The Study of Modern Intrastate War

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Introduction

In 1871, the Russian battle painter Vasily Vereshchagin crafted one his most famous and controversial works: "The Apotheosis of War". This piece was intended to act as a damning critique of the effects of warfare, which had been initiated by the leaders of warring parties, on civilians. The painting depicts a pyramid of skulls in a desert with the ruins of a city in the background. The etched dedication of the picture declares: "to all conquerors, who were, who are, and who will be". With such renderings, the picture communicates the ubiquitous sense of catastrophe, destruction and death that is brought to everyday people by conflict.

Although this work was completed some time before such events, the painting has carried a troublesome resonance when the effects of the conflicts of the twentieth and twenty first centuries are considered. This has been particularly discernable in the intrastate, ethnic or "new" wars (Kaldor, 1999) that have transpired since the end of the Second World War. Indeed, the remnants of the Rwandan Genocide, which have been showcased through the preservation of the skulls and bones of the victims, seem to harrowingly mimic the pictorial renderings of Vereshchagin.

As such, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that contemporary intrastate wars provide foundations for immense human suffering. This suffering seems to permeate into all aspects of the societies experiencing conflict, particularly into the homes of ordinary people. As Turton (1997:77) laments, "they are particularly destructive of the lives and livelihoods of civilians; and they are waged not against an invisible enemy but against neighbors, friends and even relatives". The theatres of the most high profile cases of extreme violence have been inclusive of the Balkans, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Sudan, Indonesia, the Middle East, Afghanistan, and several other countries.

The actual destructive effects of intrastate wars over the past few decades have been difficult to estimate. It is suggested that as many as 20–30 million people have perished in intrastate wars since 1945 (Miall, Ramsbottom and Woodhouse, 1999:32) and nearly 50 million people have been displaced from their homes (Holsti, 1995:32). Additionally, human rights violations during intrastate war – including mass gang rape, systematic torture, forced displacement, sexual mutilation, genocide, and the exploitation of child soldiers – have caused misery on a gargantuan scale. As a consequence, there is a crying out for more effective ways of controlling and transforming the devastating effects of intrastate war to be unearthed. However, achieving this ambition is problematic without a greater comprehension of intrastate war's causes.

Indeed, this has become a crucial subject of research for many schools of thought in the social sciences. In consequence, this review essay seeks to identify and critically engage with the central approaches to the dilemma that is contemporary intrastate war. A caveat does need to be raised that this will not be an extensive examination of every text written on the subject. Instead, this article is intended to provide an introductory overview and taste of the serious international problem of intrastate war.

Ancient Ethnic Hatreds

One of the most common approaches to understand internal war, which emerged in the early 1990s, but had its

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theoretical origins in more colonial based literature (for example see: Furnival, 1948; Shills, 1957; Smith, 1965; Isaacs, 1975), was what can be described as the "primordial" (Gertz, 1963) or "ancient ethnic hatreds" approach (Kaplin, 1993). This has been an interpretative framework for media coverage (for example see van der Gaag and Nash 1987; Myers et all 1996; Campbell 1998:51-4), many Non-Government Organisation reports (Keen, 2000: 20) and politicians (Preston, 1996; 112; Shawcross 2009:83).

The ancient ethnic hatreds approach contests that intrastate violence between factions erupts as a consequence of tribal and ethnic affiliations that have been suppressed, but never truly removed in the hearts and minds of the warring parties. Subsequently, the finalisation of the Cold War has arguably allowed the re-emergence of inter-ethnic hatreds (Snow 1996: 26, 38; Keen, 2000: 20). In elaboration, the removal of the hegemonic patronage established by the superpower re-positioning in the post Cold War era is contested to have "lifted the lid from a cauldron of long simmering hatreds" (Clinton, 1994 quoted from Brown, 2001:3). Certain studies, positioning themselves within this mindset, have also emphasised a primitive instinct for violence inherent within warring parties and there is also a stress upon the element of irrationality to the violence (Kaplin, 1994; Turton, 1997:81).

