

Chapter 4

Violence, Diffusion, and Disintegration in Societal Systems

The term “ethnic conflict” has become a euphemism used to categorize sub-state conflicts that we can not explain or comprehend, especially those taking place in “low” cultures.¹ “Religious fundamentalism” has replaced “communism” as the main explanation for ideological conflict and insurgency, especially in world regions suffused with Islamic culture. Both of these amorphous terms serve as the proverbial rug under which we sweep the dirt and debris of political relations in a world which continually defies and evades our understanding. Ethnic groupings seem to abound in a world where many consider them obsolete and inappropriate. Confessionalism challenges the universality of Western conceptions of the state, society, and political relations. Ethno-religious conflict has become the major challenge to the integrity and viability of the secular state. Ethno-religious violence threatens to drain the world community of its resources and human compassion and drag us all into its vortex of utter chaos. Yet, we remain woefully unprepared to handle social identity as a political issue or as a conflict variable. Most recent inquiry in ethnic conflict has focused on ethnicity as a particular category in events analysis; religion is often used as an explanation for intractable conflicts and acts of irrational zeal. The main thrust of this chapter is to shift inquiry away from “ethnicity” as a category of analysis and “religion” as an impetus to atrocity and toward *politicized identity* as a consequence of systemic conflict processes.²

Ethnicity, as a term denoting the “condition of belonging to a particular ethnic group,” appears to be a conceptual umbrella under which anyone, or even everyone, may hide from the relentless vicissitudes of life or seek refuge during political “storms.”³ The term ethnicity covers all social identity groups that are organized on the basis of at least one ascriptive (physical or psychic) defining trait, such as genetics, religion, language, culture, or traditional residence (Rothschild 1981, 86-87).⁴ Religion is especially problematic in political analysis because it is organized on the basis of ideas, beliefs, and notions of spirituality. The implication

of these observations is that any physical or psychic marker of social distinction, anything that appears to make one group of people different from others, contains a potential for group formation, organization, and differentiation (and, possibly, division) based on the simple dichotomy of (1) those who have the specific trait: “us,” and (0) those who do not: “them.” (GAP 1987)

On the positive side, religion and ethnicity are the foundations of cultural diversity and pluralism on a global scale. Identification with a cultural identity can protect the individual ego from becoming lost and insignificant in the anonymity of mass, secular society. The exact quality that is defined as difference in relation to the exogenous macro-society is the similarity that binds members of the endogenous micro-society and provides them with a sense of commonality, community, and security. An expansive image of the “self” that is inclusive of the “other” and based on comity and trust. Difference is distinction and that distinctiveness often leads to mutual respect, tolerance, and an appreciation of diversity.

On the negative side, religion and ethnicity can represent a preoccupation with self and social differences, an abiding distrust of others, and an nearly impenetrable barrier against social, economic, or political integration. The politicization of identity presages the disintegration of complex societies into their constituent components; ethnicity and religion become parochialism and fanaticism and a challenge to cosmopolitanism. Difference becomes division and that division leads to chauvinism and acrimony. Left unchecked, acrimony turns to hostility, and hostility to violence.

Mediating the difference between these polar extremes is the establishment and maintenance of a myriad of fragile social ties and institutional linkages that crisscross group identity borders, the “web of group affiliations.” Such societal ties and linkages bond small groups into larger groups, making those larger organizations and societies viable and cohesive. Large social identity groupings and organizations are the foundation of industrial economies. The integration of many distinct social groups into a supraordinate organization is a requisite for development and modernity.

This book is especially interested in the negative side of religion and ethnicity (and all forms of identity) because that, by definition, is where the problems of identity lie: division precludes combination (and often violently). This interest does not stem from a supposition that religion or ethnicity themselves are causes of social disintegration and systemic underdevelopment, but rather argues that politicized identity is symptomatic of a troubled societal system, a system that needs immediate remedial attention. This study looks at the “problem of identity” from a systemic perspective: it is an examination of societal and systemic anomie and the loss of social control; it is an explanation of political identity and societal disintegration; it is an exposition on the transformation of aesthetic and progressive cultures to “cultures of violence.”

From a systemic perspective, the central issue of ethno-religious conflict are the questions: why ethnicity, why religion? That is, given the myriad of different ideologies, social and political identity groupings, and functional and professional organizations available to the individual in our increasingly complex and interdependent world, why are ethno-religious identities, in particular, becoming the focal points for political mobilization and violence? One possible answer is inferred from arguments advanced by many feminist critics of international relations theory. They argue that violence connotes the essential transformation of social relations (from amity to enmity) and that the incidence of violence in any form and at any level of association affects the general status of violence in societal culture. "Feminist perspectives on security would assume that violence, whether it be international, national, or family violence, is interconnected." (Tickner 1992, 58) Ethno-religious violence may be somehow associated or "connected" to other violence in the system, that is, it may merely be a part or a reflection of a pervasive, macro-systemic conflict process pressuring the transformation of all forms of societal relations and leading them to engage in violence.

A second feminist criticism looks at categorical boundaries used in theory and questions the basic supposition that such abstract boundary distinctions actually provide operative closure in the real world.

Realist models of international relations have been built on assumptions of rigid boundary distinctions between outside and inside, anarchy and order, and foreign and domestic. The outside is portrayed in terms of dangerous spaces where violence is unsanctioned. This threat of violence must be guarded against and controlled if security on the inside is to be achieved. (Tickner 1992, 133)

The paradox of these perspectives should be obvious. The act of guarding against the external threat is itself an example of the interconnectedness and transformative influence of violence; the external threat transforms the "peaceful society" to the "armed society" and an equivalent source of threat to others (e.g., as a "security dilemma"). Furthermore, the rationalization and glorification (or normative justification) of violence against the external "enemy other" in the *public* sphere leads to an increasing toleration and eventual acceptance of violence within society's public sphere and spills over also to saturate the *private* sphere. The strategic ideas of coercion, violence, and domination eventually pervade the societal system. The special salience of a particular social identity becomes a function of circumstances and the imperatives of organization and coordination for survival. The argument focuses on human culture as the medium and on violence as the noxious message; it is a culture of violence approach.⁵

The main feminist argument, however, looks primarily at the individual as both the transmitter and receiver of culture (they go on to claim that the roles of sender and receiver, especially as regards international relations, are strongly

gender biased). As a transmitter of culture, the individual acts to create and recreate culture. However, the individual is first a receiver of culture and only later do they become a transmitter; the individual consciousness, then, must be considered a social construct. Yet, viewed from a systemic perspective, culture itself must be viewed as being primarily a social construct—that is, a construct of the physical environment and the socio-political context (or operational milieu).

Two research questions emerge from this discussion: 1) does the example (or experience) of violence affect and alter the surrounding environment in ways that transform cultural norms from non-violent to violent? (or simply, does violence diffuse?) and 2) assuming that a culture of violence does diffuse, what effects does the diffusion of violence have on societal relations?

This chapter hopes to shed new light on these questions by outlining some plausible (if only partial) answers. The main argument builds on an assumption that there is a fundamental difference between a social group's political behavior when that group perceives its surrounding environment as threatening (i.e., a societal condition of *insecurity*) and when that environment seems non-threatening (i.e., *security*). In a condition of general threat, groups operate in a crisis mode of decision-making; this mode emphasizes exclusivity, enmity, and coercive or violent (utilitarian) strategies of conflict management. When the environment is understood to be non-threatening, a non-crisis mode predominates; this mode emphasizes inclusiveness, amity, and cooperative (normative) strategies.

As conflict is an inevitable condition of political relations, the main problem in political conflict theory is to understand why political relations transform from non-violent to violent. The explanation proposed here is that the existence of violence, and, especially, systematic violence (i.e., protracted social conflict), creates or reinforces a social psychology of insecurity which tends to diffuse through the network of social ties and alter the perceptions and policy priorities of the political actors most closely affected by the threat of violence (i.e., all actors in affective proximity; herein, the protracted conflict region). The growing sense of insecurity leads to increasing exclusivity, enmity, and violence in political relations among all groups in proximity to the source of political violence.

While there has been increasing interest in diffusion processes in political research, these studies have looked primarily at temporal and spatial diffusion patterns of independent categorical events such as inter-state war. As argued earlier in this book, this tact has led diffusion research down a dark alley and contributed to the current state of stagnation in the field. This study extends the inquiry to include *systemic diffusion*. Systemic diffusion refers to the spread of insecurity *intensively* throughout the “web of group affiliations” and communications until, eventually, the condition of insecurity affects all social interactions and political relations within the system. The diffusion of insecurity approach requires analysis of the uses of violence in all political interactions (inter-state, civil, and communal) and between all groups at any level of aggregation.

The Politics of Difference

The basic premises of this book as regards identity are that 1) identity as cultural diversity is a collective good, both aesthetic and progressive; 2) politicized identity (i.e., identity conflict) is an early warning of potential or progressive societal anomie; and 3) violent identity (i.e., identity warfare) connotes societal disintegration and systemic breakdown. In this view, the origins of any particular identity are irrelevant. The debate between primordial and instrumental approaches to the study of ethnic identity overlooks the idea that ethnicity is a collective good. Even though ethnic identifications appear to be highly resilient and persistent over time (i.e., static), they are also constantly adapting to changing circumstances (i.e., dynamic). Recall the claims made in the previous chapter that diversity is societally constructed. By adapting a popular phrase, we can propose that if particularistic identifications did not already exist, they would be invented. We can extend that proposition and assert that where such identifications do not already exist, or when their extant form is inadequate or inappropriate in reflecting current conditions, they are reinvented. This study rejects the notion that ethnicity, ethnic conflict, and religious fundamentalism are important, new categories of analysis. The “sudden explosion” of ethno-religious conflicts around the globe following the end of the Cold War at once represents a significant change in political relations and a mere artifact of the ways in which we construct and categorize our ideas and thinking on political behavior.⁶

The essential question, from this point of view, is not whether ethnic violence (or nationalist violence or communal violence or gang violence or state violence or domestic violence) is on the rise. The essential question is whether and to what degree the total, overall incidence of violence has increased (or decreased) in the relevant universe of social and political interaction (i.e., the global system or human society). Once the answer to that question has been determined, then inquiry can be made into the specifics of where and, especially, why the use of violence has become the preferred method of conflict interaction, for what social groups, and under what conditions.

