine the selection of cases used in this study.

### **9.3 External influences on humanitarian emergencies: evidence from the cases**

External actors, both governmental and non-governmental, become involved in the domestic politics of almost all weak states. The act of diplomatic recognition, for example, provides a regime with international and domestic legitimacy that an unrecognized entity (e.g., the Turkish Republic of Cyprus) does not enjoy. If external agents become involved only *after* a war of secession, civil war, or politicide begins, it is not part of the analysis. Such post-event interventions may help explain why a crisis ends or is prolonged, but it does not help locate its aetiology.

#### *Eritrea*

After the formal federation of Eritrea with Ethiopia, thanks to a UN General Assembly decision in 1949, the Ethiopian monarchy received considerable outside assistance, both economic and military. There is no evidence, however, that it received encouragement from abroad to abrogate the federation and forcibly to incorporate Eritrea into the unitary empire. It should be noted, however, that many of Haile Selassie's foreign patrons did not oppose his project of imperial consolidation (Iyob 1995). Some Arab countries provided assistance for the Eritreans, but it came only after the start of the armed campaign of secession. It can be argued that had the great powers and a few

others formally embargoed all arms sales to Haile Selassie, he might not have had the physical means to destroy the federation. This is at best a speculation.

### *Rwanda*

French help in strengthening distinctions between Hutus and Tutsis has been chronicled and documented. The French favoured the minority Tutsis, but they did not create the social division. The Tutsis had ruled over the Hutus long before the French inherited the former German colony. Perhaps the French could be faulted not so much for what they did as for what they did not do, namely promote a more inclusive political system and take active measures to reduce the social distance and discrimination between Tutsi and Hutu.

### *Indonesia*

There is no evidence of a direct foreign complicity in the massacres of 1965-66. Nevertheless, the PKI (communists) had close relations with China and a load of weapons from China, ostensibly sent to PKI cadres, was on its way to Indonesia when the attempted September 30 coup took place. This attempt, however, was a tipping event which brought forth massive reprisals against Indonesia communists. The PKI-Chinese connection was a factor, but hardly a sufficient condition for the killing.

### *Burundi*

Some of the comments about Rwanda, above, would apply to Burundi as well. French colonial policy which strongly favoured maintaining the Tutsi domination of Burundi politics was an overhang that significantly increased the risks of humanitarian emergency, in this case massacres of Hutus. We should keep in mind, however, that similar French policies in West Africa did not lead to similar outcomes.

### *Nigeria*

There is no evidence of direct and instigating external forces in the very complicated politics of Nigerian federalism in the 1960s. There were constant social and political tensions between the different peoples and regions of the country. These were certainly among the legacies of the British decision to create a Nigerian federation instead of a collection of separate ethnic/religious/language states. Given the extreme social diversity of the Nigerian federation, conflict was highly predictable. However, without the tipping events of the July 1966 coup and the massacres of Ibos in Northern Nigeria in the autumn, the probabilities of armed secession by Biafra would have been much lower. Oil politics and French influence over the Ibos may have played a role in this tragedy, but there is little to indicate that they were either necessary or sufficient conditions for armed violence.

### *Sudan*

There is no evidence of external forces instigating the war between the Muslims and Africans of Sudan. As in most of the cases, however, the colonial overhang of creating a state out of the social maelstrom that constituted Sudan's society at independence is a



factor. The colonial legacy certainly increased the risks of humanitarian disaster. The partition of the colony prior to independence might have helped avoid the prolonged civil war that continues.

### *Sri Lanka*

The war between the Tamil LTTE and the national government forces was essentially an indigenous affair. India's peacekeeping force ultimately ended up fighting on behalf of the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. There was some clandestine support for the LTTE from Tamils in India that may have helped sustain the military campaign to this day, but that would help explain only why the war continues, not why it started.

### *Uganda*

Colonial overhang again is relevant in the sense that the politics of Uganda prior to Idi Amin were strongly influenced by ethnicity, but there is no direct connection between Amin's atrocities and external forces. To the extent that there was any effort to influence domestic politics in Uganda, it was on the side of reining in Amin rather than assisting him. The United States applied economic sanctions against Uganda, OAU members expressed their displeasure at his behaviour, and ultimately Tanzania intervened militarily to depose him. Amin's unique style of tyranny and atrocity reflects individual psychopathology more than systemic sources.

### *Lebanon*

Syria, France, and the United States, among others, played direct roles in Lebanese politics. Israel played an indirect role, although after the beginning of the civil war, Israel became directly involved through military and other means. The Lebanese civil war was played out against the backdrop of the larger Middle East problem. However, despite impressive arguments to the contrary (Rasler 1992), most of the evidence points predominantly to local sources in the origins of the armed conflict. The basic issue was the predominance of Christian sects established through the 1942 constitution, in a society in which Muslims had become a majority and were frequently excluded from official positions. External influences, mostly Syrian, certainly complicated issues and might have helped propel the situation toward war, but it is difficult to make a convincing case that they were necessary or sufficient causes of the conflict. Nevertheless, I have categorized the Lebanese war as having been in part instigated by external sources.