Although this framework remains somewhat ubiquitous amongst the lexicon of politicians and media outlets (Turton, 1997:78), it has been criticised academically with refrain and experienced a decline in scholarly potency over the past twenty years due to its significant deficiencies.

The first dilemma created by this approach is that it has a dangerous leaning towards racism. It could be contested that colonial stereotypes of wild and primitive savagery are evoked by proponents of this argument to instil a feeling that this violence is an expression of a form of "new barbarism" (Duffield, 2001). This is particularly true when African civil wars are analysed. As Campbell (2007:363) proposes, 'If orientalism as a discursive formation can mutate into regionally specific articulations (akin to the notion of ''Balkanism'' described by Todorova, 1997) then what this autochthonous discourse demonstrates is the power of something akin to ''Africanism'' in which the continent is homogenised, tribalised and rendered completely 'other' to its US and European counterparts'. To be sure, Campbell's proposition carries some clout. A recent study by Campbell (2007) on the Darfur crisis illuminates some of the strengths of this claim.

The second and more analytically concerned problem with this explanation is that it is essentially mono-causal. Rather than appreciate the complexity of internal conflict in relation to the interaction of various socio-economic factors, this approach proceeds to over-simplify matters substantially. A consequence of this staggering simplicity is that it has been almost impossible to validate empirically.

Aside from its empirical fragility, the ancient hatreds explanation cannot account for the timing of an outbreak of violence nor can it account for phases of inter-ethnic group co-operation or peace. It provides no explanation for why conceptualizations such as ethnic identity, which may become defined through innate hostility to another group, have such meaning when it did. Why, for example, have conceptualisations of "Arab" and "African" identity markers become so meaningful in the current Darfur conflict when they have had little salience in the past?

In addition, studies suggest that the internal war may not actually correlate to the end of the Cold War (Fearon & Laitin, 2003:77). Furthermore, there is the assumption, within this ancient ethnic hatreds framework, of a genetically based conception of ethnicity. This is a troublesome position to take as in contradiction to such conceptions, more substantiated sociological approaches to ethnicity suggest that it is something which is socially constructed and, in certain instances, a concept that is chosen, but ultimately not a concept based upon blood (Weber, 1978:389; Smith, 1986).

Progressively, a considerable exegesis falsified this ancient hatreds approach and studies began to explore the more socio-economic focused aspects of the problem. One of main ways of analysing contemporary civil conflict comes from the varied and broad dialects of structuralism.

Structuralism

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Structuralist approaches attempt to describe and identify the broad social, political, and economic factors that are asserted to ignite internal conflict. There are several different structural approaches. Initially, there is a plethora of quantitative based literature that seeks to identify the economic and political determinants of civil war (Sambanis 2001:259). Habitually, these studies use large data samples and sophisticated statistical methods of analysis to try to find correlations between the onset of internal political violence and variables related to social factors (see Elbadawi and Sambanis 2000; Henderson and Singer 2000; Maxwell and Rueveny 2000).

In a different structuralist approach, Brown (1996) develops a more straight forward framework for identifying the causes of internal wars, distinguishing between background causes and proximate causes, and identifying four main forms of factors that can lead to violence. These factors are inclusive of weak state's composition, security concerns, ethnic geography; political factors such as discriminatory political institutions, exclusionary national ideologies, inter-group politics, and elite politics; economic/social factors such as widespread economic problems, unequal economic distribution systems, modernization, and cultural/perceptual factors such as patterns of cultural discrimination and previously antagonistic group histories (Brown 1996: 573).