This is not meant to imply that nothing can be learned from the categorization of violent conflict episodes. Micro-level and macro-level systemic research are symbiotic endeavors; both inform and refine the other. Once the specifics have been delineated, once the essential problem has been identified and defined and the general context mapped, the analytic specifics can be readdressed and used to gain ever greater clarity and insight. I have argued above that ethnicity is a particularly amorphous concept. As a category for analysis it poses few parameters for exclusion of cases from the analytic domain. However, its intrinsic ambiguity can be revealing. The term “ethnic” implies communal minority status within an existing state.⁷ Political mobilization in terms of ethnic identity implies a rejection of broader association or integration (linkage or identity) with the state, with other

groups within the state, or with a wider or supraordinate identity grouping. The subjective realities of individuals within a condition of political ethnicity place great emphasis on parochialism and perceived differences. Ethnicity is a safe haven from the uncertainty and frustration of dealing with mega-society; politicized ethnicity is characterized by social horizons rapidly shrinking, elaborate social networks fragmenting into their smallest identity components, and social linkages deteriorating until finally withdrawn or abandoned. Political ethnicity, like nationalism, can quickly exacerbate social tensions into a social psychosis of violent individuation (voice) and radical exclusivity (exit).⁸

Religious identity, on the other hand, is a much broader concept of social identity; it transgresses ethnic identities and proffers a symbol and rationale for unification of the more localized ethnic groupings in common cause. Religion can be the identity basis for a communal majority or it can offer avenues for association with other co-religionist groups situated outside the immediate conflict. The invocation of religion strengthens the identity group not only by expanding its sense of inclusion across identity borders but by mustering the emotive power concentrated in the spiritual "world" and bridging the boundary between humanity and deity. It often signifies an attempt to reignite a particularistic unity in the face of fragmentation and disunity.

In addition, the intrinsic ambiguity of identity allows opportunistic elites great latitude for voicing grievances and making claims against established authorities and privileged social groups. The same identity can at different times be expansive or confined; the mobilized group expands and contracts according to the identity markers emphasized, the historical symbols invoked, and the collective memories and grievances evoked. (Brass 1974) Political identity alludes to a degree of group definitiveness that it can not possibly support through objective criteria. This ambiguity of political identity is especially problematic when it is coupled with perceptions of an inherent, exclusive communal nature in the group identity. Ambiguity of group identity in conjunction with diversity and the natural interspersed of peoples can, and often does, translate into ambiguity in the extent (or boundaries) of communal territory. This ambiguity can fuel competing claims to geographic space; these border disputes are the material issues of exclusivity that most often presage the resort to warfare.⁹

Even the claim that ethnic conflict and warfare is occurring is probably too optimistic as it presumes a level of organization and coordination that are ephemeral at best. Ethnic groups, like states and other forms of identity groups, are not unitary actors. Ethnic groups are usually the least institutionalized of political groups; that is, they usually have little formal organizational structure, standard procedures, or central coordination. Warfare involving ethnic groups is waged by informal, scattered militia in a process gone out of effective control. Ethnic wars can not be stopped by treaty because no one is granted authority to negotiate the group's sovereignty and no one is obligated by any social contract

(neither explicit nor implicit) to accept any proposed settlement; the war must first stop and then the end can be negotiated.

There is little central authority, few coherent chains of command, fragile hierarchies, and few rules in a condition of violent ethnicity. Ethnic leaders are simply voices; they can not truly command nor can they devise (nor enforce) generally acceptable solutions. Ethnic wars are wars of desperation and sheer survival; they are most accurately portrayed as protracted social conflicts and cultures of violence. "It is only in the long run that they will 'end' by cooling off, transforming or withering away; one cannot expect these conflicts to be terminated by explicit decision." (Azar et al. 1978, 50) Ethnic wars stop when they can no longer be fought, because the issue of ethnicity itself is at once symbolic and ascriptive, non-negotiable and fundamentally uncompromising. It is difficult to determine whether ethnic conflicts ever really end; they seem simply to become less salient (and less violent) under favorable circumstances.

It has been proposed in the preceding chapters that all forms of political violence and warfare are essentially equivalent social processes and symptomatic of advanced systemic breakdown and societal disintegration. In this sense, ethnic violence may be the most insidious form of intra-state political violence in that it (1) presupposes a breakdown in the very authority structures that are needed to impose whatever measure of control may be mustered against violence while (2) retaining the minimal organization and coordination necessary to invoke high levels of mechanized warfare and (3) characterizing the nature of the conflict in evocative, symbolic terms that are intrinsically non-negotiable. Ethnic conflict is especially volatile when ethnic identities coincide with religious identities; relational goals may quickly escalate when expressed in diametric spiritual symbolics.

At the inter-state level of interaction, similar complications are infused in nationalistic warfare; what appears to be lacking at the inter-state level is the possibility of a non-violent alternative, an inclusive authority system. Resistance to the comparison of inter-state and intra-state violence results mainly from this perceived difference in essential authority structures; the greatest contrast is evoked by the claim of absolute anarchy (i.e., a complete lack of authority) in the global arena. These is a system of interactions but no regulation. The obvious implication of the perception of anarchy is to negate the claim that violence in the system of interactions is symptomatic of systemic breakdown and failure. There is no authority, so, there is nothing to be held responsible or accountable for either system performance or failure. In this idealized view violence becomes a purely exogenous phenomenon that interrupts the normal condition of security and disrupts peaceful relations, that is, violence is seen as a purely *environmental* condition with no responsive connection to either psychic or operational criteria under the direction of the adversely affected and innocent (victimized) political unit. The questions raised under this understanding focus on how this condition of aggressive external attack might come about and, more immediately, how such

a situation might best be guarded against or deterred, the possibility of its occurrence controlled, or ultimate victory assured. This concept of security is preoccupied with utilitarian strategies of conflict resolution. This perspective characterizes the conventional approach to inter-state security studies.

The argument promoted in the present treatment criticizes the conventional understanding of the problem. The apparent lack of a meaningful or effective authority structure at the inter-state level of political organization may be viewed historically as an act of omission but the continuing lack of effective authority structures must be viewed increasingly as the consequence of acts of commission. (Wendt 1992) The failure to provide an efficacious conflict management mechanism both enables the resort to warfare and results from the problem of political violence; violence prevents the provision of authority structures and hostility precludes their operation and development. The absence of an authoritative conflict management structure seems to advantage the strongest actors in the system but the advantages thus perceived are a temporal illusion. The political economy of conflict dictates that the system will deteriorate over time so that even the most privileged sectors, those that are most successful in procuring relative gains, will be adversely affected over the longer-term as systemic conditions continue to deteriorate and productive resources diminish. When system conditions deteriorate too far, systemic wars result.

Two critical elements which define the problem of the control of violence are (1) the decision to use violence, rather than any non-violent strategy or remedy, and (2) the availability of the means, or instruments, to pursue violence.¹⁰ The first element derives from the *psycho-milieu* and the second from the *operational milieu*; both derive from the *environmental milieu*. (Sprout and Sprout 1965) We can determine the proper context for our inquiry into the issue of identity violence by first examining the preconditions of such political violence behavior within its relevant environmental milieu, broadly conceived to include both geopolitical and cultural aspects and articulated as grievances and justifications. We may then extend the inquiry by examining the special logistical factors pertaining to the conduct of such political violence within the specific operational milieu (i.e., access to instruments such as weaponry). Of course, these conceptual domains are linked together by the human psycho-milieu and that is something which can not be accurately and reliably detailed; it is the quintessential "black box" in any political process. The human element, however, represents the ultimate object of research into political conflict behavior: understanding the social psychology of political violence.

The primary agent of societal disintegration is *insecurity*. Insecurity refers to the psychic condition brought on by a perceived (actual or potential) vital threat to one's physical integrity or well-being. A corollary to the condition of insecurity is a distrust of certain associations (i.e., with "them") and an unwillingness to pursue or maintain exogenous ties and linkages. This condition of insecurity is stimulated by the incidence of violence within reasoned proximity, that is,

temporal, spatial, or systemic proximity. The condition of insecurity increases the individual's disposition to justify the use of coercion and violence in political interactions and broadens the acceptable range of discretionary applications of coercion and violence. A condition of crisis is an acute sense of insecurity brought about by unexpected events that appear to pose an imminent threat to vital interests or integrity. In terms of conflict management, the condition of insecurity increases the propensity for political violence, while the condition of crisis increases the probability of political violence. The hypothetical mechanism, then, of societal disintegration is the *diffusion of insecurity* through established networks of social relations in *protracted conflict regions*.

Patterns of Violence

The idea that there may be "patterns of violence" presumes that violence is not randomly distributed and questions whether individual episodes of political violence are independent events. Rather, violence is viewed as a generalized social phenomenon with particular variations due to either environmental (patterns of causal conditions) or experiential differences (patterns of conditioned responses). Of course, the distinction between environmental and experiential is not profound but, rather, covariant as each aspect has determinant effects upon the other in a coterminous relationship at the praxis between ideology and human action. At bottom, the potential for violence as a political instrument is assumed to be a constant throughout the human species.¹¹

Environmental patterns of violence are usually thought to be related to varying rates and levels of societal development. Development processes, levels of attainment, and their attendant problems tend to equalize or synchronize in proximate, geographical units and, thereby, cluster in geographical or spatial regions, that is, there appears to be more similarities in development processes among proximate groups than disparities. In the grossest analysis, advanced countries may be seen to cluster in distinct regions: North America and Western Europe; whereas, less-advanced countries cluster in other regions; thus, the gross distinction between the "First World" and the "Third World." Yet, while there appears to be little variation in the general development characteristics of the "advanced" First World countries, there does appear to be great variation throughout the Third World regions and countries.