### *Somaliland*

Ethiopia played a minor role in the first attempted secession of Somaliland from Somalia in 1988. It provided haven for Somaliland refugees, but it strictly desisted from providing more than sanctuary and some humanitarian assistance. The record is largely incomplete, and one could suspect greater complicity given the traditional animosity between Somalia and Ethiopia (the Ogaden War), but at this point the evidence is stronger toward Ethiopian neutrality (Pegg 1997).

## *Croatia*

The Croatian declaration of independence and the subsequent YPA (Yugoslav People's Army) invasion to maintain the integrity of Yugoslavia and to protect and aid the Serbian minority was a sufficient condition for the war. Domestic policies of excluding Serbs from government positions were equally important, perhaps more so. Premature recognition of Croatia by Germany, the EU and the United States also helped to promote armed activity (Cf., Woodward 1995:ch. 6). Even more than Lebanon, the foreign factor in this case is very strong and helped convert a high risk situation (new state, multi-community) into a humanitarian emergency.

## *Bosnia*

European presumption of the breakup of Yugoslavia, the premature and unconditional recognition of Croatia by Germany, and encouragement for holding the plebiscite in April 1992 helped to trigger the war (Woodward 1995:ch 6). Serbian military assistance and political encouragement were also vital in transforming the multi-ethnic Bosnian republic in Yugoslavia into an arena of mass murder, rape, and ethnic cleansing.

## *Tajikistan*

Russia was no doubt a background factor, but the collapse of post-communist authority was not occasioned by external forces. This is largely a home-grown civil war typical of aborted states. Russian military involvement, though low-keyed, has played a role in the war, but was not a major source of the war.

## *Sierra Leone*

There is no evidence of direct external promotion, organization, or funding of the insurgency. However, several Liberian 'armies', themselves refugees of their own collapsed state, had fled to Sierra Leone and were using its territory for actions into Liberia. There may have been some collaboration between Sierra Leone insurgents and the Liberian factions, but the sources of the crisis were predominantly local. Withdrawal of Western aid to Sierra Leone after 1991 helped precipitate an economic crisis that was instrumental in motivating the military coup of 1992.

## *Rwanda*

Uganda had offered sanctuary for Tutsi exiles from Rwanda and helped arm the Rwanda Patriotic Front (Tutsi). Most external actors, however, were working to create a peace in Rwanda. The 1993 Arusha accord was brokered by United Nations, and was specifically designed to promote ethnic reconciliation. The United Nations also sent a small force (UNAMIR I) to monitor the fragile cease-fire and accompanying process of demilitarization. The outside community, in other words, sought to help bring peace and ethnic harmony to the country.

The cases in the study reveal no consistent pattern of external promotion, organization, direction, or high-level funding of conflicts that led to humanitarian emergencies. There is not a single case in which either a great power or lesser neighbouring states' activities

were necessary or sufficient conditions for armed conflicts , although Woodward (1995) has made a strong case that European policies in Yugoslavia in 1990-92 weighed heavily on the ultimate outcome of war. There were some instances where a more aggressive stance by external powers or the United Nations might have helped *avert* armed conflict – Eritrea and Rwanda might be examples – but this is usually a view based on hindsight. In any case, the sovereignty norm precludes overt intervention in the absence of a direct request from ruling authorities. Only in the Lebanese, Sierra Leone, and Yugoslav cases is there reasonable evidence that the actions of foreign powers significantly helped to exacerbate local conflicts to the point of armed violence. But, given the local dynamics, it is unlikely that these actions (e.g., premature German recognition of Croatian independence) were sufficient to propel the rivals to war.

## X WEAK STATE TYPES AND TYPES OF HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

A final question is whether the different types of state weakness, ranging from weak, 'phantom' and collapsed states, produce different types of humanitarian emergencies. Väyrynen (1996:36) distinguishes violent from complex humanitarian crises. The former involve primarily war casualties and refugee flows (displacement). Complex crises include, as well, disease and hunger.

Of the 17 cases, I have classified four as complex. In the Sudan, drought was associated with the on-going civil war, but it was not drought that caused the conflict. The war, however, seriously disrupted humanitarian assistance, thereby increasing casualties. The same situation prevailed during part of the 30-year secession war in Eritrea. In Sierra Leone, disease and malnutrition followed upon the rampage of looting and expropriation of the leaderless military. In Rwanda, disease and hunger were primarily the legacies and not the causes of the genocide and the resulting flow of refugees into neighbouring countries. No particular conclusions flow from the figures.

Absolute numbers of victims follow no particular pattern either because of the great variation in the conflicts that gave rise to humanitarian emergencies. The Eritrean secession war claimed at least 100,000 lives, but the armed conflict lasted for thirty years. In contrast, about one-half million perished as a result of the Rwandan genocide that took place within several weeks; in Somaliland, 60,000 perished in several days.