A recent and interesting contribution to the structuralist school comes from Monica Duffy Toft's (2003) theory exhibited in *The Geography of Ethnic Violence*. Toft argues that the primary determinant of ethnic wars is whether states and potential secessionist minorities see their particular claims over a territory as divisible or indivisible. States almost always see their territory as indivisible for fear that any secession will encourage more secessionist movements, so the important causal variable is the attitude of the minority group. These views, however, are heavily driven by structure. Toft finds that groups that constitute majorities in one region are more likely to see their territorial claims as indivisible, because they are likely to have higher confidence in the legitimacy of their self-determination claims and are more likely to attempt secession. This study contests that capability and government oppression play significant, though lesser, roles in periods of intense internal violence (Toft, 2003).

Overall, there are several distinct problems with the vast structuralist school that need to be raised. Firstly, structuralism fails to provide much explanatory power as to why similar societies that share the same structural features most commonly associated with conflict – for example poverty, ethnic divisions, grievances, weak government institutions and capability, lack of overriding national identity, and low levels of state legitimacy – seem to produce radically different conflict histories. For example, Botswana has often exhibited the potential characteristics of a weak state, yet perpetual violence has not been so engrained into the country's history in comparison to neighbouring Zimbabwe.

Secondly, despite the longevity and persistence of certain structural conditions in most conflict-ridden states, structuralism still cannot account for the timing of the outbreak of violence (Jackson, 2004). Employing a purely structuralist approach does not provide a satisfactory answer to the puzzlement of why conflicts and campaigns of extreme violence occurred when they did. Why, for example, did Rwanda erupt into genocide in 1994 and not in 1990 when the Rwandan Patriotic Army first invaded from Uganda?

Thirdly, the structuralist school pays little heed to the role of actors or agents in the outbreak and escalation of violence. As such, structuralist approaches do offer a description of the pre-conditions which may exist before the outbreak of campaigns of violence. They do not, however, delve deeper into the minds of the killers and focus upon the intent behind those who perpetrate campaigns of destruction. Intrastate war seems to be more pertinently understood as something that is man made and not simply an inevitable outcome of certain structural deficiencies within states. As a consequence, there has been a need to bring agency back into analysis. As Michael Ignatieff (1999:24-25) suggests, 'It is not only the victims whose worlds one has to enter, if one wishes to understand modern war, but the world of the gunmen, torturers, and apologists of terror. […] The horror of the world lies not just with the corpses, not just with the consequences, but with the intentions, with the minds of killers'. This shift in emphasis towards individualistically-focused intent has been a central theme addressed by the bounded rationality approaches.

Rational Choice Theory

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Rational choice theories endeavour to explain that extreme ethnic violence is the result of the actor's utility-maximizing strategy. For example, Fearon (1995), whilst examining the cases of Sudan's civil wars and Rwanda's genocide, claimed that the rationalist models are proven because the genocide can be understood as resulting from information failures, commitment problems, or rational power-conserving elite strategies. Hence, rational choice theory assumes that internal conflict is the result of an actor's rational activity of widespread interests such as prosperity, power and security

Fearon and Laitin (1996) put forward a cooperation equilibrium theory. This theory attempts to explain the escalation of conflict and spiral of the security dilemma to the point of violence that is in no one's obvious self-interest. Conflicts are said to escalate as rational individuals take steps to defend themselves. In doing so, they threaten the security of others, creating a security dilemma. Fearon and Laitin analyze why groups, when presented with an escalating security dilemma, cooperate instead of raise arms in self-interested defence. Here, the idea of a spiral equilibrium theory is raised (Fearon and Laitin 1996).

Spiral equilibrium theorizes that as others see a situation spiral toward violence, they cooperate in a self-interested way with one another and conflicting parties in order to lower tensions. The in-group policing equilibrium theorizes that groups ignore the offenses of others, assuming their own ethnic group will sanction them (Fearon and Laitin 1996).

