

# **Horizontal inequalities as a cause of conflict**

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## Introduction

‘Remove the secondary causes that have produced the great convulsions of the world and you will almost always find the principle of inequality at the bottom. Either the poor have attempted to plunder the rich, or the rich to enslave the poor. If, then, a society can ever be founded in which everyman shall have something to keep and little to take from others, much will have been done for peace’ (de Tocqueville 1835, quote from 1954 edition,,: 266)

Violent conflict in multi-ethnic and multi-religious countries remains a major problem in the world today. From the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia to the Basque region of Spain and Northern Ireland, from Rwanda to Sudan, from Fiji to Indonesia, numerous bitter, deadly conflicts have been fought along ethnic or religious lines. In addition to the deaths and injuries that result on and off the battlefield, violent organised conflict is also a major cause of underdevelopment and poverty. It reduces economic growth and investment, worsens social service provision and leads to weaker human indicators compared to non-conflict countries (Collier and the World Bank, 2003; Stewart, Fitzgerald and Associates, 2001). To make matters worse, the incidence of such violent conflict is highest among the poorest countries of the world. Consequently, those concerned with promoting development and reducing poverty must make prevention of these conflicts a priority.

Although there has been some decline in the total incidence of violent conflict since the mid-1990s (Figure 1), the proportion of conflict that is presented as being primarily concerned with ethnic disputes has been rising (Figure 2).

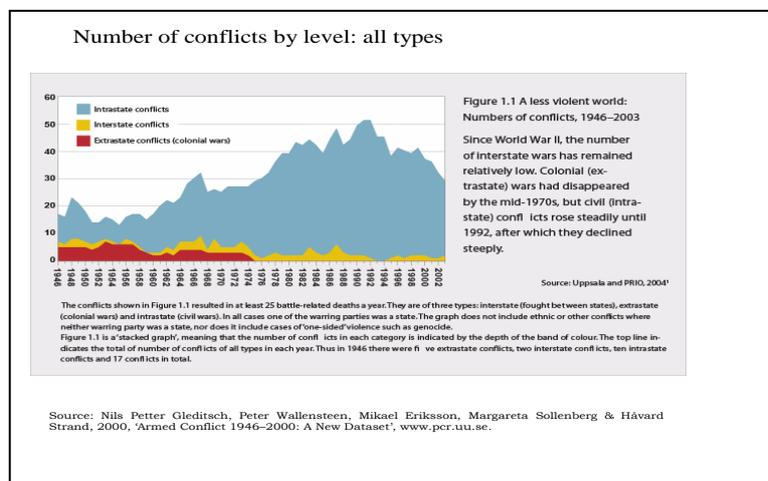


Figure 1

Fortunately, there is plentiful evidence to show that violent conflict in multi-ethnic societies is not an unavoidable ramification of ethnic difference, an outcome of ‘age-old ethnic hatreds’ as is popularly suggested, nor of an unavoidable ‘clash of civilisations’ (Huntington, 1993). Violent conflict within multi-ethnic countries is not inevitable—in fact, most multi-ethnic societies are peaceful (Fearon and Laitin, 1996). The critical question, then, is ‘why does ethnic or religious conflict break out in some circumstances and not in others?’

One important hypothesis concerning the causes of violent conflict focuses on the presence of major ‘horizontal inequalities’ or inequalities among culturally defined groups. This theory is based on the notion that ‘when cultural differences coincide with economic and political differences between groups, this can cause deep resentment that may lead to violent struggles’ (Stewart and Brown, 2007, p. 222). If it is correct, it presents important policy implications, for development policy generally as well as for policy in conflict-affected countries. The concept of HIs and its relationship with conflict has formed the central hypothesis of the work of CRISE, based at the University of Oxford and funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), in collaboration with partners in Latin America (Bolivia, Guatemala and Peru), Southeast Asia (Indonesia and Malaysia) and West Africa (Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria). In each region, one of these countries has avoided serious national conflict (Bolivia, Malaysia and Ghana, respectively) while the remainder have experienced severe violent conflict in the recent, or relatively recent, past.

Each country, has, however, confronted serious HIs. For example:

- in *Bolivia*, the Infant Mortality Rate of the indigenous population is 50 per cent higher than nonindigenous
- in *Peru*, the proportion of the indigenous population with secondary schooling is one fifth that of whites
- in *Guatemala*, 20% of the indigenous population is estimated to be in extreme poverty in 2000 in comparison with 5% of the non-indigenous.
- In *Nigeria*, maternal mortality rates in the northeast of the country are nine times those in the southwest.
- In *Côte d’Ivoire*, the literacy rate for Northern Mande is just 23 per cent, half the rate among the Akan.
- In *Ghana*, in the Northern Region the child mortality rate is nearly 2.5 times Ghana as a whole.

- In *Malaysia*, despite considerable improvement, Chinese incomes on average, over 1.6 times Malays.
- In *Indonesia*,

Thus it is evident that conflict is not inevitable where there are HIs, as some of these countries (notably Ghana, Bolivia and Malaysia) have largely sustained peace. Hence the research set out to investigate whether HIs predisposed countries to conflict, the conditions in which, for any given HIs, conflict was most likely, and the policies which might help avoid conflict.

This lecture reviews the main findings and conclusions of CRISE research. It suggests policies, based on the research findings, that could help to reduce the frequency of violent conflict and prevent its recurrence.<sup>1</sup>

The lecture is structured as follows: section 1 defines the concept of HIs in more detail and elaborates on their connection with conflict. Section 2 reviews the 10 major findings of CRISE research. Given that the evidence implies that HIs are an important cause of conflict, policies to reduce such inequalities need to be identified and introduced where they are acute. Section 3 identifies relevant policies and discusses some advantages and disadvantages of different approaches. Section 4 briefly looks at data and measurement. Section 5 draws some conclusions and highlights further research needs arising from the work.

### **1. Groups, horizontal inequalities and conflicts**

HIs are inequalities among groups of people that share a common identity. Such inequalities have economic, social, political and cultural status dimensions. Horizontal inequality differs from 'vertical' inequality (VI) in that the latter is a measure of inequality among *individuals* or *households*, not *groups*—furthermore, measurement of VI is often confined to income or consumption.

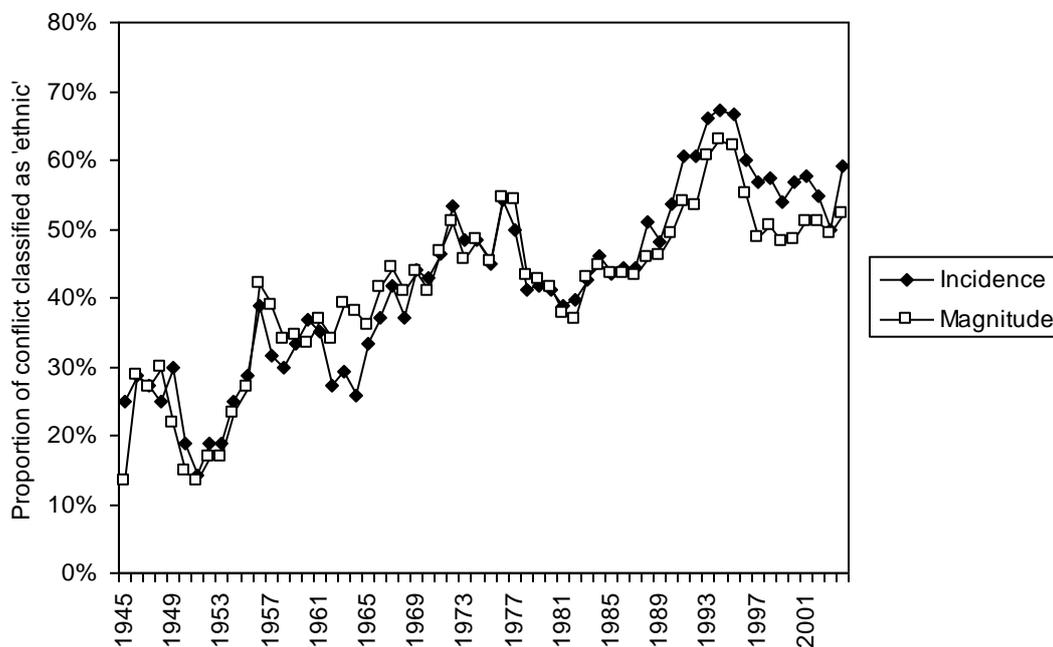
During the Cold War, many conflicts presented themselves as disputes about class or ideology, following the East–West division, with each side supported by the major powers along ideological lines. The identity basis of conflicts has become much more explicit since the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, as ideological differences

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<sup>1</sup> For a deeper discussion, see Stewart (2008a). See also the *Working Papers* and *Policy Papers* on the CRISE website, <http://www.crise.ox.ac.uk>; the site also contains several special issues of journals and 11 forthcoming books.

have diminished; socialism no longer seems a serious alternative to capitalism and its use as a banner no longer guarantees external financial support. According to the Center for Systematic Peace, ‘a virtual cornucopia of these seemingly intractable (and previously “invisible”) social identity conflicts [have] exploded onto the world scene and captured the public and policy eyes’.<sup>2</sup> Data on conflict confirm this rise, revealing a major increase in the proportion of all conflicts labelled as ‘ethnic’: from 15 per cent in 1953 to nearly 60 per cent by 2005 (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**  
**Trends in ethnic conflict as a proportion of total conflict, 1945–2004**



Source: calculated from Marshall (2006).