In the grossest terms, the incidence of warfare seems to be somehow spatially associated with lower levels of societal and systemic development. Mandel (1980), studying the contemporary period, 1945-1974, and Bremer (1992), studying the modern era, 1816-1965, both confirm a relationship between "low technology" or "less advanced economies" and militarized violence. Yet, it is well known that it is the more advanced economies, that is, the great powers and the Superpowers,

who are most likely to be involved in militarized violence.¹² In the contemporary period, the relationship between lesser development and higher militarized violence is more a matter of place (that is, the lesser developed areas provide the theater for warfare) and less a matter of involvement.

We are concerned here mainly with matters of variation in the patterns of violence associated with experiential differences. Experiences, too, seem to cluster in time and space, especially in the contemporary period due to tremendous increases in the speed and volume of information transfers as well as the enormous increases in inter-group and inter-societal interactions and interdependencies. Experiential patterns are the result of either social action (patterned preferences) or social learning (conditioned responses). The experience of social actions spreads through the agency of human behavior and social interaction. Patterns develop in the relationship between the initiator and target of social actions due to perceptions of successful performance in goal-directed, interactive actions or policies. Patterns in social learning are based on or derived from patterns of social action but are transmitted and spread indirectly (and abstractly) through communication and information media and codified in institutions and culture.

Cultural explanations of patterns of social learning, and especially of patterns in the normative justification of violence, are inadequate in and of themselves because they do not explain how such patterns became encoded in any particular referent culture. Cultural arguments can help to explain the persistence of patterns which are no longer appropriate or functional under changed circumstances (Pareto calls these “residuals”), but such encoded explanations and prescriptions are subject to continual social criticism and cognitive reevaluation and, therefore, subject to evolutionary change over time. Cultural mores that are consonant with experiences and aspirations are likely to be retained, those that are inconsistent (dysfunctional or dissonant) with experiences are likely to be discarded.¹³ As Gurr has explained in setting out what has come to be known as the “culture of violence hypothesis,”

if discontent is widespread in a society, anomie (normlessness) common, and political violence frequent, there is a tendency for attitudes of expectancy of violence to be converted into norms justifying violence. The process of violence-expectancy-justification-violence tends to perpetuate itself, contingent on the persistence of [the requisite functional conditions]. (Gurr 1970, 170)

The existence of variation in cultures of violence, however, points to variations in patterns of social action and learning and can be instructive for identifying processes or patterns of social interaction which tend to favor the initiation, rationalization, and perpetuation of violent forms. Empirical investigations of Gurr’s culture of violence hypothesis have lent credence to the ancient wisdom that “violence begets violence” and that the incidence of violence is thereby to be considered a major determinant of future incidents of violence.¹⁴ Eckstein qualifies

that general observation (and foreshadows the present study) by noting that, “statistical relations seem to vary, for some reason, with geographic areas.” (Eckstein 1980, 160)

Traditional concepts of security and related empirical studies of patterns of violence have concentrated mainly on the particular phenomenon of inter-state war or that of civil war and revolution, the traditional concerns of institutionalized states. The study of inter-state security patterns is exemplified by Singer and Small’s Correlates of War (COW) project. That project’s research efforts have focused mainly on either the institutional corollaries of the war phenomenon, such as borders, alliances, and military or power capabilities; the institutional artifacts of the “war system,” such as system configurations or polarity, power distributions or balances, or security regimes; or the institutional dynamics of that system, such as arms races, crises, or decision making. The underlying assumption is that inter-state war is the primary problem and that major power war is the only significant threat to world peace. Traditional studies of civil warfare and revolution (or civil war as revolution) have been similarly constrained, for the most part, because of an essential Hobbesian/Machiavellian preoccupation with *raison d’etat*, the survival of the regime, and the equivocation of the extant regime with the legitimate state.¹⁵

The institutional bias is clear in the classification scheme of the COW data base; wars are identified according to institutional criteria and sorted into inter-state, civil, and extra-systemic types. Inter-state wars are the most institutionalized forms of modern warfare, whereas civil and extra-systemic wars comprise the least “civilized,” organized, and institutionalized actors and so are less institutionalized forms of warfare. Comparisons of these three sub-classifications are rendered impossible due to the fact that the non-institutional aspects of wars (such as non-military casualties or non-state actors) are not coded. In any case, institutional arrangements associated with the systemic ability to wage war can not be considered true causes of war as they are themselves essentially caused by war (i.e., institutions are formalized culture and certainly not independent events); rather they must be viewed as the instrumental means of war and, as such, should be clearly correlated with war in some fashion.¹⁶ The real causes of war lie in the perception in the minds of systemic leaders, and their consequent actions in pursuit, of an expected utility of war, much of which is culturally determined. Conflict and security studies of the COW-type are perhaps better considered as studies of patterns of war in highly institutionalized, European and Europeanized cultures.

The Eurocentric bias of security studies is becoming more clear as the overwhelming influence of the Euro-center of the world system continues to wax and wane in the second half of the twentieth century. One way to place this apparent systematic bias into proper perspective has been to take a holistic systems approach and then differentiate systemic components according to the functional characteristics of the macro-system itself, such as in Wallerstein’s (1974) “world

systems” approach in political economy or Falk’s (1966) “world order” approach to security studies. Such an approach explicitly focuses on the systemic effects of spatial dependence, interdependence, and diffusion. These holistic approaches, however, tend to bifurcate the world into core and periphery and focus primarily on the dynamics of the core and their impact on the periphery (internal dynamics in the periphery are usually discounted as insignificant or distorted). Related studies of the periphery tend to explain differences in terms of victimology dynamics attributable to the predatory activity of the core states, such as the “dependency” theorists in political economy and theories of proxy wars, ideological struggles, and extended major power rivalry taking place in “crush zones” or “shatterbelts” in security studies (e.g., Kelly 1986; Hensel and Diehl 1992).¹⁷

The paucity of war events in the European theater since the end of World War II helps divert some scholarly attention away from major power and superpower activity and toward the violence associated with the de-colonization process in the emerging Third World states. Because the focus of Third World political activity was on the establishment of viable institutional states or on the competition among social groups vying for control of state authority and power, civil conflict and development studies expanded greatly. The United States’ experience in the Vietnamese civil war, especially, energized interest in the internal dynamics of Third World societies. The “communist threat” had become a euphemism for the diffusion of internal discontent with post-colonial regimes and the “domino effect” a euphemism for the diffusion of violence through many areas in the Third World.

The quote from Gurr cited above (explaining the culture of violence hypothesis) contains three critical elements for the transmission of norms of violence: (1) there is an extant source of violent social action, (2) there are extant requisite conditions, and (3) there is a mechanism (i.e., interactions and social learning or culture) through which rationalizations for violent behaviors spread over time and space. The burgeoning literature in political security studies on *diffusion processes* takes account of this cultural conceptualization of the interdependence of violent actions.¹⁸ The interest in diffusion as an element of scientific analysis is usually traced to a debate in anthropology in 1889 and referred to as “Galton’s problem.” Galton’s problem is important in the political analysis of violence because it argues against the fundamental assumption of independence of statistical events in a social context and thereby makes statistical analysis of political actions and their “causes” problematic. Unless the analyst can determine the extent of the effect of culture on the occurrence of a particular class of behavioral events, they can not know the extent of the real relationship between social cause (or stimulus) and social effect (or response).¹⁹

The theoretical perspective is that political violence is the research problem and that such violence occurs under conditions of systemic failure, that is, when normative conflict management strategies are unsuccessful or inoperative. The research question focuses on the peculiar distribution of the research problem, both

spatially and temporally, in the world system. Specifically, the question is why political violence clusters in distinct regions and why those regions continue to witness varying types and different episodes of political violence throughout the fifty-year, post-World War II era.

The superficial response to the research question is that certain societies or cultures or peoples are naturally more aggressive or violent than others. If we extend the temporal scope of inquiry to include information from all eras of human existence, we would observe that political violence has been a more or less generalized, though periodic, phenomena in the world system. No particular people, society, or culture may claim to be immune nor immutable to the use of violence in socio-political relations. There is ample intuitive evidence for assuming a cultural factor in the explanation of political violence, that is, that once it is utilized and its use is perceived to have gained some collective benefit for the group (or avoided some loss), it is likely to be used again. (Gurr 1988) There is also ample evidence to dissuade us from accepting that such a condition, or culture of violence, is either a natural trait of certain peoples or an immutable condition. The general evidence suggests that the use of political violence is a contingent, rather than an inherent, condition. History also suggests that once a society has quit the use of violence it is not immune from using it again at a later date, although it does appear to become resistant to its use in particular situations (institutional inhibition). On face value, it appears safe to assume that political violence is a potential instrumental attribute of all societies but that its actualization is susceptible to some measure of control.

Huntington's (1968) "lack of stability" thesis argues that the societal proclivity to engage in civil conflict and violence is a function of the development, or "modernization," process and a consequence of the nascent state's inability to either expand normative co-optation or apply sufficient utilitarian control. If that thesis held explanatory power, then we would expect the incidence of political violence to be concentrated in the "modernizing" societies (which it appears to be) and that it would be either generally or randomly distributed throughout those societies (which it is not). Again, the thesis appears to make some explanatory contribution but can not account for the distinct patterns of political violence in the world system. A survey of those societies not "modern" in the Huntington sense reveals that autocratic regimes and authority patterns are generally distributed throughout the Third World, as also are unconstitutional changes in leadership, inferring that coercive utilitarian strategies are predominant in such "modernizing" societies (as would be expected). Democratic regimes, dependent as they are upon normative strategies, are rare and generally unstable (short-lived) experiments in such societies. However, neither the "modernizing" condition nor the autocratic regime-type appear to explain the peculiar patterns of political violence.²⁰ The obvious correlations between "modernizing" societies, autocratic regimes, and political violence appear to be spurious.