In line with Fearon and Laitin, Walter (1997) essentially argues that cost and benefit calculation is used in making any kind of agreement. Furthermore, ethnic war will happen if one ethnic group refuses to agree because the cost is more than the benefits. Thus, it is impossible to achieve an agreement when ethnic groups in conflict meet face to face because the cost of tolerance to the other group is higher than the benefit in achieving agreement. Here, the security dilemma is the explanation of rationality to such attitudes as genocide. Lake and Rothchild (1996) develop on the analysis of the security dilemma put forward by Fearon to emphasize that ethnic war arises mainly because information failures and troubles of commitment prevent competing groups from getting a negotiated agreement that all would prefer.

A particularly influential strand of the more rational choice inclined debate is located in Collier's studies on civil wars, which examines the economic aspects of intrastate war. Collier's (2000:26-27) work argued that intrastate war was caused by "opportunities for primary commodity predation", and asserted that "objective grievance is not a powerful primary cause of conflict". Collier suggested that the key to understanding contemporary intrastate war was located in 'greed' and the desire to loot by rebel actors, rather than in any particular grievances or ideological commitments. Employing methods of economically centric analysis, Collier suggested that the probability of greed-based war breaking out in a given country was greatest under the following conditions: high primary commodity dependence, a surfeit of young, unemployed, and poorly educated men, and rapid economic decline (Collier and Hoeffler, 2000).

Collier has recently changed his position, arguing that grievance may play a larger role than initially concluded. Nevertheless, Collier's economic-centric approach has been highly influential in the field. Kaldor, for example, in her "new wars" (Kaldor, 1999) thesis asserts the significance of economic incentives for criminals who engage in ethnic war. To Kaldor, one of the important traits of "new wars" is the blurring of distinctions between war and organised crime. Additionally, Keen's (1998) work has also endeavoured to illuminate the economic benefits of contemporary internal war, at least as "immediate functions" (Keen, 2008:20) of violence.

As a general research discipline, there are important insights offered by the rational choice school. Firstly, there is the observation that elites may use ethnicity instrumentally to further their own interests. Secondly, there is an attempt to understand how fear can become manifested in violence through the security dilemma hypothesis.

In general, however, the rational choice programme's strongest advantage in the social sciences, its parsimoniousness, has also been the cause of its failure to make serious progression in the study of intrastate conflict in comparison to other approaches. In many ways, the advancement of a research programme and approach may be assessed by its ability to generate new knowledge and by its ability to cope with anomalies. But, like other deductively derived research programs, rational choice's great strength is its firmly-based axiom—that all behavior is

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best explained at the individual level and is motivated by micro-rational concerns ,which in most, although not all, formulations, dominated by hopes of individualistic material gains.

Yet this assumption that conflict or war is merely based on rational calculation and material interests seems difficult to substantiate. To be sure, there is some validity in the claim that violence can indeed be rational, but it seems difficult to assert that, even in times of intense crisis, people are not influenced strongly by emotional concerns. Would it, for example, really be plausible to suggest that "[t]he gouging out of eyes and hacking off of genitals as well as the rape of women and children, the wholesale massacre of ethnic groups within towns and villages, the desecration and destruction of the properties and houses of those viewed by the perpetrators as ethnic 'others', and the collection of men, women and children in concentration camps where torture, murder, and genocidal deprivations" (Bowman,1994) in Yugoslavia can be explained purely by rational calculation and not emotional considerations? It seems very difficult to suggest that a confident and complete answer to this proposal could be yes. The occurrences in Yugoslavia were too brutal a set of acts to be committed by those who profess to be rational and indeed it may be pertinent to suggest that emotions may play a much larger part in extreme violence than bounded rationality approaches conclude. These considerations will be turned to shortly.

Overall, then, despite aiding the project to falsify the "ancient ethnic hatreds" approach and expanding upon the limitations of the structuralist school, pure rationalist theory is incomprehensive in analyzing many case studies of intrastate conflict based on its troublesome foundations, which assert the existence of a self maximising individual being present even when acts of violence transpire. In contradistinction, psychological theories have presented greater empirical explanatory value towards ethnic violence. However, there are also problems yielded with these approaches as the next section explores.