Identity conflicts have also become global, as the divide between Islam and the West has replaced the ideological divisions of the Cold War. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the Israel–Palestine conflict are clear examples.<sup>3</sup> Today, then, mobilisation along by group identity has become the single most important source of violent conflict. This raises a critical question: why does serious violent conflict erupt in some multi-ethnic societies while the majority of groups live peacefully together?

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.systemicpeace.org/conflict.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> For a deeper discussion of this aspect, see Stewart (2008b).

The central hypothesis explored here is that violent mobilisation is most likely when a group that shares a salient identity faces severe inequalities of various kinds, i.e. confronts Horizontal Inequalities.

Such inequalities may be economic, social or political or concern cultural status.

- **Economic HIs** include inequalities in access to and ownership of assets— financial, human, natural resource-based and social. In addition, they comprise inequalities in income levels and employment opportunities, which depend on such assets and the general conditions of the economy.
- **Social HIs** include inequalities in access to a range of services, such as education, health care and housing, as well as in educational and health status.
- **Political HIs** include inequalities in the distribution of political opportunities and power among groups, including control over the the presidency, the cabinet, parliamentary assemblies, the bureaucracy, local and regional governments, , the army and the police . They also encompass inequalities in people’s capabilities to participate politically and to express their needs.
- **Cultural status HIs** include disparities in the recognition and standing of different groups’ languages, customs, norms and practices.<sup>4</sup>

Any type of horizontal inequality can provide an incentive for political mobilisation, but *political* inequalities (that is, political exclusion) are most likely to motivate group leaders to instigate a rebellion, as can be seen, for example, in the recent case of Kenya. By contrast, *economic and social* inequalities, as well as inequalities in cultural status, are more likely to motivate the mass of the population. Cultural status inequalities bind groups together and thereby increase the salience of identity differences.

The relevance of any element depends on whether it is an important source of income or well-being in a particular society. For instance, the distribution of housing (a key source of discord between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland in the 1970s) is likely to be more relevant in an industrialised country than in a country where people still build their own homes (Stewart, 2005). Land, however, is

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<sup>4</sup> Arnim Langer and Graham Brown first introduced the concept of cultural status inequalities. See Langer and Brown (2008).

extremely important in places where agriculture accounts for most output and employment, but it becomes less significant as development proceeds. Each type of HI is notable in itself, but most also have wider impacts, affecting other types of inequality. Political power, for example, is both an end and a means, as inequalities in political power often lead to social and economic inequalities. Similarly, there are causal connections between educational access and income: lack of access to education leads to poor economic opportunities, and low income tends to result in poor educational access and achievements in a vicious cycle of deprivation.

Mobilisation along group lines only occurs if people identify strongly with their own group, and if they view others as being different in fundamental respects. As anthropologists emphasise, group boundaries are socially constructed and not innate or primordial. However, because of history, education, and propaganda, often orchestrated by political leaders, people can *perceive* their most salient identities—and those of others—as essential or primordial.<sup>5</sup> As David Turton (1997, p. 82) notes, the ‘very effectiveness [of ethnicity] as a means of advancing group interests depends upon its being seen as “primordial” by those who make claims in its name’. Such ‘essentialisation’ occurs despite the fact that generally, people have multiple identities, and salient group boundaries may change over time in response to events, leadership and opportunities.

There are clear synergies between the concept of HIs and other approaches to understanding inequalities and the dynamics of mobilisation in multi-ethnic countries. For instance, Charles Tilly’s (1998) concept of ‘categorical inequalities’ describes similar group inequalities. Ted Gurr’s (1993) concept of ‘relative deprivation’ as a cause of minority rebellion represents another similar view. However, the HI hypothesis differs from relative deprivation in its view that the relatively rich, as well as the relatively poor, may initiate conflict. In Burundi, for example, the Tutsis have attacked the poorer Hutus; and the relatively rich area of Biafra initiated the Nigerian Civil War of the late 1960s.<sup>6</sup> Such incidents seem to be motivated by fear that an existing situation is not sustainable without force and that the relative prosperity of the group is, or may be, subject to attack.

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<sup>5</sup> Social psychologists have explained this as being due to a human tendency to ‘essentialise’. See McCawley (2008).

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, Nafziger (1983); Lemarchand (1996).

## **2. Ten major findings on the causes of conflict and the relationship between HIs and conflict.**

### *1. The probability of conflict is higher in areas with greater economic and social HIs*

This finding confirms the basic, research hypothesis concerning the relationship between HIs and conflict, and is supported by a number of investigations. Østby's (2008) empirical analysis across countries, for 1986–2003, for example, reveals a significant rise in the probability of conflict in countries with severe economic and social HIs. In her models, she defines groups alternatively by ethnicity, religion and region, and finds a significant relation between HIs and the onset of violent conflict for each definition. Economic HIs are measured by average household assets and social HIs by average years of education.

The effect of HIs is quite high: the probability of conflict increases threefold when comparing the expected conflict onset when all variables have average values, compared to a situation where the extent of horizontal inequality of assets among ethnic groups is at the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile. In the case of inter-regional HIs, the probability of conflict increases 2.5 times as HIs rise from the mean value to the 95<sup>th</sup> percentile value.<sup>7</sup>

Other statistical cross-country work that supports this relationship includes Gurr's successive studies of relative deprivation and conflict (Gurr, 1993; Gurr and Moore 1997) and Barrows' (1976) investigation of Sub-Saharan African countries in the 1960s. Gurr reports a positive relation across countries between minority rebellions and protests and relative deprivation, defined in economic, political and cultural terms. Barrows notes a consistently positive correlation between HIs and political instability across 32 Sub-Saharan African countries in the 1960s, with measures of inequality including share of political power and socioeconomic variables. More recently, Wimmer, Cederman and Min (2009) used global data for 1946–2005 to show that countries with high degrees of political exclusion are more likely to experience violent upheaval.

In addition, intra-country studies demonstrate a positive relationship between the level of HIs and the incidence (or intensity) of conflict. Mancini (2008) uses district-level data to examine the connection between HIs and the incidence of conflict in

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<sup>7</sup> See also Østby (2003).

districts of Indonesia. After controlling for a number of intervening factors, including economic development, ethnic diversity and population size, he finds that horizontal inequality in child mortality rates and its change over time are positively (and significantly) associated with the occurrence of deadly ethno-communal violence. Other measures of HI, in civil service employment, education, landless agricultural labour and unemployment, were also related to incidence of conflict, but the effects were less pronounced than those of child mortality.

The Indonesian results suggest, too, that violent conflict is more likely to occur in areas with relatively low levels of economic development and greater religious polarisation. In contrast, standard measures of (vertical) income inequality as well as other purely demographic indicators of ethnic diversity were found to have no significant impact on the likelihood of communal violence.

Studies in other conflict-affected countries have also shown a relation between HIs and intensity of conflict. In an examination of the Moro rebellion in the southern Philippines, Magdalena (1977) records a strong link between the relative deprivation of Muslims, measured in terms of differential returns to education, and conflict intensity. Murshed and Gates (2005), using a 'gap' measure of human development, note strong econometric support for a relationship between regional deprivation and the intensity of the Maoist rebellion across districts of Nepal. A later study by Do and Iyer (2007) replicates the finding that conflict intensity is related to regional deprivation, although in this case it is measured by the regional poverty rate and the literacy rate. They point out, too, that caste polarisation affects conflict intensity.

Higher levels of horizontal inequality are thus correlated with a higher risk of conflict, but not all violent mobilisation in high HI countries is primarily identity-driven, at least not in terms of the discourse associated with it. This was the case, for example, in Guatemala and Peru, where the rebellions were primarily presented in ideological terms. Prominent leaders of the movements came from outside of the deprived indigenous groups and were motivated by ideology, not ethnicity (Caumartin, Gray Molina and Thorp, 2008). In these societies 'race/ethnicity' and 'class' are virtually coterminous, that is they are ethnically 'ranked systems' (Horowitz, 1985, p. 22). In such societies, mobilisation by *class* may alternate with or be a substitute for mobilisation by ethnicity. However, there was a strong ethnic dimension to the conflicts, as evidenced by a willingness among indigenous people to be mobilised against the state and the victimisation—almost genocidal targeting—of indigenous

peoples by the non-indigenous-dominated governments. In Guatemala, for example, Francisco Bianchi, a government adviser in the early 1980s, openly declared that ‘for the most part the Indians are subversives; and how can one counter this subversion? Obviously by killing the Indians<sup>8</sup>’ (cited in CEH, 1999, p. 182). In Peru, despite the historical policy of suppression of ethnic identity through repression and discrimination, HIs still meant indigenous peasants were vulnerable to the recruitment techniques of Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), which offered material benefits and used coercion. (Thorp, Paredes and Figueroa, forthcoming).

These factors suggest that HI was an underlying element in these conflicts, a proposal confirmed in the Guatemalan case by the commission that investigated the historical origins of the conflict. The Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico stated that the roots of the conflict lay in the ‘exclusionary, racist, authoritarian and centralist’ characteristics of the Guatemalan state, society and economy (CEH, 1999, p. 81).