There is some recognition in the literature of the cluster pattern of political violence and various treatments have been offered, such as “regional conflict formations” (Väyrynen 1984), “shatterbelts” (Kelly 1986), “security complexes” (Buzan 1991), and “politically-relevant international environments” (Maoz 1993). While these treatments acknowledge regional patterns and differences, only the “shatterbelt” concept offers a possible explanation: violent conflict concentrates in certain areas that are particularly susceptible to external interference due primarily to strong and competing external interests in the areas. This concept closely approximates the popular Cold War notion of superpower “proxy wars.” Again, a survey of the evidence suggests that, while the external powers are often involved in violent conflict-ridden states’ affairs, this is not a necessary condition nor does it appear generally to be a sufficient condition. In fact, many of the longest and most intense episodes of political violence during this period have failed to attract significant attention from either systemic Superpower. And, of course, the end of the Cold War competition does not appear to have had a significant effect on the incidence of systemic violence: the overt competition and blatant interference are gone but the violence remains. (The end of the Cold War does appear to have had an effect on the intensity of systemic violence, an issue that will be addressed further in chapter 7.) It is certain that external interference, at least in the form of support and supply functions, has a significant impact on the ability of the antagonists to engage and wage war and sustain losses, but this does not explain the conflict generation, the decision to use violence, nor does it attend to the societal consequences of violence, especially as those consequences might create conditions favorable to future incidents of violence.

There appears to be no credible theoretical explanation in the literature for why the many and various political actors (groups) in some regions are more prone to use violence than are those in other regions with apparently similar attributes. However, the distinct patterns of political violence in the world system argues that there is something that appears to increase the probability that violence will be used in dispute interactions and, whatever that something is, it appears to have a systemic or structural quality.

The following section will present a systemic explanation for the patterns of political violence evident in the contemporary world. This theory does not challenge our developed understandings of the political conflict process, conflict management, and conflict resolution. It is recognized that those areas of research and theory are well-developed, meaningful, and useful. It is hoped that this systemic theory will contribute to our general understanding of conflict dynamics by “bringing the system in” to show how the general environment affects specific conflict processes. Only by taking account of the environment can an appropriate, and thereby efficacious, strategic conflict management system be devised. This approach is in complete agreement with Gurr’s (1994, 365) optimistic assessment of the prospects for successfully managing societal conflicts: such conflicts do not

“necessarily lead to [unresolvable] protracted and violent conflict....there is much evidence that they can be managed and transformed to less destructive forms.”

Diffusion Dynamics

Diffusion analysis has only recently been applied to empirical security studies (e.g., Ross and Homer 1976; Most and Starr 1980 1990; Bremer 1982; Faber, Houweling, and Siccama 1984; Houweling and Siccama 1985; Hill and Rothchild 1987; Kirby and Ward 1987; Most, Starr, and Siverson 1989; Siverson and Starr 1990 1991). These “first generation” diffusion studies take a holistic or systemic approach to the study of inter-state war and militarized disputes.²¹ A full accounting of this expanding literature is beyond the scope of the present study. Several findings of the diffusion literature, however, are particularly pertinent to the present discussion:

A plausible argument advanced by Most and Starr suggests that *different* types of war may exist and that those different types of war tend to result in different diffusion effects. Put more specifically, it seems reasonable to surmise that large-scale international wars may not have tended toward diffusion during the 1945-1965 period, while small-scale civil, guerrilla, and colonial wars may have been much more inclined to diffuse. (Most et al. 1989, 115)

Most and Starr argue that one should not reasonably expect war to diffuse throughout the international system as a whole, but rather that such diffusion will be constrained within sets of nations that interact significantly with each other. (Most et al. 1989, 118)

The pattern of international dispute initiation indicates that some positive form of contagion was present at the global level during the 1900 to 1976 period. The national level results suggest that this is not a process of addiction [or positive reinforcement], which in turn suggests that we are dealing with a process of infection or spatial diffusion. The inter-regional analysis indicates that this is not fundamentally a process whereby disputes spill-over from region to region, but rather, as the intra-regional analyses show, a process of infection [positive spatial diffusion] operating chiefly *within* regions. In short, coercion is regionally contagious. (Bremer 1982, 53)

From this literature we can distill three important points: 1) theoretical postulations of diffusion processes relating to violence and coercion are supported by empirical research; 2) different types of warfare should be included in diffusion research and analysis; and 3) geographical regions defined in terms of significant networks of socio-political interactions are the proper context for studying diffusion processes.

I have already argued that one proper regional context or theater for studying a particular diffusion of violence and coercion process is the global theater throughout which European and Europeanized patterns of violence and coercion can be assumed to have diffused. However, due to the extreme complexity, high institutionalization, long history, global scope, and incredible magnitude of coercive technology and affective mechanisms it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to “unpack” the various diffusion processes and mechanisms and separate them from the strictly functional and circumstantial explanations for persisting violence and coercion. If there is a universal or generalizable process of the diffusion of violence and coercion, it should be much more easily observed in, or distilled from, its sub-systemic manifestations in the lesser institutionalized areas of the global security system. Most, Starr, and Siverson (1989) look at diffusion of war at the global level; this is appropriate for looking at the diffusion of conflict generated by the great power core of the world system, but this process is secondary in the analysis of diffusion in the contemporary system which is defined by regional security complexes.

The diffusion literature, however, severely limits itself by looking primarily at the temporal and spatial diffusion of *like events*. The concept of the culture of violence forwarded by Gurr and many prominent feminist theorists is more compatible with the idea of diffusion laid out here because it takes into account the idea of a *systemic diffusion* of a specifiable social process and related non-specific, substitutable events and phenomena.

Humans distinguish themselves as being clever, inventive, and strategic creatures and so their responses to conflict stimuli may vary over a range of multiple, substitutable options. To complicate matters, group leaders may also choose similar strategic options in response to seemingly different social stimuli.²² Even the “fact” of a group’s leadership (or group identity) and their special strategic policies is a result of selecting (either directly or indirectly) from substitutable options. Arendt (1951/1973) gives an early account of the possibility of substitutable group leadership. She argues that special social conditions favor the ascension of certain types of leader, that such leaders can not direct nor alter but only give voice to the lead provided by the “will of the masses,” and that, as conditions change, leaders are replaced and forgotten. Organizations certainly can pursue substitutable goals, e.g., social organizations can form the mobilization nucleus for special political goals. What is referred to here as “substitutable events or phenomena” incorporates the general idea in its many forms. In terms of the politics of identity, it refers to the idea that individuals may identify with multiple social groupings and may be mobilized by any one of a number of such identities depending on circumstances. For example, an individual may alternately be an active or inactive member of an interest group, political party, ethnic group, communal group, religious group, or a polity (or may even latently identify with any number of groups), and so on. Which type of group organization is salient at any point in time is one distinct question for inquiry; what methods are employed

by the group in political interaction is quite another question, because they are not directly explained, in most cases, by the choice of group organization.

In the simplest terms then, diffusion is proposed as the process dynamic that explains the peculiar patterns in conflict behavior noted in the Third War during the contemporary period. *Temporal diffusion* here refers to the endogenous spread of the condition of insecurity over time; that is, incremental change in a particular political group or actor, the “already afflicted.” *Spatial diffusion* refers to the spread of insecurity extensively, or exogenously, outward from a source and across physical space, that is, to include others in the “affliction.” *Systemic diffusion* signifies the spread of insecurity intensively throughout the “web of group affiliations” until the condition of insecurity affects all social interactions and political relations within the system.

The development of a distinct culture of violence, one which will incrementally transform and eventually supersede the normative culture already in place in a societal system, will require a substantial period of time. It is likely that the longer the period of time, all other things constant, the greater and, thus, more readily identifiable the indicators of cultural transformation and distinction. Although it should be assumed that the alterations resulting from the diffusion process will proceed as a function of the persistence of a particular source of insecurity, that relationship may not be a direct reinforcement effect. More likely, the actual violence exhibited at the source will be sporadic (but not random) and, thereby, magnify the expected response due to a more powerful *partial-reinforcement* effect.²³ In any case, because vital political processes can not be studied through controlled experimentation, evidence of such a process must be located in prior experience. Ideally, the most compelling evidence will be found in relation to “constant” sources of political violence interactions. This ideal source, by definition, is a protracted social conflict. It remains beyond the scope of the present study to attempt a full explanation of why such protracted conflicts exist and persist (or of the corollary question: why do they die out and disappear); that is a separate research question. It is enough for the present purpose of focusing study on the proposed diffusion effect to acknowledge that several significant sources of theoretical insecurity can be identified; constant source violence does exist and this fact enables a test of the diffusion of insecurity theory.

The appropriate subject for a study of the diffusion of political violence, then, is similar to what Buzan (1991) has termed “security complexes,” what Väyrynen (1984) has termed “regional conflict formations,” and what Maoz (1993) has termed “politically-relevant international environments (PRIE).” Buzan claims that,

regional security subsystems can be seen in terms of patterns of amity and enmity that are substantially confined within some particular geographical area....A security complex is defined as a group of states whose primary security concerns

link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another. (Buzan 1991, 190)

For Väyrynen,

Regional conflict formations are a complex mixture of intranational, intraregional, and extraregional conflicts of violent character. A novel feature of these conflict formations is that they have become more complex and more entangled in the sense that they cannot be easily decomposed into individual conflicts. Such an effort easily fails because of the pervasive linkages existing between different forms of conflict. (Väyrynen 1984, 344)

For Maoz,

A politically-relevant international environment of a given state represents the set of political units (state and nonstate units) whose structure, behavior, and policies have a direct impact on the focal state's political and strategic calculus. (Maoz 1993, 5-6)

All three of these conceptualizations of regional conflict subsystems have definitional criteria which make them useful in the analysis of regional variations in conflict behavior, but none are wholly adequate for the analysis of diffusion processes. All three concepts incorporate geographical proximity and political salience. In addition, Buzan emphasizes patterned behaviors, Väyrynen includes all types and levels of political violence and focuses on the interdependent complexities of conflicts, and Maoz, while primarily interested in state behavior, includes all political actors in his relevant environment. All three, however, lack a clear condition which might serve to differentiate the conflict patterns of the various regional security systems.