Psychological approaches

Psychological theories present a powerful argument for explaining internal conflict and extreme violence. One of the central thinkers Horowitz (1985) introduces an emotional motivation for ethnic war. Horowitz argues that people tend to choose maximizing the difference between their group and another rather than maximizing benefits of their own group. Here, people give some benefits for their group to guarantee that the other group obtained even less. The ethnic group conflict is directed into such competition for group benefits. The consequences are that the competition fights for dominance of the state to show their group's status of superiority compared to the other group and thus the competition legitimizes the group's pursuit of a superiority status objective. Therefore, ethnic conflict is about superiority upon other groups through political domination. Horowitz's explanation argues that the psychological logic of emotional driving forces is more vigorous than economic, linguistic or any other particular benefits. At this point, Horowitz explains that in addition to the contest for dominance, fear of group extinction is also a powerful motivation for ethnic war. Such feelings of worry are because of demographic fear and domination by opposing groups in history. In short, Horowitz argues that this fear of extinction is directed to the hostile feeling, and finally leads to violence of conflicted groups (Horowitz, 1985).

Another powerful explanation for violence provided by psychological approaches concerns the emotion of prejudice. Kaufman, whose enhanced theorisations will be turned to shortly, explains that the myth-symbol complexes (Smith, 1986) of a group, including prejudice, play an important role in ethnic group war. An emotional feature of prejudice, stereotyping and negative feeling, creates a hostile situation toward the other group (Kaufman, 2001: 26).

There is an interesting strand of analysis on the role of emotion within ethnic conflict from the work of Petersen (2002). In truth, Petersen's approach may be better described as essentialist rather than strictly psychology orientated. Nonetheless, Petersen's work may present an interesting building block for further research in this field.

Petersen contests that four emotions—fear, hatred, resentment, and rage— can help explain not only why the intensity of conflict varies sharply over time, but also how it can arise spontaneously and yet remain purposeful, as well as why it is so easy for individuals and groups to essentialize the communal enemy simplifying relations, which in reality are often highly complex, into the perception that "I am a member of X, he is a member of Y, and members of Y should be targeted for violence."(Petersen, 2002:3).

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In Petersen's (2002) conceptual framework, each emotion is activated by different circumstances; each, therefore, makes different, testable predictions about who will be targeted and when. For example, fear predicts that the most threatening group will be attacked. Hatred predicts attacks on historical traditional enemies.

Resentment, in turn, emanates from jealousies concerning status, and predicts action against higher-status but vulnerable groups. Rage is distinguished from the other three as a non-instrumental reaction to frustration and resultant desires to lash out, which produce cognitive distortions and incoherent choice of targets.

Petersen's studies focus mainly on the Baltic States over the twentieth century and of Yugoslavia during the last quarter of the twentieth century do a fairly persuasive job in both case studies, although in truth it does need to be stated that the process of dividing and classifying emotions is an extremely difficult labour to undertake for any scholar. Nevertheless, Petersen may have reignited a method of understanding internal violence through Essentialist-based logic, and it will be interesting to see where future projects go.

In sum, psychological approaches to internal war represent much plausibility because, simplistically speaking, decisions are often motivated by emotional concerns. However, it would be naïve to suggest that internal war emerges purely because of people's emotions. Emotions need to be harnessed to mobilize certain ethnic groups to engage in conflict or war with other groups. The tools, like complex myth and symbols, can be employed by elites, like leaders or politicians, to seduce ethnic groups into conflict. For example, in the Acehnese conflict, through enacting the myths of warrior ethos in group defence, religious dignity, and self-sacrifice for the ethnic groups, the actors received honour from their groups as heroes or *sabilillah*, those who died in the name of God and the Acehnese ethnic group. Another example is the Rwandan Genocide, which saw myths such as "The Story of the Origins" used as an instigator for violence. "The Story of Origins" was common knowledge in Rwanda and used to justify the Tutsi minority rule over the Hutu majority and the marginal Twa. These myths were supported by the European colonizers and extended to fit the Eurocentric idea of superiority. This mythology was used in an inverted fashion by Hutu Power elites to present a sense of Hutu ethnic victimization, which was ignited into rage in the dark days 1994 (Twagilimana, 2003).