It is important to emphasise that what has been found is increased *likelihood* of a greater incidence of conflict with higher HIs. Not all countries with high levels of horizontal inequality experience conflict, though. Indeed the studies of Bolivia and Ghana reveal high economic and social HIs yet both countries have avoided substantial conflict. Consequently, it is essential to examine when high HIs lead to conflict and when they do not. While a few of the studies cited above include an investigation of political HIs, most do not. The nature of political HIs is one variable that determines whether high economic and social HIs generate conflict.

*2. Conflict is more likely where political, economic and social HIs are consistent. . . Conflict is less likely when a particular group faces deprivation in one dimension and dominance in another,*

In cases where political, economic and social HIs are severe and consistent, both the leadership and the mass of the population in the deprived group(s) have a motive to mobilise. The leadership is motivated by political exclusion (that is, political HIs) and the population by economic and social HIs—leaders can use these inequalities to mobilise people, as illustrated by Côte d’Ivoire. Thus in a sense, as has been widely suggested (e.g. Glazer and Moynihan 1975; Cohen 1969; Ignatieff 1995) , identity

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<sup>8</sup> ‘Por lo tanto los indios son subversivos. ¿Y como combatir la subversión? Evidentemente matanda a los indios’. Cited in Caumartin (2005, p. 28).

difference is often instrumentalised by leaders when they themselves have a strong motive for rebellion, but it is only effective in mobilising people where there are grievances among the mass of the population. While Félix Houphouët-Boigny was President (1960–93), political inclusion was in effect, despite some large HIs on a north–south basis (Langer, 2008), and the country was peaceful. Nonetheless, discontent over socioeconomic deprivation and the absence of equality in the area of cultural status, particularly a lack of recognition of the Muslim religion, was articulated in the *Chartre du Nord* of 1992. The death of Houphouët-Boigny in December 1993 and the end of his regime was followed by explicit political exclusion, with former Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara, a presidential candidate from the north, barred from standing in both the 1995 and 2000 elections. No concessions were made and violent conflict broke out in 2002.

The Nigerian Civil War (1967–70), which resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, also illustrates the importance of a coincidence in political and economic incentives and interests in provoking violent conflict. Initially, the Igbos and the Yorubas, the more educated groups, shared many of the high-level posts in the new federation. The coup d'état of 29 July 1966, led by Lieutenant-Colonel Murtala Mohammed, a northerner, resulted in the exclusion of the Igbos from power and established an increasingly anti-Igbo climate. Amidst widespread anti-Igbo sentiment and the subsequent attacks, many Igbos migrated to their home regions in the eastern part of Nigeria and 'became a powerful lobbying group for an independent Biafra, in which they now had a vested economic interest' (Nafziger, 1973, p. 529). Fear that without political power in the Nigerian federation, there would be an increasingly disadvantageous distribution of oil revenues—by then the most important source of government funds—compounded economic and political exclusion. At the same time, the oil revenues promised an independent Biafra relative wealth.

Socioeconomic deprivation tends to produce mass grievances that make mobilisation for opposition and even violence possible. Effective mobilisation, however, depends on both elite and mass participation. Most serious conflicts are organised, rather than being spontaneous, and require strong leadership. The motives of the elite of a group, or its potential leaders, are particularly important, because the elite controls resources (including, sometimes, military assets) and can win support by accentuating common identities, and denigrating the 'other', while heightening perceptions of inter-group inequalities. According to Brass (1997), they play the role

of 'conflict entrepreneurs'. In areas where the group's elite hold power, though, they are not likely to encourage or lead a rebellion. This holds true also when members of the elite do not dominate political power but do participate in government, as they can still enjoy the 'perks' of office, including opportunities for personal enrichment and the dispensing of favours to supporters. Consequently, even in the presence of quite sharp economic and social HIs, people are unlikely to initiate violent conflict if their own group leaders are included in political power, and even less so if they are politically dominant.

The experiences of Malaysia, as well as of Nigeria after the civil war, exemplify this. In both countries, the group that was economically impoverished constituted a numerical majority and was politically advantaged. In Malaysia, the *bumiputera* (an umbrella term for indigenous groups in the country) accounts for roughly two-thirds of the population (depending on the precise categorisation), while in Nigeria, the northern peoples are estimated to make up more than 50 per cent of the population.<sup>9</sup> In each country, this numerical advantage has translated into dominance of political power (continuously in Malaysia and for most of the time in Nigeria). Having political power—and the 'pork-barrel' gains this confers—obviously greatly reduces the motives of a group's elite to lead a rebellion. Furthermore, it permits action to be taken to correct other inequalities. In Nigeria, such action has been confined primarily to the political sphere (including the bureaucracy and the army through the Federal Character Principle). In Malaysia, though, systematic action also has occurred in the socioeconomic realm through the New Economic Policy.

At a local level, Ukiwo (2008) has shown the need for consistency of HIs in the socioeconomic and political realms if they are to lead to conflict. Contrasting the experiences of two Nigerian cities—conflict-ridden Warri in Delta State and the more peaceful Calabar in Cross River State—he shows that if economic and social HIs are not high, political exclusion will not be sufficient to provoke conflict. There were political, economic and social HIs in Warri, but in Calabar, although the leaders of certain groups felt excluded and tried to mobilise support, their potential followers believed that they were well treated and were not ready to rise in protest.

Østby (2008) provides econometric support for the importance of consistency among economic and social HIs and political HIs if they are to provoke conflict. She reports

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<sup>9</sup> Political resistance to censuses in Nigeria casts doubt on all population estimates.

that while political exclusion on its own (as an independent variable) does *not* affect the likelihood of conflict, statistically it has a strong interactive with inter-regional asset inequality. That is, asset inequality has a stronger effect in increasing the probability of conflict in the presence of political HIs. Østby also identified a similar effect with regard to educational inequality, although not a statistically significant one.

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

This finding is essentially a development of the previous one: where power is shared, political HIs are lower, hence peace is likely even where there are severe economic and social HIs. When there is genuine power sharing, no single group dominates politics, but all (major) groups have a real sense of participation in government. Econometric evidence shows that formal power-sharing arrangements reduce the potential for conflict, as argued by Lijphart (1969). For example, Binningsbø (2005) explores the impact of proportional representation (PR) and territorial autonomy within countries, while Reynal-Querol (2002) finds that PR has a positive influence on the reduction of conflict propensity. In the federal context, Bakke and Wibbels (2006) report that 'co-partisanship' between central and sub-national governments, which implies shared political power (at least regionally) and consequently lower political HIs, significantly reduces the chance of conflict.

Both Bolivia and Ghana, for example, have included deprived groups in government. In the case of Ghana, there is an informal tradition in the Fourth Republic that whenever a southerner is president, the vice-president is northern. In Bolivia, informal arrangements have involved the political participation of indigenous representatives for much of recent history, and political participation has made for greater toleration of continued economic and social HIs. Guatemala, Indonesia and Peru, which have each experienced conflict at certain times, practised exclusionary government prior to their conflict periods.

A study of Kenya's political crisis in early 2008 is illustrative. Broadly speaking, stability had been sustained in Kenya by a balance, with political power favouring some groups which were deprived in socioeconomic terms, for some periods (notably under President Daniel arap Moi), or by inclusive government (during much of Jomo Kenyatta's regime and early in the presidency of Mwai Kibaki). However, when the Kibaki regime became politically exclusive and Kibaki refused to acknowledge electoral defeat in the 2007 elections, the opposition groups reacted violently. The

introduction of a more inclusive political regime in early 2008 was an essential step towards stopping the violence (Stewart, 2008c).

It is important to stress the implication of this finding: political cooption of the leadership of disadvantaged minorities by the dominant group is often sufficient to prevent conflict without introducing policies to improve the socioeconomic position of these groups in the short run. This was arguably the case with the Indian population of Malaysia, which is represented in the governing coalition through the Malaysian Indian Congress, but which has received little in the way of targeted developmental aid, despite pockets of acute socioeconomic deprivation (Loh, 2003). Similarly, in Nigeria, while northern political power has helped to prevent major north–south confrontations, the northern part of the country has remained seriously deprived in socioeconomic terms. It does not, of course, follow that this is a satisfactory situation, given that severe HIs are undesirable in themselves, quite apart from their instrumental role in fomenting violent conflict. Moreover, so long as socio-economic HIs persist, the potential for conflict remains. Nonetheless, political inclusion does appear to play an important part in preventing violence, and it may comprise a significant step towards more inclusive development. This is because ethnic leaders who do not ‘deliver’ development to their constituency are likely to be challenged in the long term by new leadership contenders more willing to press their group’s developmental claims.

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

Citizenship brings with it a variety of economic and political entitlements, as Gibney (2008) shows. Not only does political participation depend on citizenship, so too do entitlements to a range of economic and social benefits. Exclusion from citizenship is a form of HI in itself and constitutes an important source of inequalities in other realms. For example, non-citizenship may deny people the right to work, to join a union, or to receive government assistance. Denial of citizenship is frequently a deliberate political act, taken for an assortment of reasons, as Gibney elucidates. Historically, indigenous groups in Latin American countries were denied citizenship rights of both a political and economic nature. Moreover, in some countries there are, informally at least, local as well as national citizenship rights.