Referring back to Gurr's three critical elements for the transmission of norms (or patterns) of violence, we can see that item 2, existent requisite conditions (states and societal structures), and item 3, a mechanism (i.e., significant interactions and culture or social learning) through which rationalizations for violent behaviors spread over time and space, are probably equally satisfied by these various regional groupings. What is lacking is item 1, an existent source of violent social action, or better yet, for analytical purposes, a continual source of violent action.²⁴ Azar, Jureidini, and McLaurin provide such an analytical key with their concept of the "protracted social conflict:"

Protracted conflicts are hostile interactions which extend over long periods of time with sporadic outbreaks of open warfare fluctuating in frequency and intensity. These are conflicts in which the stakes are very high—the conflicts involve whole societies and act as agents for defining the scope of national identity and social solidarity. While they may exhibit some breakpoints during which there is a cessation of overt violence, they linger on in time and have no

distinguishable point of termination....Protracted conflicts, that is to say, are not specific events or even clusters of events at a point in time; they are processes. (Azar et al. 1978, 50)

Protracted social conflicts (PSCs) are intractable conflicts of unpredictable violence and may thus provide a continual, credible source of violent threat, and a pervasive sense of insecurity, for the rapid devolution of regional conflict formations into cultures of violence.

The existence of PSCs provide a violent core, or fount of insecurity, for the longer-term redefinition of regional cultures to incorporate normative justifications for increased levels of political violence and coercion. The geographical areas surrounding these PSC cores may be thought of as Protracted Conflict Regions (PCRs). It is these regional security formations, or subsystems, that will provide the best test of the diffusion of insecurity approach to understanding prevailing patterns of violence in the world system.

In operationalizing the proposed regional diffusion of violence process under study, it is necessary, first, to explain the process itself. Most and Starr (1990) give the most comprehensive discussion of the issues involved as they relate specially to political science. They identify "five logical forms which a policy explanation could take": 1) internal societal, 2) internal reinforcement, 3) external extra-societal (general linkage), 4) external impositional (direction), and 5) external selective (decisional). In evaluating the primacy of different diffusion processes as they relate specifically to the subject of political violence a crucial assumption must be made regarding political interactions: that is, non-violent political forms are collectively valued over substitutable violent forms. There are two important inferences derived from this assumption: first, substitutable forms are available to a social group's decision makers and, second, violent forms will be initiated in political interactions only when they are valued more highly than non-violent forms and this juxtaposition of policy preferences is societally anomalous.

On the basis of the above assumption, "internal societal" forms of violence and coercive policy diffusion can be attributed to the lack of development of substitutable non-violent forms and means of conflict management within a given society (political development approach—level of development should be a control variable). "Internal reinforcement" forms would tend to favor violence and coercive policy if prior uses proved successful (or experiences proved pleasurable—a sadistic society?); the definition of what constitutes "success," however, is highly contextually dependent and its collective valuation is normatively prescribed (i.e., reinforcement is a dependent variable of normative justifications). "External imposition" can not be considered an independent variable in sovereign societies; any direction these states might take from external sources is ostensibly the result of voluntary compliance by decision makers; external imposition can otherwise only be sustained by force. The question in this regard is what makes sovereign states susceptible to dependent political behavior and non-resistance to

(or even collaboration with) external interference or intervention? The answer is that secure states maintain autonomy whereas insecure states seek support. The “external selective,” or decisional, form provides the ultimate explanation of policy preferences in a security environment composed mainly of sovereign states, yet those decisions are conditioned fundamentally by the nature of the security environment itself, the “external extra-societal.” The “external selective” explanation of security policy comes closest to the traditional conceptualization within political science research of the salient diffusion process, that is, “diffusion as emulation” (Siverson and Starr 1991, 5-6). It is, however, unlikely that collectivities or polities will emulate violence and coercion in and of themselves, that is, as an end. It is much more likely that violence and coercion will be emulated only under anomalous societal conditions, that is, when non-violent forms are thought to be unavailable or ineffective. The “external extra-societal” refers to the general security environment which conditions the applicability and consequences of policy. As Most and Starr explain,

In the extra-societal possibility, the decisions by the *i*th polity regarding the policy [X at time 1] are explained by some *other* extra-societal phenomenon(ena)...This process comes closest to capturing our notion of foreign policy substitutability...For example, a state's increase in arms expenditures could be a response not only to the defense spending of others, but the activities of other states [or non-states] which also threaten security...(Most and Starr 1990, 400)

What we are interested in here, then, is the interplay between the psycho-milieu of the policy decision makers (of all political groups, both state and non-state) and the operational-milieu of the regional security formation or complex.

This interplay is well illustrated by the concept of the *security dilemma*: “Operating in conditions of anarchy, states, by seeking to advance their individual national securities (through policies of arming, deterrence, and alliance), create and sustain an international environment of decreased relative security for themselves and for the collective of states.” (Job 1992, 17) The essential idea is that the perception of threat to systemic security generated by states pursuing what might be considered “individual rationality” alters general policy preferences in ways that are consistent with what should be considered “collective irrationality.” The concept of the security dilemma defines the interplay between the operational-milieu and the psycho-milieu as it conditions the policy preferences of relatively secure and highly institutionalized states.

When we consider the circumstances prevalent in the under-institutionalized societies of the Third World, “the security dilemma metaphor and underlying logic do not hold up to scrutiny.” Job (1992:17) lists four key ways in which the premises of the security dilemma are violated:

- (1) there is no single, cohesive nation within the borders of the state, but several contending communal groups;
- (2) the regime lacks the support of a significant population sector and, thereby, enjoys limited popular legitimacy;
- (3) the state lacks sufficient resources and effective institutions for allocation, production, and distribution;
- (4) the security threat stems more from intensive interplay between domestic actors (state and non-state) rather than extensive interactions among states.

To that list, I would add one more:

- (5) the personnel, agencies, and instruments of external and internal security are interchangeable and there is no clear jurisdictional distinction among security spheres and missions.

In these circumstances, there is no singular notion of national security and no dominant externally oriented security dilemma for the typical Third World country. Instead, there exist competing notions of security advanced by the contending forces within society. The state itself is at issue in most conflicts. National security has to be seen as distinct from state security and regime security, with each component of society competing to preserve and protect its own well-being. What results in such a contentious environment is better characterized as an *insecurity dilemma*, i.e., the consequence of the competition of the various forces in society being (1) less effective security for all or certain sectors of the population, (2) less effective capacity of centralized state institutions to provide services and order, and (3) increased vulnerability of the state and its people to influence, intervention, and control by outside actors, be they other states, communal groups, or multinational corporations. (Job 1992, 17-18)

The general lack of institutionalization in contemporary Third World societies is signified by the fact that the state is less than the Weberian ideal bureaucratic state which enjoys a monopoly of legitimate authority and force. There is a general lack of strong structures which might condition and channel social forces into socially acceptable, or tolerated, behavioral norms. The control of the state apparatus, while not determinant, makes the regime the strongest player among contending actors and the principal arena and prize of political conflict. Boundaries among multiple political actors and communal groups are very fluid and contentious and social interaction patterns are highly vulnerable to defections and alterations. It is within these lesser institutionalized systems, then, that the diffusion of violence and coercion should operate most freely and be the most easily detected, defined, and measured.

The Diffusion of Insecurity

The very existence of protracted (violent) conflicts and enduring rivalries gives credence to the fundamental claim of temporal diffusion: social learning, institutional momentum, and the empowerment of conflictual elites over cooperative elites drives the “growth of the coercive state.”²⁵ A thorough examination of the special dynamics of temporal diffusion, or the persistence of particular episodes of political violence, is also beyond the scope of the present study. It is important to recognize that the temporal diffusion effect lends transformational momentum to the general diffusion effect. In other words, impressions from experience on an actor within a system tend to remain for some time. These impressions also contribute impetus to the incremental transformation of that actor’s special subjective rationality and political culture (and, eventually, that of the system in general).

Of greatest interest to the present study is the spread of the problem of political violence to involve additional groups or actors in separate events or episodes.²⁶ It is supposed that the principal diffusion of insecurity effect should be a simple function of spatial proximity; a serial model is proposed. “Serial diffusion typically takes place outward from the core toward the periphery or peripheries....In the serial model the process of diffusion is continuous and decays across space; the further from the core, the weaker the influence of the core.” (Wellhofer 1989, 320) The universe of analysis for the study of the culture of violence/diffusion of insecurity process, the Protracted Conflict Region (PCR), may then be defined spatially by the extrapolation of the three elements of diffusion: time, space, and system.

A theory of the diffusion of insecurity is here proposed to explain the special patterns of violence observed in the world system during the post-World War II era. It has been noted above that there is strong reason to perceive the systemic patterns of violence as being consistent with the notion of cultures of violence as there is observed a definite clustering effect. It is estimated that 90 percent of the total political violence experienced in the world system has been concentrated in six regional clusters: the Middle East, Southern Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Korean peninsula, and Central America.²⁷ Yet, those specific clusters of political violence can not be considered constant systemic traits or stable phenomena; rather, each of the clusters’ internal properties also can be observed to change significantly over the fifty-year time span of the study. At the center of each cluster is observed an identifiable core conflict that existed at the end of World War II and has persisted throughout the post-war period. These six core conflicts fit Azar et al.’s (1979, 50) conception of protracted social conflict: “Protracted conflicts are hostile interactions which extend over long periods of time with sporadic outbreaks of open warfare fluctuating in frequency and intensity.”

It has been proposed that the violence and hostility of these core conflicts spills over and affects all social relations in proximity to the violence, that is, these protracted conflicts generate a generalized social psychology of insecurity in the affected populations. Over time, a fundamental transformation of normal societal relations tends to be rationalized, articulated, symbolized, and embedded in the culture of the various, affected identity groups; thus creating cultures of violence that rely primarily on utilitarian strategies and are resistant to the adoption (or skeptical of the viability) of normative strategies.