Taking such ideas into consideration, it seems apt to suggest that a more sophisticated mode of analysis is logically one that seeks to combine the strong aspects of the main approaches, and understands how myths and symbolic resources are crucially manipulated by elites in order to mobilize the masses into extreme violence. More often than not, masses find a form of coordination in distinct identities, often formed through perceived ethnic affiliations with one another, which have most crucially been socially constructed.

Constructivism

Some of the most useful work on intrastate war has emerged from the broad constructivist school. Generally speaking, constructivist approaches to internal war draw attention to several key identity-related factors: the historical construction and maintenance of exclusive identities by colonial and postcolonial ruling elites for the purposes of political and social control; the perceptions of insecurity between identity groups in situations of emergent anarchy or state failure; and the role of language, history, symbols and culture in fomenting inter-group rivalry (for examples see Lemarchand, 1994; Wilmer, 2002; Jackson, 2002; Mamdani,2001) .

Of the diverse constructivist approaches to intrastate war, one of the most interesting and insightful is the symbolist theory put forward by Stuart Kaufman, which attempts to combine the strong aspects of the various theories such as elite manipulation, the emotions of ethnic hatreds, the creation of a security dilemma and myths justifying hostility. In his broad section of work, Kaufman draws upon the previous work of Smith (1986) and Edelman (1971) on the significance of symbolic resources for elite control of the masses to argue that ethnic wars are caused by the ability of such symbols to whip up ethnic hatreds out of proportion to the tangible stakes that are actually at issue. He explains that ethnic symbols are such a potent source of conflict in part because "ethnic group or nation is a god so powerful that it is irresistible to invent him whenever he does not exist." (Kaufman, 2001:6). In accordance with Kaufman, the most dangerous symbols used in ethnic wars are myths that justify political domination over particular geopolitical territory, which may have been lost in the past, and myths of past atrocities that can be used to justify fears of future

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genocide. The sum of Kaufman's research was his publication *Modern Hatreds* (2001).

Kaufman's book represents a significant scholarly advance over most prior constructivist research. By focusing on the Caucasus in the period of socialist collapse, Kaufman is able to hold more or less constant certain influential variables such as cultural differences and prior institutional strength, while still covering a universe whose cases vary on several other variables of interest, such as availability of ethnic symbols. In a somewhat counterfactual, yet important fashion, Kaufman considers whether the outcome of a campaign of violence could have been different if leaders had pursued a different course. Claims that symbolic politics or elite manipulation determined the outbreak of a given war require that pivotal decisions by particular elites or warlords be identified which, if changed, could have avoided the outbreak of war. As such, Kaufman pays considerable attention to not only the role of elite intent in the outbreak of violence, but also the role of other important structural factors.

A significant strength of Kaufman's analysis is that it provides a plausible way to explain not only the causes of ethnic wars, but potentially a way to account for the patterns of atrocious violence which transpire in their duration. An interesting, though yet to be meticulously explored, example here would be that of Sudan, which has experience considerable periods of inter-ethnic wars that have seen deplorable acts being carried out on civilians such as rape, mutilation, mass executions and torture. In this case, the effects of mythologies of slavery have conceivably provided a puissant mechanism for elites to manipulate the masses into extreme violence. In addition, the effects of employing mythologies of slavery have been highly discernable in the recent conflict in Darfur, a region in western Sudan. Perceptions of "non Arabs" or "Africans" as slaves have been highly prevalent in the violence practiced by the Janjaweed militias during the counter-insurgency campaign in the region.