Sources of loss of citizenship rights vary. Migration (legal and illegal) is a common cause, and in some cases, subsequent generations are also debarred from citizenship. Less commonly, states can explicitly revoke citizenship rights, as

happened to the Jews in Nazi Germany and to Asians in Uganda. A third way in which citizenship can be lost is when the state itself changes form. Gibney (2008) cites the case of the Roma population, which became stateless when the Czech Republic separated from Slovakia in the 1990s.

At a national level, denial of citizenship has been critical in inciting rebellion in Côte d'Ivoire (Langer, 2008). Similarly, in Nigeria, the settler–indigene distinction has been the source of many local-level conflicts (Bach, 2006; Human Rights Watch, 2006). Denial of citizenship also has been a major source of local conflict in Ghana (see, for example, Tsikata and Seini, 2004; Jönsson, 2006).

Gibney (2008) suggests three principles on which citizenship might be based:

- first, everyone should be a citizen somewhere, and those without citizenship should be accorded it in the country where they are located;
- second, de facto membership of a state should confer the right to citizenship, where de facto membership is defined by contributions and ties to the society; and
- third, an extended period of residence should bestow citizenship rights.

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

##### *5. Unequal cultural recognition among groups is an additional motivation for conflict and cultural 'events' can trigger conflict*

Cultural status inequalities can be extremely important.<sup>10</sup> Fundamentally, culture (ethnicity or religion) itself is often the factor that binds people together as a group. Hence the more important it becomes in the way people see themselves and others, the more likely it is that they will mobilise along group lines. Cultural status inequalities can therefore increase the salience of group identity. There are three important elements involved in cultural status: treatment with respect to religion and

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<sup>10</sup> Explored in Langer and Brown (2008).

religious observation; language recognition and use; and respect for ethno-cultural practices. In some countries, notably Ghana, conscious efforts have been made to grant equal recognition across groups with regard to each element. In other countries, there have been periods of explicit cultural discrimination (such as against the use of indigenous languages in Guatemala and Peru) or informal discrimination (such as that towards non-Christians in Côte d'Ivoire or non-Muslims in Malaysia). Such inequalities make other inequalities (economic, social or political) more powerful as mobilising mechanisms. Moreover, cultural discrimination also weakens political and economic capabilities, thus accentuating these inequalities, with the consequence of cumulative disadvantage.

Culturally discriminating events are also frequently a trigger of riots and even major conflict, as exemplified by the Protestant Orange Order marches in Northern Ireland, language policy in Sri Lanka, and the desecration of religious buildings and sites in India and Palestine. In Malaysia, recent attacks on cultural status—in the form of the destruction of Hindu temples—have led to serious politicisation of this community for the first time (Fenton, 2009).

#### *6. Perceptions of HIs affect the likelihood of conflict*

People take action because of *perceived* injustices rather than because of measured statistical inequalities of which they might not be aware. Normally, one would expect there to be a relation between perceived and observed inequalities, so the 'objective' HIs are clearly relevant to political action. Yet it is also important to investigate perceptions and their determinants, since leaders, the media and educational institutions can affect the discernment of inequality, even when the underlying reality remains unchanged. The results of CRISE perceptions surveys in Ghana and Nigeria illuminate why some identities become more politicised than others (Langer and Ukiwo, 2008). In both countries, the majority of those questioned believed there to be very little difference in educational access according to group, despite records of school attendance showing large differences. This may be because perceptions of difference are based on opportunities at the local level and much of the recorded difference is between regions.

Furthermore, respondents in both Ghana and Nigeria, considered their religion to be much more important than their ethnicity in the private sphere (for example, in relation to social interactions, including marriage) but ethnicity to be much more important in the public sphere, in terms of their views on government job and contract

allocations. This highlights the importance of maintaining ethnic balance in the political administrative sphere. In general, Nigerians felt ethnicity to be more important to them than did Ghanaians, both in relation to their own individual identities and, they believed, as determinants of allocations of government jobs and contracts. At the same time, a significantly greater number of respondents in Ghana than in Nigeria stated that their national identity was important to them. Differences in perceptions of the significance of ethnicity may be because Nigeria has experienced more inter-ethnic conflict than Ghana; they may also help to explain the higher incidence of such conflict. Kirwin and Cho (2009), for example, using Afrobarometer data, found that there was a significant association between perceptions of group inequality and the acceptability of political violence across 17 African countries.

The importance of the role of perceptions in provoking action means that leaders, institutions and policies that influence perceptions can affect the likelihood of political mobilisation. In post-Houphouët-Boigny Côte d'Ivoire, political leaders launched an active campaign to 'market' identities and differences via the media (Akindès, 2007). In Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah himself, the first post-colonial leader, placed great emphasis on national unity, in contrast to leaders in Nigeria who adopted a far more regional perspective.

Educational institutions are relevant here, too. In Ghana, boarding schools dating back to colonial times have brought together members of the future elite from across the country and have contributed to a national project. These factors may partly account for the finding that Ghanaians valued their national identity more highly than did Nigerians in the CRISE perceptions surveys.

A variety of actions (including symbolic ones) can influence perceptions. For example, both Houphouët-Boigny and Nkrumah initiated investment programmes in the deprived northern regions with the goal of reducing inequalities. Although they were insufficient to close the gaps, these measures led people to believe that there was an effort to achieve a fairer distribution of resources. Moreover, the elite in the north benefited particularly from some of the programmes through, for example, the allocation of contracts, reducing their incentive to mobilise their members for group conflict. Post-conflict support for indigenous economic and social programmes in Guatemala, while also too small to make a major difference to the extent of inequality, has changed *perceptions* of inequality, with more people thinking the society is inclusive.

*7. One reason high value natural resources can lead to conflict is that they create high HIs.*

There is a well-established econometric link between the presence of natural resources, such as gas and oil, and the incidence of conflict, but the precise causal mechanisms are disputed (Ross, 2004; Humphreys, 2005). Natural resources encourage increased competition for power among the elite (because of the greater 'spoils' arising from control of the state), but CRISE research suggests that the conflict-inducing potential of natural resources also is often mediated through their impact on horizontal inequalities, and that this can translate into both separatist struggles and local-level conflict (Brown, 2008; Tadjoeiddin, 2007). The discovery of natural resources can generate sharp increases in regional inequality, and where these resources are located in ethnically or religiously distinct regions of a country, separatist conflict may emerge. This is particularly so if the groups are relatively poor or if they feel that they are not benefiting from exploitation of the resources.

In his analysis of separatist movements in Southeast Asia, Brown (2008, forthcoming) finds that the discovery of natural resources in the Indonesian province of Aceh was a vital development in the transformation of Acehnese discontent. The objective of the rebellion changed from securing local rights to secession from Indonesia altogether. Similarly, Tadjoeiddin (2007) argues that natural resources in Indonesia have created an 'aspiration to inequality' in provinces where they are located. Treisman (1997) contends that natural resources played an important role in stoking ethnic separatist claims in post-communist Russia and the discovery of oil in Sudan has transformed the conflict there.<sup>11</sup> In Bolivia, ongoing disputes over natural resources—forest, gas and land—have polarised society and led to increasingly violent opposition from civic committees and property owners in the lowlands (Gray Molina, 2008).

Policies towards natural resources are the source of a major dilemma, and the cause of much debate in countries such as Indonesia and Nigeria. Do the people in resource-rich regions have some special rights to resources found in those places? If granted, HIs will manifest themselves as the resource-rich regions become far richer than other areas. Alternatively, should the state redistribute the revenues (as, for example, with the INPRES programme<sup>12</sup> in Indonesia under President Suharto and

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<sup>11</sup> *Sudan Update* (1999) 'Raising the stakes: oil and conflict in Sudan'. December.

<sup>12</sup> This was a programme of fiscal transfers to the regions and districts introduced by Suharto based on 'Presidential instructions' (*Instruksi Presiden*)

the redistributive formula in Nigeria), which will moderate HIs, but may also lead to unrest? Revenue-sharing agreements are consequently a vital component of peace agreements in locations where high value natural resources are located.

In addition, natural resources are frequently associated with local-level conflict, as in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and in many instances in Peru, where mining developments have been linked with conflicts over entitlements. Here, too, the distribution of resources among local groups, or between local groups and companies, is often unequal and can thus feed local-level conflict. Ethnic disputes over control of a gold mine in the Indonesian province of North Maluku also ignited local conflict (Wilson, 2005).

*8. The nature of the state is a pivotal factor in determining whether serious conflict erupts and persists*

The importance of the state with respect to conflict goes beyond the matter of its inclusiveness, or lack of it. Key here is its reaction to conflict within a country. Although highly repressive regimes can prevent conflict (for example, the New Order regime in Indonesia was effective in preventing communal conflict in much of the country), an aggressive state can fuel and sustain a conflict. In both Guatemala and Indonesia (with regard to separatist conflicts), harsh and aggressive state reactions to rebellion sustained conflict for many years, causing deaths on a massive scale and provoking further rebellion. In Guatemala, the state's response to rebellion has been described as 'a campaign of state terror' (Caumartin, 2005, p. 22), with widespread killing, particularly of the indigenous population. In Indonesia, the viciousness of the Indonesian armed forces' response to the original, small-scale Acehnese rebellion boosted support for the movement when it re-emerged (Brown, 2008; Kell, 1995).