The idea of “spill over” suggests a diffusion dynamic. The vehicle, or medium, through which this diffusion takes place is what Simmel has termed the “web of group affiliations,” or social networks, through which individuals share communication and coordinate (or counterpoise) effort. Social networks are based upon normative procedures and expectations and tend to become multiplied and institutionalized, over time; they provide the foundation and infrastructure of social relations in complex societies. Group boundaries are important structural components that will condition a societal diffusion process, especially when those boundaries are formalized as between “state” groups. Boundaries are created by social identity distinctions and are often institutionalized over time and may act as filters, channels, or barriers to communication. One of the most important defining traits differentiating the “in group” from an “out group” is the quality and number of social ties (and, by implication, the quality of societal communication). In general, social ties are more numerous, stronger, and used more frequently between individuals of the same group as compared to individuals of different groups. The political structure of societies, and especially the state structure, thus provides a strong conditioning mechanism for the diffusion process.

The basic model of the diffusion of insecurity process is the serial model depicted in Figure 4.1. The hypothesized insecurity effects produced by the experience (or knowledge) of actual violence, coercion, or threat spill over both spatially and temporally. The serial diffusion dynamic takes place outward from the source, or core; the process is continuous (as long as the stimulus remains) and the effect decays across space (i.e., as a function of the distance from the source).²⁸ The simple temporal diffusion process may be understood to operate in much the same way. The political structure of the world system is the state-system and the formal boundaries defined by that structure provide a meaningful division of the space into distinct units. These units qualify the effect, as already noted, and provide convenient data points for analysis.

By imposing the spatial diffusion model on the system space and centering the model on the six identified core conflicts, we can categorize the system units by reference to their spatial relationship to the core protracted conflicts: 1) “confrontal states” (PCR-1), are those states situated at the core, involved in the hostility, and on whose territory the core violence occurs; 2) “peripheral states” (PCR-2), are the states bordering on the Confrontal States; and 3) “marginal states” (PCR-3), are those bordering outward of the Peripheral States. These, then,

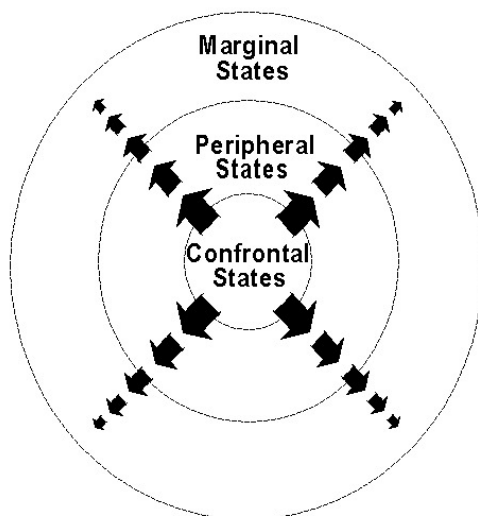
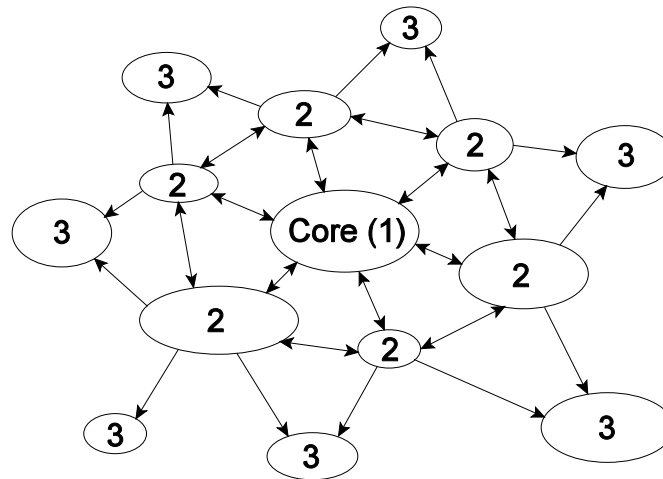


Figure 4.1 The Spatial Diffusion of Insecurity: Protracted Conflict Regions

are the units that experience, to varying degrees, the “experimental treatment”: the climate of insecurity, and thus comprise the protracted conflict regions (PCRs) under study (see Appendix A for the list of states comprising the different regions). The world system also provides a “control group” in those states with basic characteristics similar to the experimental group (i.e., the general pool of Third World states) but which do not experience the special treatment, termed Non-PCR states. A third systemic classification (in addition to the bifurcation of Third World states into PCR and Non-PCR categories) is designated the Highly Institutionalized States (HIS): these units’ characteristics differ substantively from the experimental and control groups. In many ways these units may be considered the “target group”; we would like to gain a better understanding of their behavior by “controlling” for the effects produced by their substantive differences (i.e., institutionalization—these units are similar to the experimental units in many respects but their behavior is highly complex, stylized, and formalized; it should be assumed that the treatment does/would affect them similarly, although the substantive elements have made the special effects difficult to detect and measure). The states comprising the HIS group are the core units of the world system: the advanced industrial democracies (West), the former Socialist Bloc states (East), and the People’s Republic of China.

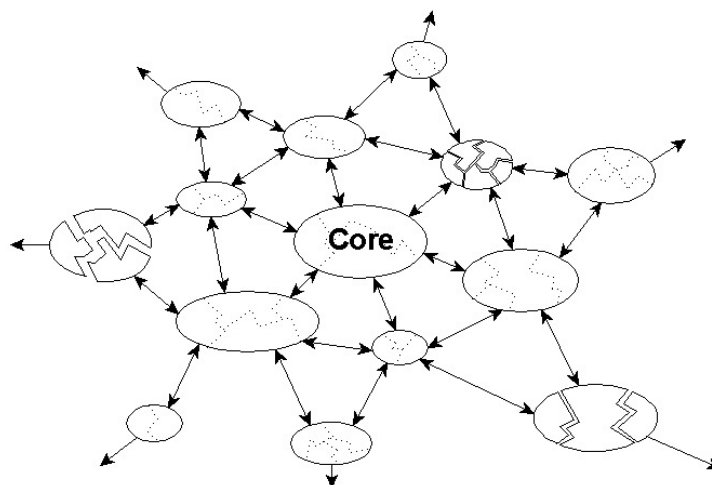
It is proposed that the treatment, the climate of insecurity, will alter the social psychology of the affected groups and, thus, lead to quantifiable changes in those



Process Reinforcement and Systemic Disintegration

Figure 4.2 Secondary Diffusion of Insecurity

groups' behavior. It should be expected that, over time, as the diffusion of insecurity process matures and the effects strengthen, more units will exhibit the problem behaviors: utilitarian strategies and political violence, in greater degrees. In macro-structural terms, these mature effects will tend to transform the behavior of the second-tier units, the "peripheral states," and then that of the third-tier units, the "marginal states," until in the fully mature insecurity system all units will appear to be similarly affected and will exhibit similarly abnormal behavior. Figure 4.2 presents the "Secondary Diffusion of Insecurity" model. This is an "interlocking central place" type diffusion model. This model takes into account the ways in which the existing structure of the system further conditions the diffusion effects; the systemic structure defines the separate nodes (states) and the nature of the communication paths. Diffusion is multi-directional and may follow more than one path to each node. The net result is process reinforcement as the diffusion of insecurity no longer depends totally on maintenance of the core stimulus. Each affected node becomes an additional source of process stimulus; each node acts alternately as source, receiver, and transmitter of the diffusion effects thereby making systemic insecurity self-perpetuating. The result is systemic disintegration as each unit struggles to augment its own security *vis-à-vis* all others; a situation commonly referred to as the "security dilemma." Cooperative ventures among units dwindle as trust diminishes, commitment fades, and



Societal Disintegration and State Failure

Figure 4.3 Tertiary Diffusion of Insecurity

insecurity increases. In short, as a result of the units' misguided attempts to protect themselves from "foreign" threats, the regional sub-system progressively loses its faculty to control its conflict processes; supraordinate (universalistic) goals give way to subordinate (particularistic) goals.

The pervasive social psychology of insecurity and the real transformation of inter-unit behavior and relations also affect the relatively more resistant and resilient social networks constituting the units themselves. Figure 4.3 presents a graphic illustration of the proposed tertiary diffusion of insecurity effects. As the units' political priorities and behaviors change and conflict management strategies transform from normative to utilitarian, the social costs of the state's primary function, conflict management, soar while the failures mount. Interest groups become increasingly incensed as the resources available for allocation and redistribution to internal recipients diminish.²⁹ The perceived legitimacy of the state is eroded and challenges to state authority multiply and intensify. The state is increasingly threatened both by the external environment and the internal situation. Under these conditions the state tends to lose its sense of societal agency and begins to act as though it were an autonomous actor within a hostile social environment. It is more likely, under this perception of internal insecurity, to transform state behavior from tolerant and inclusive to intolerant and exclusive. Opposition, rather than being accommodated or coopted, will be increasingly

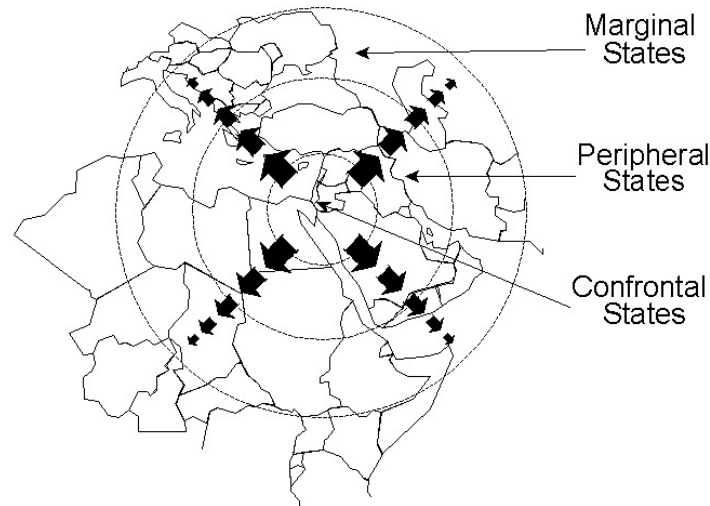
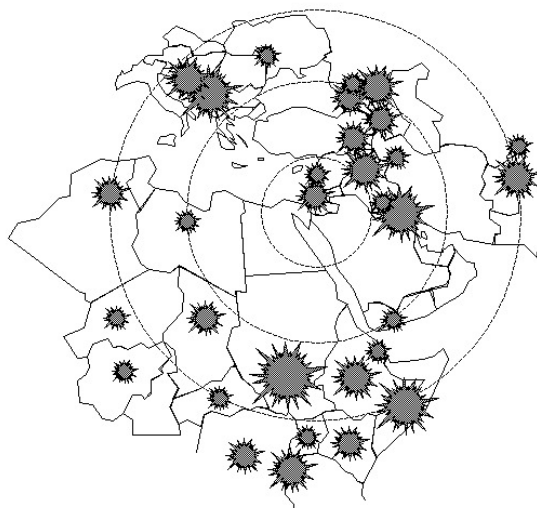


Figure 4.4 Middle East Protracted Conflict Region I

repressed as resources become increasingly scarce. Whereas, the perception of external threat tends to rally the citizenry “round the flag” in the short-term, it appears to have an opposite, competing effect over the long-term. The net, mature effect here is societal disintegration and state failure, a condition commonly referred to as the “insecurity dilemma.” The rise in political violence and insecurity, both externally and internally, exacerbates political divisions and social cleavages within society, leading eventually to ungovernability and societal fracture within the systemic units themselves.