As a whole, however, a significant weakness of the symbolic politics theory is that research is mostly focused on analyzing conflict, war or even the most extreme ethnic violence (Kaufman 1998, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2006, 2007). It has not, however, been particuraly concerned with the issue of how it may be possible to establish or explain ethnic peace. For example, only in the case of Malaysia does the symbolic politics approach feasibly explain the period of peace there. Even for the Malaysian case study examined by Kaufman (2006), the symbolic politics theory only is used to test one conflict that arose in Malaysia around 1960s between the Chinese and Malays ethnic group. However, the failure of the symbolic politics approach to adequately address the issue of ethnic peace is something that has been abstained from in a great deal of scholarship on ethnic war, and may prove to be the next stepping stone in research.

Concluding remarks

There are important lessons that can be drawn from the progress of the internal conflict studies field thus far. As already implied, there has been a wealth of literature which addresses the causes of internal war. However, there have been very few convincing attempts to explain how this relates to creating cultures of peace. Assuredly, identifying the causes of internal violence is essential in order for remedial action to be applied, and this has been the main subject of this essay, but there does seem to be a broad and disheartening consensus that although internal or ethnic wars are hard to start, they are extremely difficult to stop. Subsequently, this does raise many pessimistic dilemmas for peace keeping initiatives that attempt to extinguish areas experiencing extreme violence. Within good reason, it may be more pertinent for studies to explore more prescriptive measures for peace once conclusions and analysis on the causes of an intrastate are made. With this move, however, there is the risk that the bounds and purpose of scholarship is overstepped and treading into the grounds of actually becoming policy formulation. Still, this should not lead to the evaluation that scholars should not try to formulate some remedial action to post-conflict societies.

Another lesson is that there is usefulness in intermediate-level and interdisciplinary theories compared with more sweeping Universalist approaches, although some would despite that the very point of theory is that it is devised to be applied universally. Nevertheless, there does also seem to be a tendency for internal war scholars to privilege one variable, say greed, ahead of other variables, whilst examining case studies. Here, there does seem pertinence in Brown's (2001) warning that doing so will be counterproductive and unfruitful. The further implication is that future analysis carried out by scholars may start to look for the variables, which they have vindicated as being so significant

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in past studies, in places where they may not be particularly prevalent. Arguably, this can lead to the scenario that if you start looking for say 'greed' in cases of violence, you are likely to see it everywhere despite the fact that it may have a very limited role in the outbreak of violence. Therefore, a willingness to harness interdisciplinary approaches to internal war and develop receptiveness to other theoretical approaches should be a fundamental axiom for future work by scholars. As Brown defends (2001:4), one of the challenges scholars should concentrate on in their studies, is to examine and identify how conflicts are different from one another, and try to recognise and comprehend the many distinctive factors that may be linked to these wars. Following this argument, it is not enough to replace one explanation such as ancient hatred with another such as economics. In contrast, one should also appreciate how the factors are interrelated and vary from one case to another. Brown (2001:4) contests that "the search for a single factor or set of factors that explains everything is comparable to the search for the Holy Grail-noble but futile"

Furthermore, most of the programmes have made more progress in generating theory in contrast to actually empirically testing such theorisations. Although theorisation has proven important in this field, the failure to consistently test theories may be linked to research constraints. More adequate theory testing will require much higher investment levels that go into data accumulation. Many of the key concepts, such as hatred, prejudice, fear or ethnic division are experiential and thus inherently difficult to measure and codify. Even seemingly simpler geographical variables present major problems because countries with prolonged conflict histories generally cannot conduct reliable censuses. Comparative case studies can often achieve sufficient depth to overcome such difficulties, but they are expensive by nature, the more so given the numbers required to overcome the problem of degrees of freedom. A progressive methodological advancement would therefore attempt to construct a greater research database on these issues.

All in all, the study of contemporary intrastate war has become a crucial research project. However, in spite of the progress made in the field, there are some significant and lingering problems. A failure to delve into these problems more seriously by scholars may see the images projected by Vasily Vereshchagin in "The Apotheosis of War" become more prevalent in future media tidings.

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