A review of separatist conflict in Southeast Asia (Brown, 2008, forthcoming) underlines that a major difference between the situation in the Malaysian state of Sabah, where a full-scale separatist movement never developed, and that in other areas, where such movements did, was the Malaysian state's more accommodating stance. Similarly, state handling of disputes in Ghana, and of some local-level conflicts in Indonesia, has dampened a number of conflicts and thwarted others. In contrast, in Nigeria, it seems, state action is often late and one-sided, making conflicts more severe than they need have been, as exemplified by events in the Middle Belt. The government's passive and late response to the emergence of violence between Christians and Muslims on 7 September 2001 in the area of Jos is

illustrative. It took the Nigerian military and police forces more than 12 hours to arrive at the scene of the violent conflict and many areas were left without security for the first 24 hours of the crisis (Higazi, 2007). Moreover, the intervention of the security forces was perceived as biased against Muslims, who alleged that police forces had killed innocent people, including women and children (Higazi, 2007).

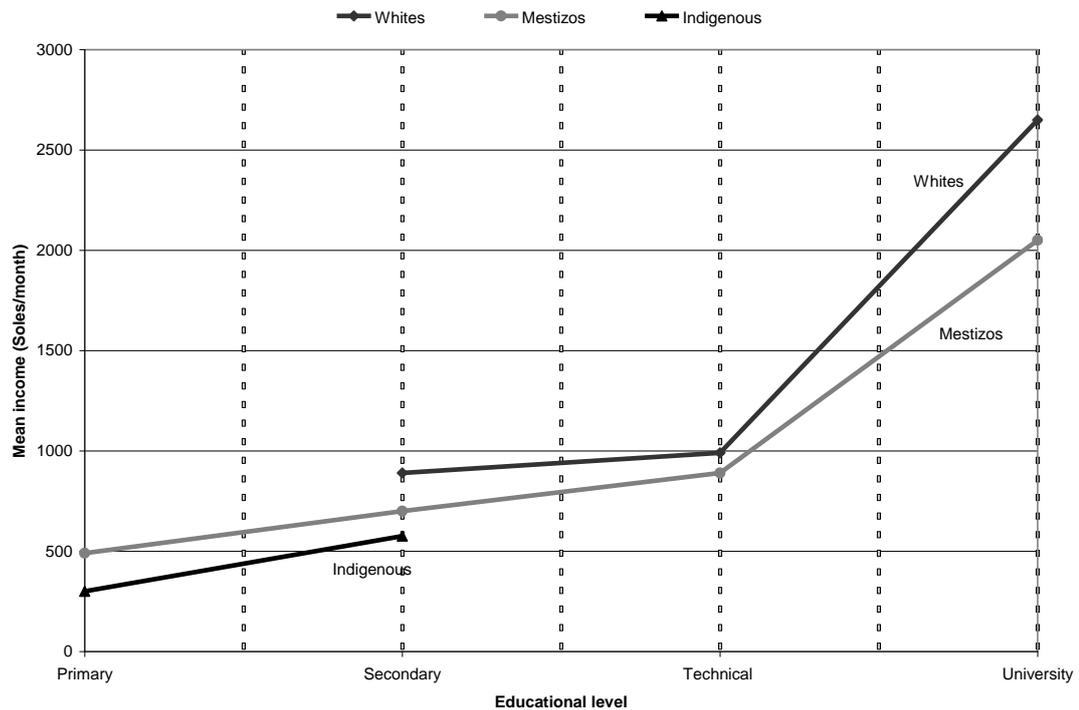
Local institutions are also important in determining the trajectory of violence, as shown by research in Ghana, Indonesia and Nigeria. For instance, Asante (2007) reports how in Ghana a conflict between adherents of the Ga traditional religion and some Christian Churches over drumming was prevented from escalating by its handling by local institutions, particularly through the implementation of bylaws of the Accra Metropolitan Authority regulating noise. Many other similar cases exist in Ghana (Tsikata and Seini, 2004). In Jos in 2001, by contrast, local authorities did little to stop the conflict—and indeed they may have contributed to it—leaving any solution to national forces (Higazi, 2007). Furthermore, in Central Sulawesi in Indonesia, during the national transition to democracy from 1999-2004, civil servants and community leaders mobilised religious identities in a violent conflict in Poso, linked to a broader competition for power in the district government. Security forces did not intervene quickly and in some cases were implicated in the violence. In neighbouring Donggala, though, despite some attempts by elites and politicians to mobilise such identities, customary leaders played a critical role in resolving conflicts as they arose, preventing problems from escalating (Diprose, 2007, 2009).

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

Historical analysis of a range of countries (including Bolivia, Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guatemala, Nigeria, Peru and the United States) reveals great persistence in HIs, with groups remaining relatively deprived over centuries (Stewart and Langer, 2008; Figueroa, 2008; Guerreiro Osório, 2008). Many HIs originate in the privileging by colonial powers of some groups or regions (or both), but are sustained by myriad ongoing elements. All CRISE studies noted this colonial factor. In the three Latin American countries studied, for example, inequalities were caused by privileged settlers taking the best resources for themselves and sustaining their dispensation through discrimination and unequal access to every type of capital. Post-colonial policies have done little to correct these inequalities. Figueroa (2008) shows that today, indigenous people in Peru have far less access to education than the *mestizo* population, which in turn enjoys less access than do whites. Furthermore, for any particular level of education, the *returns*, in terms of additional income earned

because of such education, are significantly lower for the indigenous population than for the *mestizos*, which are again lower than the returns secured by whites (see Figure 2). This is due to a combination of poorer-quality education, poorer social networks and discrimination in employment (Stewart and Langer, 2008, Figueroa, 2008).

**Figure 2**  
**Education returns in Peru**



Source: Figueroa (2008).

In West Africa, regional inequalities were caused in part by geographic and climatic differences, but were made worse by colonial economic policies that favoured the south of each country in terms of economic and social infrastructure. Again, post-colonial policies, including structural adjustment packages, have failed to correct the inequalities. In Malaysia, the colonial 'ethnic division of labour' (Brown, 1997) ensured that Malays remained in subsistence agriculture, while migrant Chinese came to dominate the domestic economy. In Malaysia, though, systematic policies have narrowed the differences.

The persistence of such inequalities is due to cumulative and reinforcing inequalities arising from unequal access to different types of capital, including education, finance,

land and social networks. Asymmetries in social capital, in particular, arising from group members having stronger contacts within their group than across groups, have made it almost impossible for some groups to escape these inequalities. This inequality trap is often reinforced by interaction with political and cultural HIs and the effects of prejudice, repression and violence.

However, there are cases of 'catch up', where group differences have been reduced over time. Mostly these are policy-related, where a conscious and systematic effort has been made to correct inequalities, as in Malaysia after 1970. In a few cases, however, groups have succeeded in 'catching up' without government support—Chinese and Vietnamese immigrants in the US are an example of this. Their success seems to be due in part to the selective immigration policy, allowing only the better educated to enter the country, and in part to the culture of work, education and achievement that they brought with them—cultural capital of a type that is typically absent in long-deprived groups. The nature of the interlocking forces that typically perpetuate HIs over generations implies that comprehensive policies are needed to tackle these complex problems.

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

The international policy community has paid little attention to HIs. The prime concerns of international donors are poverty reduction and the promotion of economic growth—neither agenda includes HIs. Vertical inequality is beginning to be recognised as a problem (Kanbur and Lustig, 1999; Cornia, 2004; UNDP, 2005; World Bank, 2006) because of the growth of vertical inequality in many countries over the last twenty five years and because such high and growing inequality makes poverty reduction more difficult. Nonetheless, VI has not received much serious policy attention, and there is still less focus on HI.

The growth supporting policies advocated internationally consist mainly of macro policies designed to secure economic stability and openness, and meso policies intended to support economic infrastructure and enhance the role of the market in order to improve efficiency. Poverty reduction policies are mainly associated with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), which concentrate on social sector expenditures and on some special schemes for the poor, such as microcredit. According to one review of PRSPs, 'the participation of minorities or indigenous peoples is either often overlooked or simply regarded as impractical due to their

marginalisation' (Booth and Curran, 2005, p. 12). An analysis of the content of PRSPs shows universal inclusion of the 'normal' macro conditions and policies to promote the social sectors. Gender equity is considered in a substantial majority of cases, but protection of ethnic minorities is mentioned in only one-quarter of cases. Countries where ethnic minorities were *not* mentioned include those that are evidently heterogeneous, such as Azerbaijan, Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Guyana, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda (Stewart and Wang, 2006).

However, DFID's development strategy recognises the importance of reducing the level of social exclusion and tackling disparities:

'DFID is also paying greater attention to the different access of particular social groups to services and opportunities, and to institutionalised discrimination, which increases the risk of violent conflict. Tackling social exclusion and inequality is an increasing part of DFID's work'.  
(DFID 2005: 10)

Aid agencies are also beginning to give more attention to HIs in analyses of conflict-prone situations (for example, World Bank 2005; OECD 2001; DFID 2005)<sup>13</sup>. For instance, DFID (2005) argues that, 'If a lasting solution [to conflict] is to be found, exclusion and inequality must be tackled. Purely military action to eliminate those responsible for violence may not work because, so long as inequalities and grievances exist, new leaders will be able to mobilise support' (DFID 2005: 14). Nonetheless, HIs do not form a systematic part of reporting, and rarely enter policy discussions, outside the regional dimension. At the same time, national policies which are explicit in addressing HIs, such as the Malaysian NEP, are sometimes criticised by international donors as being efficiency-reducing.