Figure 4.4 superimposes the basic spatial diffusion model on a map of the Middle East region to illustrate the PCR concept in both spatial and state-structural terms. The Middle East is by far the most well-recognized of the culture of violence regions and the most mature example of the proposed diffusion of insecurity effects.³⁰ The graphic depictions of the application of formal theoretic construct to a structured reality (the system of states) in Figure 4.4 and in Figure 4.5 below also illustrate some of the difficulties that variations in analytic unit characteristics pose for comparative analysis. Figure 4.5 plots the locations of the serious episodes of political violence that have taken place in the Middle East during the 1990s (to mid-1996). Each distinct episode is represented by an “explosion” icon; the icons vary in size to denote the differing magnitude of the various episodes. In spatial terms, the plot diagram reveals some sense of the



Major Political Violence Episodes in the 1990s

Figure 4.5 Middle East Protracted Conflict Region II

clustering characteristic of systemic violence: episodes tend to congregate and the magnitudes of the congregated episodes tend to synchronize. In structural terms, the plotted episodes can be seen to effuse throughout the system and congregate especially in the outer ring of the geometric model (i.e., the PCR-3 “marginal states”), such that a “ring of fire” analogy seems an appropriate description of the current situation in the Middle East PCR.

Insecurity and Development

Having detailed the systemic (processual and structural) dynamics of a three-level diffusion of insecurity theory, it will be helpful to examine the specific effects this proposed process will have on the politics and policies of the affected groups and states. By detailing these proposed effects, testable hypotheses may be derived.

Figure 4.6 summarizes the hypothesized systemic effects of the diffusion of insecurity, the societal effects of pervasive insecurity that together characterize a culture of violence. Starting with the upper left-hand corner of the diagram, the existence of a protracted social conflict acts as the original source for the diffusion of insecurity; the strength of the effect is qualified by the intensity, magnitude, and

duration of the actual and potential political violence. The effect is conditioned by geographical distance (decaying in strength across space) and the special properties of the extant social exchange and communication networks (transmission, perception, and response). The general psychic effect is termed a “climate of insecurity” and the general transformation produced is to shift political actors’ decision making from non-crisis to crisis mode. Of course, there is no practical way to measure the postulated psychic disturbance in affected individuals or the transformation of the social psychology of affected groups. However, because human beings are rational creatures possessing free will, what they think will become the motivation for their actions.³¹ If there is a distinct change in thinking, this change can be measured through the changes in actual behavior. As the normal politics of security transform to the abnormal politics of insecurity, several quantifiable changes in state (or actor) behavior are expected:

- an increase in the use of coercion and violence in political relations;
- an increase in the resources committed to militancy (more personnel/greater expenditures);
- an increased likelihood that affected states will develop incoherent authority patterns (i.e., neither purely democratic or autocratic, but rather inconsistent and confused);
- an increase in societal contention among competing interest groups under increasing resource scarcity;
- an increase in the use of political repression (i.e., the use of coercion and violence to thwart group mobilization) by state authorities to augment social control in an atmosphere of increasing disorder and challenges to state authority;
- as the state is increasingly perceived as adversarial or obstructionist by interest groupings, individuals will increasingly shift their loyalties away from the state and refocus them on more efficacious and secure communal identities: ascriptive or parochial identity groups with which they have a stronger, more stable, and reliable (i.e., secure) bond and from which they are unlikely to be ousted or alienated;
- as personal loyalties shift away from the state and toward communal identities, the resources available to the state to manage the increasing and intensifying conflicts will diminish, thereby disabling and weakening the central state and strengthening local leaders, that is, political and social cohesion deteriorates leading to increasing societal disintegration into

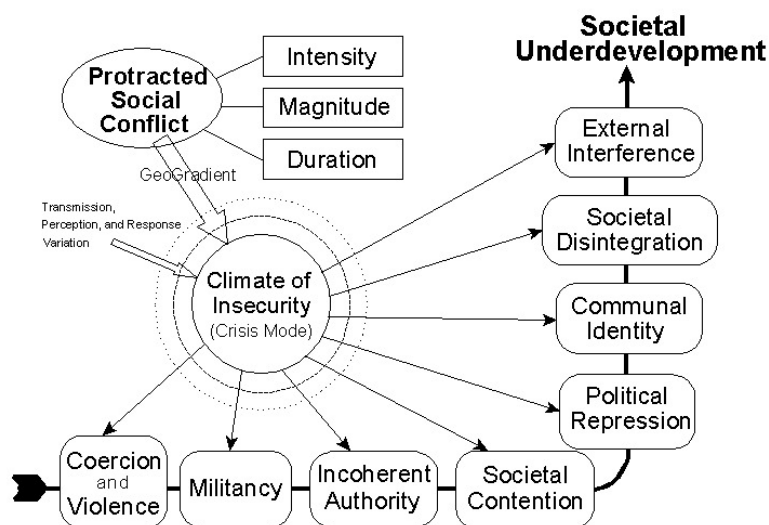


Figure 4.6 The Societal Effects of Pervasive Insecurity

communal/ethnic groups (coalitions among outgroups are possible, but only for convenience in their mutual opposition to the common enemy, the state);

- the general weakening of state capabilities and capacities leads the state to seek external support (to compensate the lack of internal support) at the same time as the weakened condition of the state and society renders them incapable of resisting external interference.

These symptoms are variable and additive and the net result is a syndrome of “societal underdevelopment” or *arrested development*.

This model can be universally applied to any level of analysis to help understand the societal dynamics of a social system experiencing abnormal levels of insecurity. In essence, the theoretic argument is two-fold: one, the social environment is a critical element in defining the politics of a conflict dyad (system is crucial to conflict management) and, two, the social psychological condition of insecurity is the primary “cause” of retarded or deviant development in the societal context. The solution to the Gordian knot of insecurity and underdevelopment, then, must be founded in the strategic augmentation of societal security with minimal recourse to the traditional modes of security enhancement, that is, without reliance on military armament and the resort to force. The main interest

of this study, however, is in establishing whether the structural theory outlined above is an accurate depiction of systemic dynamics. It is to that end that we turn next. This chapter has examined the conflict dynamics of the “global insecurity system” as a way to explain the resulting societal and systemic inefficiencies and the general condition of “arrested development” in the Third World, especially, and the whole world system, in general. The next chapter will present a rigorous examination of the hypotheses proposed as characteristic of the societal underdevelopment or arrested development syndrome.

Notes

1. It has become commonplace in the literature to see the political domain divided into “high” (military security) and “low” politics (economic and social issues). Such “hierarchical binary oppositions” (to use the feminist phrase—e.g., Tickner 1992, 7-8) are inherently biased and represent prejudicial thinking. Within “high” politics, there is a distinction made between “major” (or “great” or “super”) powers and “minor” powers. Minor powers are minor in the relativistic terms that presume they can not reasonably threaten a major power (in a conventional conflict event), therefore they are assumed to be of little consequence and, thus, of little interest to the paragons of security analysis. Security studies displays little attention to conflict trends outside the advanced core of states and, as a result, that discipline remains ill-equipped to understand violent conflict processes in exactly those areas where they are most likely to occur. When attention is shifted from an “events” focus to a “systemic process” concentration, the minor powers may be seen to wield a great measure of influence on the policies and actions transpiring within the system. In this context, a subjective distinction between “high” (Europeanized) and “low” (Third World) culture hides an important distinction between *highly-institutionalized* social structures and *less-institutionalized* social practices. Interactive events taking place in a variable context of formal institutionalization are important analytically as comparison may reveal effects of *structural determination* (institutional conditioning) on the course of events.

2. Throughout this discussion I equate the special term “ethnicity” with the more general concept of “identity”; the term identity refers to the individual’s psychological attachment to a social identity group. The main difference in these terms is that ethnicity implies an ascriptive quality in social identification, whereas identity may also include groups based purely on achievement criteria. The ascriptive quality tends to make ethnicity or nationality more politically salient and resilient under conditions of stress as they are in some sense inescapable. I must also take this opportunity to acknowledge my somewhat liberal use of literary license in describing some reactions to the use of ethnicity as a variable in recent scholarship. I apologize sincerely to those scholars who have diligently and rigorously examined and applied the special qualities of ethnic identification in their analyses. I especially acknowledge the seminal work of Gurr and the Minorities at Risk Project, to whom I am indebted for a large part of my understanding and insights into the issues of political ethnicity.

3. The quoted definition is from the *American Heritage Dictionary*, 2nd college ed., s.v. “ethnicity.”

4. See Bloom (1990), Mercer (1995), Neumann (1992), Smith (1992), Wæver (1995), Wendt (1994), and White (1992) for various treatments of social identity theory in international relations.