The only safe generalization is that by and large, government-sponsored and/or organized politicides have the greatest human costs. On average, the number of victims of politicides has been significantly higher than those resulting from civil and secession wars.<sup>7</sup> The most infamous post-1945 politicide was Pol Pot's decimation of Cambodia's population in 1976-78. Following not far behind was the organized murder of Bengalis by Pakistani troops in 1970, the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the 250,000 to one-half million victims of the post-coup carnage in Indonesia in 1965-66, and the targeted destruction of 100,000 to 200,000 Hutus in Burundi. Idi Amin's victims in Uganda numbered up to 300,000. There are many other cases where either the absolute number of deaths neared or exceeded one million (the Great Cultural Revolution in China, another politicide) or where the number of victims – either murdered or sent fleeing – exceeded ten per cent of the country's population (e.g., Macias Nguema's victims in Equatorial Guinea, where hundreds were killed and one-third of the country's population fled).

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<sup>7</sup> Using Gurr's (1996: 65) figures based on 50 episodes of genocide and politicide, a minimum of 9 million and a maximum of 20 million civilians perished. If we take the median of 14.5 million casualties for 50 events, the average casualty rate is 290,000 victims per politicide, a figure substantially above the casualty rate for civil and secessionist wars.

The number of casualties resulting from secessionist wars, civil wars, and state collapse are in general substantially lower than those resulting from politicides. The average number of killed in the 6 cases of politicide is 588,000. The average number of combat and civilian casualties from internal wars, including wars of secession and state collapse, is 266,000, or a ratio of 2.2:1. Politicides result, in brief, in more than twice as many casualties as internal wars.<sup>8</sup>

Even allowing for the great uncertainties and unevenness of casualty statistics, differences of this magnitude cannot be due to chance or to imprecise data. There seems to be a very distinct profile of victims--particularly those killed. In politicides, specific groups made up mostly of citizens are targeted for extermination. The purpose is not to destroy a military force or various types of armed resistance to the state, but to eliminate an entire segment of the civilian population. In many cases, it is the higher educated, politically active élites of social and ethnic groups. Wars, in contrast, have the specific purpose of (i) defeating an armed adversary; (ii) capturing state power; and/or (iii) seceding from the state. Civilians become trapped in war zones, or they may be coerced to provide haven, sanctuary, and sustenance to armies. In wars for territory, populations may be forcefully expelled, as in Bosnia and Croatia. Any type of resistance may bring death, but the normal purpose of wars is not to destroy distinct elements of the society but to capture power. Citizens in these wars are usually innocent victims. In politicides, they are deliberately targeted. The collapse of states may lead to high civilian deaths if no local sources of security can develop, but usually as in Somalia, civilian deaths, hunger, and disease are consequences rather than the purposes of military actions.

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<sup>8</sup> In making these calculations, numbers are partly skewed by several outliers or extreme events. If we eliminate them (the Pakistan politicide of 1970-71 and the Eritrean and Biafran wars), the ratio of average victims of politicides to victims of wars increases from 2.2:1 to 3.7:1. The generalization holds.

## XI EVALUATION OF FINDINGS

All humanitarian emergencies have their individual and unique characteristics. However, when we compare across several cases, there seems to be common patterns, or a morphology of crisis. To use Suganami's (1996) work on the methodology of war causation, there may be 'families' of causes that share many features, but where individual details are not identical. In the cases reviewed here, we can identify few necessary or sufficient conditions, but many of the background attributes of states, combined with exclusionist policies and tipping events, seem to predict to increasingly high risks of humanitarian emergencies. I have chosen to characterize the problem as a process, where attributes combine with actions to create increasingly dangerous risks of political and social violence. New and weak states, often bearing structural colonial legacies such as arbitrary borders, provide the background attributes. Governments, however, make choices, and frequently these undermine their legitimacy. The choices frequently include discrimination and exclusion, and sometimes great peril and threat to specific communities within the state. Often these measures are designed to strengthen the government. In fact, they have the reverse effect: they diminish both vertical and horizontal legitimacy. Playing the ethnic or community card is a dangerous strategy. It may bring short-term political gains for incumbents, but in the long run it destroys the affective foundation of the state. Elsewhere, I have termed this the state-strength dilemma (Holsti 1996:ch. 6).

Tipping events transform the weakening structure of legitimacy between communities and between communities and the state, into violence. Either governments go after real or imagined opponents or, more frequently, they target entire communities for 'extreme measures'. Communities at risk take up arms in self-defense or attempt to secede from the state which has become a threat to their autonomy, culture, economy, or existence. The resulting battles and massacres lead to hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions of refugees.

The political sources of humanitarian emergencies are complex, but this diagnostic exercise has sought to demonstrate that there are conditions, policies, and paths that significantly increase the risks. Frequently those can be identified prior to the disasters, but the international community seems to have little political will to intervene in a preventive sense. The warning signals of war in Yugoslavia or Eritrea, of politicides in Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi, and of state collapse in Somalia were highly visible, in some cases months before the tipping events that sparked the catastrophes took place. But despite pleas by successive secretaries-general of the United Nations, and sometimes by individual governments, there is no sure path to political prevention. To the extent that diagnostic exercises can help uncover patterns and paths, we might at least begin to develop the informational base upon which political action must be based.

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