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<sup>13</sup> For instance, World Bank (2005) acknowledges that 'horizontal inequalities may escalate into violence when differences such as ethnicity are politicised to mobilise for political causes' (p 20) and a list of 'potential responses to conflict factors' includes a response to structural disparities between regions, recommending a focus on systematic redistributive policies (p33). According to OECD (2001), 'Donors need to be politically sensitive about how activities generate benefits or cause poverty, dislocations and inequities between different groups such as returnees and local populations'. An example given is a community housing project which allocated an equal number of houses between Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslim populations. 'This example illustrates how the standard development criteria (needs-based decision making, efficiency, product-oriented rather than process-oriented approaches) may have to be modified to meet peace-building objectives' (p. 31).

An important exception is post-conflict Nepal where HIs are taken seriously in both analysis and policy. DFID's paper on fighting poverty cited the situation in Nepal as pointing to the need for 'affirmative action programmes and strengthening organisations that represent excluded groups', although the peace-building section of the report omits mention of inequality (DFID 2005: 10).

Aid donors are, for the most part, not directly concerned with political systems. However, in so far as they are, despite recognition of the desirability of inclusiveness, the emphasis is generally on multiparty democracy and the 'usual' governance reforms, such as improved transparency and accountability. Yet in practice, multiparty democracy can lead to exclusionary politics in heterogeneous societies.

At a more political level, many Western governments give priority to promoting multiparty democracy, while generally ignoring political HIs which can result from such a system. The need for power-sharing is more often acknowledged in post-conflict societies, as in Bosnia Herzegovina, Lebanon and Iraq. But wider acknowledgement of the need to rethink the design of democratic systems in multiethnic settings is rare.

A dearth of international statistics on the issue reflects this lack of focus. For example, neither the World Bank nor the UNDP includes statistics on ethnic, religious or regional HIs in their well-known datasets, although some national-level Human Development Reports, such as those on Kosovo and Nepal, have provided ethnic or religiously disaggregated data. A notable exception is the Demographic and Health Surveys (to date covering 77 countries) funded by USAID with contributions from other donors. These contain ethnic and religious variables in quite a number of cases, permitting the investigation of relationships across countries (Østby 2008). But these surveys do not cover all countries, and are not carried out at regular intervals. Nor do they include political variables or other variables of obvious interest, such as household income.

As far as national policies are concerned, there is a much higher consciousness of the importance of HIs in many heterogeneous countries, and a considerable array of policy approaches has been adopted, as will be indicated in the next section. Nonetheless, by no means all culturally diverse countries acknowledge the importance of HIs, or take policy action towards them. In some cases this is because,

like the policies of international donors which they often adopt, they are blind to these issues, while in other cases, governments are deliberately exclusionary.

Of the countries studied in depth by CRISE, the Latin American cases deliberately practised exclusionary policies in colonial times and these were carried over into independence. More recently, formal policies have been more inclusionary, but informally there is a great deal of inequality and little effort to correct it, especially in the cases of Peru and Guatemala. Bolivia has been more inclusionary politically, but not in terms of economic approaches. However, after the conflict in Guatemala ended, the country began to tackle some of the country's high inequalities, notably with regard to education and culture, but very high inequalities remain.

In West Africa, policies have varied over time. Since independence there have been weak attempts to correct inherited socioeconomic HIs, but these have been largely offset by macroeconomic policies which have pulled in the opposite direction. On the political front, Ghana has generally adopted informal inclusionary policies; Côte d'Ivoire had a similar stance for several decades until exclusionary policies were instituted after Houphouët-Boigny. Nigeria, in contrast, has made a conscious attempt to correct political HIs through the Federal Character Principle (Mustapha 2007), but has done little to correct socioeconomic HIs.

In Southeast Asia, Malaysia has been most explicit, systematic and effective in correcting socioeconomic HIs. A national coalition government involves all groups in society and thus, although Malays have dominated, political HIs have been kept partially in check. In Indonesia, there was a conscious but limited attempt to secure regional equity under Suharto via the INPRES programmes, but political HIs were severe. Since democratisation, extensive political and fiscal decentralisation has effectively reduced these problems by making the district the main object of political power. An equalisation formula is also in place to ensure that poorer districts receive a greater proportion of central funds.

In sum, national policies seem to be greatly in advance of international ones in the arena of HIs, but by no means universally so and they are rarely comprehensive.

### 3. Policy Findings

The main conclusion of this research is that HIs increase the risk of violent conflict, especially where they are consistent along socioeconomic political and cultural status dimensions. It follows, then, that the correction of such inequalities is an vital area for policy in any multiethnic society where HIs are severe. Moreover, this is important from the perspective of well-being, justice and efficiency as well as for reducing conflict risk. Not only are these policies clearly required in countries that have suffered from conflict, but they should also be part of development policies generally: both as a conflict-prevention measure and because they will contribute to a just and inclusive society.

However, three caveats are in order. First, obviously, these are not the only policies needed. Policies to correct HIs should, wherever possible, complement other development policies towards growth, employment and poverty reduction; sometimes there may be trade-offs, and then priorities will need to be determined. Secondly, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to HIs. Understanding the nature and extent of HIs is essential to the design of appropriate and effective policies and requires the gathering and analysis of data. In addition, some aspects of HIs and their consequences are context specific and, thus, the policies that seek to address them should reflect this specificity: what is appropriate in one setting may not be so in a neighbouring country. Finally, it is important that policy-makers be conscious of and sensitive to the tensions and controversies that might arise from the implementation of policies aimed at redistributing resources across groups. The policies can arouse resentment and opposition among losing groups, and targeting specific groups may entrench perceived differences. Both these effects can potentially increase the propensity to mobilise along group lines. Policies can be designed to reduce these risks, but possibly at the expense of reducing their effectiveness. In general, policies need to be introduced cautiously and sensitively.

Three distinct approaches to the management of HIs can be identified (Table 1).

- First, *direct* approaches which involve targeting groups directly (for instance using quotas for the allocation of jobs, educational access, or assets). The direct approach can be quite effective, even in the short term, but risks increasing the salience of identity difference and antagonising those who do

not benefit from the policy. The implementation of direct approaches also presupposes that beneficiary groups are easy to identify.

- Secondly, *indirect* approaches, which involve general policies which have the effect of reducing group disparities. These include, for example, progressive taxation, antidiscrimination policies, regional expenditure policies or decentralisation of power. These policies eschew narrow targeting and are much less likely to increase the salience of identity, but they may be less effective in reducing HIs.
- Finally a third type of approach we label '*integrationist*'. In this case, the aim of policies is not so much to tackle HIs but to seek to reduce the salience of group boundaries. An integrationist approach involves, for example, promoting national identity, and shared economic or political activities across groups (Stewart, Brown and Langer 2008). These are attractive in reducing the salience of group boundaries, but they can conceal inequalities rather than reducing them.

**Table 1: Approaches to reducing HIs**

		Policy Approach		
		Direct HI-reducing	Indirect HI-reducing	Integrationist
Dimension	Political	Group quotas; seat reservations; consociational constitution; list proportional representation	Design of voting system to require power-sharing across groups (e.g. two-thirds voting requirements in assembly); design of boundaries and seat numbers to ensure adequate representation of all groups; Human Rights legislation and enforcement.	Geographical voting spread requirements; ban on ethnic/religious political parties (national party stipulations)
	Socio-Economic	Quotas for employment or education; special investment or credit programmes for particular groups.	Anti-discrimination legislation. Progressive taxation. Regional development programmes. Sectoral support programmes (e.g. Stabex)	Incentives for cross-group economic activities. Requirement that schools are multicultural. Promotion of multicultural civic institutions
	Cultural Status	Minority language recognition and education; symbolic recognition (e.g. public holidays, attendance at state functions)	Freedom of religious observance. No state religion.	Civic citizenship education; promotion of an over-arching national identity

Source: Stewart, Brown and Langer (2008).

Below I discuss some concrete measures that can be taken in order to reduce socioeconomic, political and cultural status inequalities.

### *3.1 Policies towards socioeconomic HIs*

A direct approach to reducing socioeconomic HIs has been adopted in a number of countries both in the North (such as the US, New Zealand, and Northern Ireland) and the South (such as Fiji, India, Malaysia, South Africa, and Sri Lanka). Some of the programmes have been introduced by disadvantaged majorities – for example in Fiji, Malaysia, Namibia, South Africa and Sri Lanka – and some by advantaged majorities for disadvantaged minorities – for example in Brazil, India, Northern Ireland and the US. The latter examples show that group equalising policies can be introduced even where the political situation appears unfavourable. In some cases these policies were introduced whilst conflict was ongoing (Northern Ireland) or following episodes of violent conflict (Malaysia, South Africa). While there is not sufficient space here to detail all policies, the following illustrative list shows the range of direct policies possible:

- Assets
  - Policies to improve the group ownership of land via the redistribution of government owned-land, forcible eviction, purchases and restrictions on ownership (Malaysia, Zimbabwe, Fiji, and Namibia).
  - Policies towards the terms of privatisation (Fiji).
  - Policies towards financial assets such as bank regulations, subsidisation and restrictions (Malaysia and South Africa).
  - Credit allocation (Fiji and Malaysia).
  - Preferential training (Brazil and New Zealand).
  - Quotas for education (Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and the US).
  - Policies towards public sector infrastructure (South Africa).
  - Policies towards housing (Northern Ireland).
- Incomes and employment
  - Employment policies, including public sector quotas (Malaysia, Sri Lanka and India), and a requirement for balanced employment in the private sector (South Africa).
- Education
  - Quotas for university entrants (Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Nigeria).