5. It has long been accepted wisdom that the perception of external threat stimulates internal cohesion; often referred to as “diversionary theory” or a “rally round the flag” effect (see Coser 1956; Levy 1989; Lian and Oneal 1993). The present discussion agrees with Russett and Graham (1989) when they argue that such a positive effect holds only in the short run, in the long run the opposite is more likely to hold—that is, long-term rivalries tend to exacerbate internal tensions and social divisions. This negative effect would be assumed to increase markedly when such threats and rivalries involve actual violence, rather than simply the threat of violence.

6. The problems of ethnic conflict are not new, although they are certainly no better understood than they were around the turn of the (20th) century when debates on the “nationality problem” raged in socialist party circles (Marshall 1990). Other sources on this subject are Holdsworth (1967), Connor (1984), and Nahaylo and Swoboda (1990). For more general treatments of ethnicity and social conflict, see e.g., Bromlei (1984), Bruk (1986), Horowitz (1985), and Gurr (1993). Of course, the problems associated with the rise of fascism, or radical nationalism, in the inter-war period are more well known, as are the treatments of “nationalism” in the literature.

7. I use the term “communal minority” despite the fact that ethnic groups also often form the communal majority of a state. Most often, however, these communal majorities (or nations), as political actors, are inseparable from the state itself. In those few cases where a communal majority group is deprived of state power by a powerful minority, the majority is relegated to minority status within political society. Cases of such great degrees of status inconsistency are rare and inherently unstable. Here, then, “minority” refers to the amount of influence a group exercises over the determination of state policy. Hence, the main conceptual difference between “ethnicity” and “nationality” can be said to lie in the degree of communal identity group access to the institutions of state power.

8. Until the massive proliferation of advanced weaponry throughout the world under the auspices of the Cold War competition was finally accomplished, ethnicity could not compare with nationalism in degrees of virulence because ethnic groups did not usually have access to the means of mechanized, militarized violence (whereas nations, by Weberian definition, had access to the state’s “monopoly of legitimate force”). The great powers of the colonial system did selectively arm minor ethnic groups in their foreign possessions as a means to enhance their abilities to control the subjugated populations, but seldom were these groups armed to the extent that they could pose a threat to the colonial power. See Laurance (1992) for an overview of global arms proliferation in the post-World War II era.

9. See Mandel (1980) and Vasquez (1993) for overviews of the relationship between borders and warfare. See also Kirby and Ward (1987) for a discussion of the theoretical issues of political borders.

10. Many theorists, especially those from the realist school, would argue that these two elements are derivations of the relative capabilities of various actors to project power (i.e., violence). I defer at this time from playing “chicken” (and egg) with the great-power bus speeding down the highway to destruction. The main point is, however, crucial in that having access to the means of violence affects the rational calculus to consider the option of initiating violence to induce change in an interactive sequence. This option has become

increasingly available to greater numbers of political actors.

11. This does not mean, however, that the propensity for violence is assumed constant for all individuals; rather, the distribution of individual propensities for violence is the same for all human aggregations in societies (see chapter 3).

12. See, for example, Small and Singer (1982). Holsti (1991, 5) simply states, "Great powers are more war-prone than other kinds of states."

13. See Festinger (1957) for a theoretical examination of cognitive evolutionary process.

14. For summaries of the empirical evidence in support of the culture of violence hypothesis, see Eckstein (1980) and Zimmermann (1983). See Gurr (1988) for a more detailed theoretical account of the "growth of the coercive state."

15. The Lockean notion of the illegitimate regime as a cause of civil disturbances did not work its way into mainstream (i.e., non-Marxist) political conflict analysis until Gurr's *Why Men Rebel* was published in 1970. Since then, with the expansion of inquiry to examine both regime and challenger against some universal standard of political conduct, our knowledge and understanding of the causes and interactive processes of civil disturbances and collective violence has progressed tremendously.

16. See Houweling and Siccama (1988) for a summation of related critiques of the COW project methodology. While many criticisms can be flung at the COW research legacy, no one questions the importance of that work in furthering our knowledge and understanding of the war phenomenon.

17. Kelly (1986, 161-62 and 173) points out, "Since 1945, most turmoil has occurred in Third World areas of great power competition where political and economic depression persists. [These areas are termed "shatterbelts."] A shatterbelt is a geographic region over whose control great powers seriously compete....A shatterbelt originates when rival major power footholds are established in an area....Major powers in a sense create shatterbelts when they decide to oppose other major powers within regional contexts."

18. There is little standardization of the terminology used to refer to different diffusion processes. Bremer (1982, 30-31—bracketed terms are equivalents used by Most and Starr 1980, 933) follows the epidemiological metaphor (as do Houweling and Siccama 1985) and uses the term "contagion" to refer to the general process by which "the use of coercion by itself increases the likelihood that it will be used again" [diffusion]; this general process subsumes "infection" [positive spatial diffusion—that is, increases across political identity borders], "immunization" [negative spatial diffusion—decreases across borders], "addiction" [positive reinforcement—that is, temporal diffusion or increases within a political entity over time], and "avoidance" [negative reinforcement—decreases within a polity over time]. What is generally overlooked in the diffusion literature in political science is exactly that idea contained in the culture of violence hypothesis that normative justifications for violence diffuse through cultural institutions, a process which can be thought of as *symbolic* diffusion of violence. Such cultural symbols of violence woven into the psychological fabric of a social group can lie dormant for decades only to be evoked again when group conditions approximate earlier situations (Brass 1974), such as is currently the case in the areas formerly comprising Yugoslavia.

19. For an explication of the theoretical impact of Galton's problem, and diffusion in general, on scientific inquiry, see Ross and Homer (1976), Klingman (1980), Wellhofer (1989), Frensdreis (1989), and Most and Starr (1990). See Most and Starr (1989) for a more comprehensive examination of the impact of diffusion processes on political theory.

20. Huntington has recently offered an alternative explanation for the current patterns of political violence, proposing a concept of cultural or civilizational “fault lines” (this is basically the “lack of stability” thesis raised to a higher level of analysis and mixed with the “shatterbelt” idea). See Gurr (1994, 356-358) for a test of this alternative hypothesis.

21. The focus on inter-state war and militarized disputes reflects the fact that the COW data bases are some of the few, if not the only, reasonably reliable aggregate data collections of conflict variables with a global scope available. Quantitative analysis in international relations (the questions asked and the ways in which those questions are investigated) is severely constrained by the a priori assumptions, methodologies, and interests of data researchers. Much of the evidence of diffusion processes in the spread of violence and warfare is lost because of the ways we conceptualize and codify political actors and events (chapter 2 above).

22. See Most and Starr (1989, 97-132) for a recent discussion of the idea of foreign policy substitutability, which refers to variability of policy response to a certain type of stimuli (i.e., there is no strict causal connection between a certain action and a certain reaction: one of a number of substitutable policies may be chosen as the reaction to a given stimulus and, conversely, a number of substitutable stimuli may evoke a given policy response). Gurr (1988, 58) also incorporates the idea of substitution of function in reference to institutions of coercion: “The personnel and agencies of warfare and internal security are interchangeable, though functional specialization between them develops more or less quickly.”

23. Partial reinforcement, wherein a response is stimulated only part of the time, produces a much more insidious effect such that the “response will be much harder to extinguish if it was acquired during partial rather than continuous reinforcement.” (Gleitman 1986, 110) This partial-reinforcement effect is consistent with the definition of the protracted social conflict given in Azar et al. (1978).

24. Maoz (1989) looks at revolutionary state transformations to supply a diffusion stimulus with systemic effects. The defining condition of such revolutionary, as opposed to evolutionary, changes is their violent character. Revolutionary violence is likely to be a consequence of, or response to, an existing pattern of violence and so might the observed systemic effects (i.e., the proposed causal relationship between revolutionary stimulus and systemic response is spurious or underspecified). Work by Paul Diehl on “political shocks” is a related attempt to find a stimulus explanation for the initiation and termination of enduring rivalries (lecture given at The University of Iowa on March 11, 1994).

25. See Gurr (1988) for a treatment of the theoretical issues of temporal diffusion and the “growth of the coercive state” and Goertz and Diehl (1993) for a discussion of the concept of “enduring rivalry”; it is argued here that enduring rivalries are simply the more institutionalized form of protracted social conflicts.

26. The spread of a single episode to include additional actors and thereby become “complexly dyadic” is herein termed “contagion” not diffusion. Most of the extant studies of diffusion tend to conflate contagion of a single episode and the diffusion to include additional episodes as a part of a unitary theoretical process. This conceptual confusion further complicates their analysis and distorts the findings. When this is added to the problem of focus on a particular category of event (i.e., inter-state war or the threat of such war) it leads to indistinct results. The problem is that the decision to become involved in an existing event or episode (i.e., contagion) strongly emphasizes the actor’s perception of its own rational choice motive and diminishes the environmental component; the change

in the general condition of insecurity is a constant at that point in time. Of all the actors who might become involved in an event, only those who anticipate a gain (or diminution of loss) will choose to participate.

27. See chapter 1, note 13. The regional clusters, or protracted conflict regions, center on six core conflicts: 1) Palestine; 2) South Africa; 3) Vietnam; 4) Korea; 5) Cuba/US; and 6) India/Pakistan.

28. The definition of protracted social conflict notes that actual warfare is not continuous but, rather, sporadic. The psychic stimulus remains continuous, however, as long as the condition is either actual or expected. In instrumental conditioning, a partial-reinforcement effect, that produced by a variable stimulus, is much harder to extinguish following removal of the stimulus than is an effect produced by a fixed stimulus.

29. This is especially troublesome in Third World countries as many of the most costly instruments associated with modern utilitarian strategies and security must be procured from extra-regional external suppliers; rather than stimulating indigenous industrialization, this intensifies external dependence and increases external influence.

30. Four of the other PCRs identified have been experiencing a "remission" of violence in the 1990s and are receiving attention and conflict management assistance, to varying degrees, by the UN and other world organizations. It remains a question at this time whether the dwindling resources and diminishing support for the world bodies will allow them to commit the necessary level of involvement over the full length of time needed to transform these violent, insecure cultures back to normal societal development conditions.

31. Recall that our four basic assumptions regarding human nature are diversity, subjectivity, rationality, and freedom of will (chapter 3).