- Language policy used to strengthen the position of some groups and weaken that of others in school and university (Malaysia and Sri Lanka).
- Health
  - Policies to improve health access and services in relatively deprived areas (Northern Ghana and in relation to the black population in the US).

Indirect policies that may lead to a reduction in socioeconomic HIs include progressive tax policies and general antipoverty programmes which *ipso facto* benefit deprived groups relative to privileged ones. Such policies also include regional and district tax and expenditure policies where groups are spatially concentrated. Other indirect measures use the legal system, for example, through the recognition and enforcement of economic and social human rights and through strong and well-enforced antidiscrimination legislation. Where regional disparities overlap with group identities, regional development policies can be a useful way of addressing horizontal inequalities indirectly. Yet, in many countries the regional distribution of infrastructure actually accentuates existing imbalances rather than correcting them.

Integrationist policies aimed at reducing socioeconomic HIs can include policies towards education that lead to common schools for children from different groups, and curricula that support national identity and national pride. In addition, fiscal and other economic incentives can be instituted to encourage inter-group economic activities and engagement. For instance, in Malaysia, a share of the capital of companies was apportioned to *bumiputera* shareholders.

### 3.2 Policies towards political HIs.

The three approaches set out above are also applicable to the reduction of political HIs. This first requires a detailed evaluation of the extent to which different groups participate in political decision-making and power. It is essential to recognise that such power-sharing does not happen automatically, irrespective of whether a political system is democratic, authoritarian or dictatorial. The major aspects that require attention in tackling political HIs include the definition of citizenship; the design of the electoral system and rules of political competition; and the presence and participation of various groups in key state and non-state political institutions (including political

parties, central and local governments, the legislature, judiciary, security forces and state bureaucracies).

The advantages and disadvantages of direct versus indirect and integrationist approaches have been much debated in the political science literature concerned with the nature of political arrangements in multicultural societies. On the one hand, Lijphart's consociationalism, corresponding to a 'direct' approach, advocates 'grand coalitions' that ensure that all groups be guaranteed some form of access and/or representation in all major political institutions and arrangements (Lijphart 1969; 1977). Such an approach was adopted in the resolution of the Bosnian war, where the 1995 Dayton Agreements and the cessation of hostilities seem to have been dependent upon the adoption of formal consociationalist arrangements. More than ten years on, however, the consequences of these arrangements in terms of effective cross-ethnic political cooperation and wider prospects for reconciliation are far from entirely positive (Bodruzic 2008). Donald Horowitz (1985), on the other hand, argues that the key divides in multicultural societies will generally be reflected in political institutions (with voters tending to vote along ethnic lines and ethnic parties emerging) and that the priority in these contexts is to seek mechanisms that will reduce the incentives for group mobilisation rather than consociational mechanisms which, in his view, encourage them.

Electoral mechanisms which are designed to ensure balanced group representation in parliament, government, and the executive are an important means of reducing political HIs. Such mechanisms can be direct – for example, Lijphart (1986) has proposed that there should be separate electoral rolls for each group, with seats allocated by group rather than by geographic boundary. This has been implemented in Cyprus and in New Zealand. An alternative direct mechanism is to create a single electoral roll but to reserve certain seats for certain groups (as in India for scheduled castes and in Colombia for indigenous people) (Van Cott 2000).

Indirect electoral mechanisms which may encourage group balance are also possible. For example, most forms of proportional representation (PR) are likely to achieve a greater degree of group balance than first-past-the-post systems, under which minorities 'tend to be severely underrepresented or excluded' (Lijphart 1986). In general, it appears that PR is an effective system to ensure that all groups are represented broadly in proportion to their population size, so long as the system has low thresholds for the minimum votes needed to justify election. However, it may not

bring about shared power since government composition need not reflect parliamentary composition.

Integrationist policies in the political sphere include policies towards political parties, since these form a critical mediating mechanism through which voter preferences are mobilised and expressed. In multiethnic societies, there is a strong tendency for political parties to become 'ethnic' as this seems to be an effective way of mobilising votes (Horowitz 1985). Thus without some constraining influences, political parties can be highly divisive in multicultural societies, with elections sometimes leading to conflict (Snyder 2000). In both Ghana and Nigeria, political parties are required to have representatives throughout the country; given the geographic concentration of ethnic groups this promotes multiethnic parties. The design of the electoral system can also encourage more broad-based coalitional parties, for instance through the adoption of 'list' PR, or a single transferable vote in multimember districts (adopted, for example, in Malta and Ireland). In addition, restrictions on the nature, the number or even the existence of political parties themselves may be another integrationist policy.

While the rules and regulations of electoral and political party systems are important mechanisms that can work towards ensuring a basic minimum of political representation for minorities, they do not guarantee participation in government nor do they secure adequate shares of important jobs in the state bureaucracy or security institutions. The group background of the executive itself – the head of the executive, particularly, but also the cabinet – is of crucial importance for decision-making, especially since in many countries the group that dominates the executive distributes resources in a way that favours its own members. There can be formal or informal provisions for a fair share of political posts at every level, including the presidency, the cabinet, the senior civil service, the military and the police. In many post-conflict societies, formal mechanisms are introduced to 'share' the top governmental positions among cultural groups. For example, in Lebanon, the top three political offices are reserved for members of the three main ethnoreligious groups. In Cyprus, Greek Cypriots vote for the president and Turkish Cypriots for the vice-president. Power-sharing can also take place over time. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, for instance, the chair of the three-member presidium rotates between the representatives of the Bosnian, Croat and Serb communities. In other settings, however, informal mechanisms dominate. In Ghana, a country with impressive

peaceful cohabitation practices, the issue of power-sharing is largely addressed informally.

Diffusion of power can be an important mechanism for addressing political HIs, with decentralisation or federalism as instruments of such diffusion. Where groups are geographically concentrated, a federal constitution can empower local groups by allowing them control over many areas of decision-making. Decentralisation can contribute to power-sharing in a similar way. Econometric analysis has shown that decentralisation is associated with lower levels of communal and secessionist violence, but this can be partly offset by the growth of regional political parties which can encourage divisions between groups (Brancati 2006). Much depends on which powers are given to the decentralised units and whether finance is also devolved. There are many cases of apparent decentralisation with little effective devolution (Crook and Manor 1998).

'Supply-side' policies may also be needed to improve the political capabilities of groups that have long been excluded politically. Policies to strengthen groups' ability to function politically (how to build consensus, how to spell out policy positions, how to lobby effectively) are usually best implemented by NGOs, but government policy can support such roles for NGOs. Support for democratic values and avoidance of repression are important. Many of the policies that help reduce socioeconomic HIs set out above will also contribute to this political capability (education is the fundamental one).

### *3.3 Policies towards cultural status inequalities.*

An important distinction between policies towards cultural status inequalities and those towards political or socioeconomic inequalities is that the latter generally involve some *redistributive* policies, while rectifying cultural status inequalities is often a matter of *recognition*. Relevant policies relate to the three main areas of cultural status: religious practices, language policy and ethnocultural practices.

Appropriate policies to bring about cultural equality across religions depend on the nature of the inequalities – whether they derive, for example, from one religion being officially recognised as a state religion, or from more informal sources of inequality. In general, complete equality is not possible if the state recognises only one 'official' religion. But even in such a context, countries can move towards greater equality of

status of different religions. Policies to promote equality in religious recognition include ensuring equal opportunity to construct places of worship and burial grounds; recognition of religious festivals and, where appropriate, public holidays to commemorate them; inclusive laws regarding marriage and inheritance; and representation of all major religions at official state functions.

Language policy raises complex questions. Designating one language as the national language is often seen as a means of promoting a cohesive and overarching national identity and possibly generating economic benefits, but it can also cause resentment and economic disadvantage among minority-language speakers. Recognition of several languages has been successful in some multilingual societies. For example in Singapore, 'official' recognition is given to all four widely spoken languages – Malay, Mandarin Chinese, Tamil and English. While government business is conducted in English, Malay is designated the 'national' language and used for ceremonial occasions (Spolsky 2004). The education sector is obviously a critical factor in relation to language recognition. Promoting cultural status equality in multilingual countries requires education in more than one language, though the specifics will vary across countries (Watson 2007). While there are apparent opportunity costs of having to teach more than one language at school, evidence suggests that where pupils are educated in their mother tongue *and* taught a national *lingua franca* they perform much better at school.

The state's recognition of, and support for, the cultural practices of different groups is another significant dimension of cultural status inequality. One important area in many societies is that of customary law practices (Langer and Brown 2008). Acceptance and recognition of legal plurality can increase the access of minorities to legal systems as well as their overall sense of being respected. In Nigeria, for instance, the introduction of Islamic *shari'a* in many of the country's Northern states has contributed to a sense of public recognition and acknowledgement among Muslims (Suberu 2009).

Policies towards cultural status inequalities must take into account the country-specific histories, politics and demographics of cultural interaction. However, it is clear that there are important symbolic steps that states can take regarding all three of the main issues discussed here that would increase the visibility and recognition of different cultural groups without significant economic costs – although there may be political repercussions. State recognition and support for religious festivities,

informal language-use practices and non-exclusive dress codes are examples. Support for the study of different languages and the use of public holidays to recognise the cultural importance of different ethnic or religious identities are other relatively low-cost examples of HI-reducing policies in the cultural status dimension.

#### 3.4 *Two cases of comprehensive policies towards socio-economic HIs*

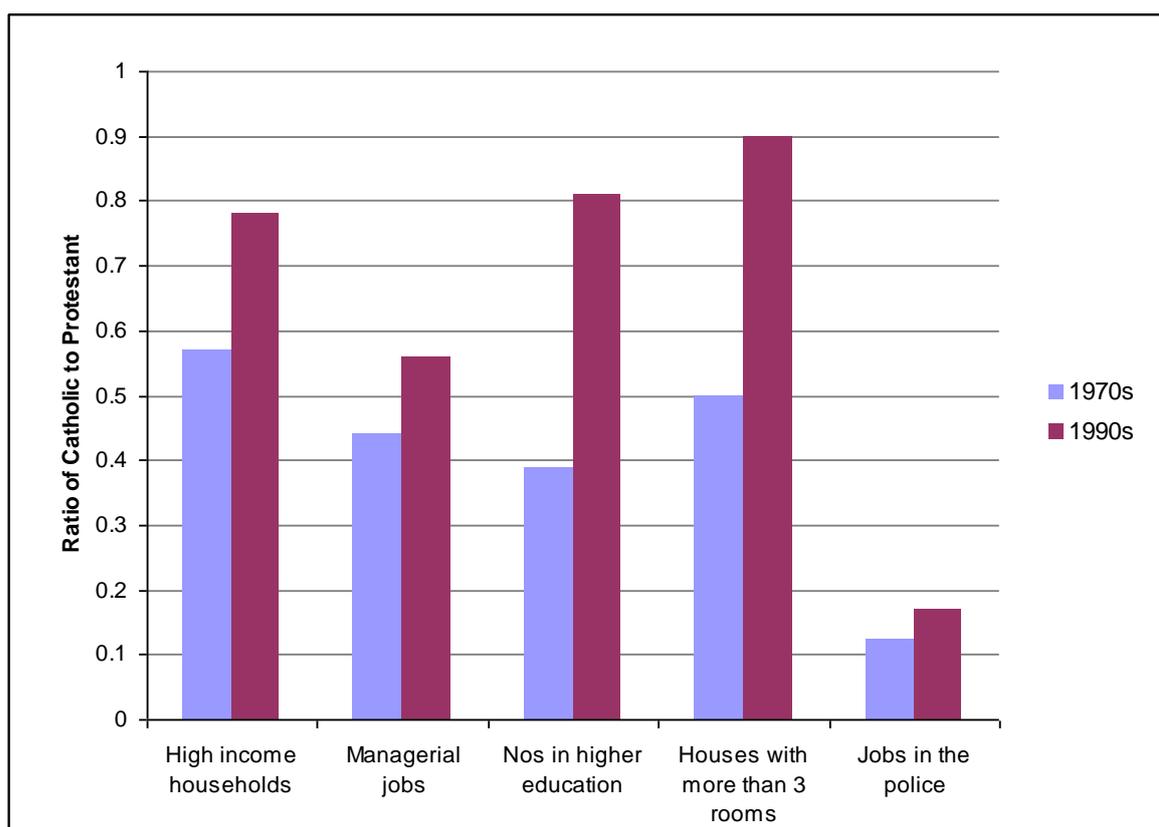
Two country examples are instructive in showing how a comprehensive effort can improve socioeconomic HIs.

- In Malaysia, the New Economic Policy was introduced in 1971 with the aim of reducing inequalities between the Malays and the Chinese following anti-Chinese riots in 1969. The aim was to help secure national unity. There was a two-pronged approach: 'to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty'; and 'to accelerate the process of restructuring Malaysian society to correct economic imbalance so as to reduce and eventually eliminate the identification of race with economic function' (Second Malaysian Plan 1971-1975). In addition to a variety of antipoverty policies (rural development; social services), restructuring policies included expanding the *bumiputera* share of capital ownership to 30 per cent; allocating 95 per cent of new lands to Malays; instituting educational quotas in public institutions in line with population shares; and introducing credit policies favouring Malays, with credit allocations and more favourable interest rates. The ratio of *bumiputera* average incomes to Chinese moved from 0.42 to 0.57 between 1970 and 1999 (with the greatest improvement happening in the first ten years of the policy), the ratio of share ownership from 0.03 to 0.23, and the *bumiputera* share of registered professionals went from 8 per cent to 47 per cent over the same period.

- In Northern Ireland, following centuries of strong discrimination and persistent HIs, a concerted effort was made to address inequalities from the late 1970s through housing policy, education policy and fair employment legislation. This was backed up by the EU and the British government reserving their contracts for firms that did not discriminate. From the late 1970s to the late 1990s, inequality in the share of the population in the high-income category eased, with the ratio of Catholics to Protestants moving from 0.55 to 0.77, the ratio of Catholics to Protestants in higher education moved

from 0.39 to 0.81, and inequality in the proportion of the population in houses with three or more rooms moved from a ratio of 0.5 to 0.9 (see Figure 3). By 2004, inequalities in higher education and in access to basic health services had been eliminated, although some disadvantage remained. For example, Protestants were still overrepresented in the 40 largest companies and a higher proportion of Catholics remained on income support. Further, a government survey in 2004 on inequality in health and social care found that Catholics were significantly disadvantaged in each area reported on (McWhirter 2004). Nevertheless, the large fall in HIs seems likely to have been an important element underlying the peace in Northern Ireland.

**Figure 3: Horizontal inequalities in Northern Ireland**



Source: Author's calculations derived from Gallagher (1995), Melaugh (1994), Fair Employment Commission (1998) and PPRU (1993)

Yet in these and other cases, it is often argued that the policies have problems (for example, see Barry 2001). It has been suggested that they undermine standards and efficiency; that they worsen intra-group inequality; and that they entrench ethnic boundaries and divisions.

- *Standards, efficiency and competitiveness.* A common criticism of affirmative action policies is that they reduce standards (in the case of education) and efficiency (in the case of economic affirmative action). In theory, there are reasons for expecting both negative and positive impacts. On the negative side, there is the interference in normal competitive processes which might prevent resources being allocated according to their most efficient use; but on the positive side there is the reduction in economic exclusion and relative deprivation, which itself contributes to inefficient resource allocation, thereby allowing the greater realisation of potential. Even policies that create 'positive' discrimination in favour of deprived groups may be offsetting the deep bias against groups suffering long-term deprivation, which cannot be

reversed by removing current obstacles alone, and may therefore have a positive impact on efficiency in the medium term.

There is no significant empirical evidence that such policies reduce efficiency, though careful evaluations are relatively rare. The most extensive studies of the efficiency impact have been with respect to US affirmative action towards blacks. Some studies show positive impact, while none show negative (Farley 1984; Keister 2000). In Malaysia, the high economic growth that accompanied affirmative action policies also suggests that such policies are highly unlikely to have had any substantial negative efficiency impact, and may have had a positive impact.

- *Intra-group inequality.* It is sometimes argued that, while affirmative action and other HI-reducing policies reduce intergroup inequality, they *increase* intragroup inequality. This is not inevitable but depends on whether the policies mostly extend the opportunities and services for lower-income classes within the deprived group(s) (for example, unskilled employment, investment in poor regions and primary education) or mostly affect upper-income opportunities (professional and skilled employment and higher education). Systematic evidence on this is lacking. In the case of Malaysia, intragroup inequality fell during the decade when the policies were most effective (Shireen 1998). In contrast, in South Africa, it seems that intra-black inequality has risen since the policies were introduced (van der Berg and Louw 2004). The business 'empowerment' policies in South Africa, for example, seem mainly to have enriched a black elite.<sup>14</sup> In both cases, of course, many other influences were simultaneously affecting income distribution (such as the antipoverty policies in Malaysia and the liberalisation policies in South Africa) so the changes cannot be attributed to the affirmative policies alone.

The possibility of some adverse impact of HI-reducing policies on efficiency and intragroup equity suggests that one should aim to design policies which tend by themselves (or in conjunction with other policies) to enhance efficiency and to improve income distribution as well. From an efficiency perspective, this might mean a greater emphasis on process reform and subsidies rather than quotas;

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<sup>14</sup> *Financial Times* (2007) 'Black South Africans Grow Impatient over Pace of Change'. January 5.

and from an equity perspective it would mean focussing on employment and basic services as well as infrastructure development in poor regions. It should also be noted that even if the policies potentially reduce efficiency and worsen intragroup income distribution, these effects need to be weighed against their likely impact in reducing violence, which would itself have a positive effect on growth and efficiency and poverty reduction.

- *Intra-group relations and the entrenchment of ethnicity.* Another common criticism of affirmative action policies is that they entrench difference, and may also reinforce negative stereotypes, encouraging the belief that a particular person has progressed only because of his or her ethnicity. Against this, the fact that members of different groups become closer in status may increase intergroup respect.<sup>15</sup> Among the seven countries in which we conducted perceptions' surveys, cross-ethnic relations appeared to be fewest and perceptions of other groups most negative in Malaysia, which has been most systematic in adopting affirmative action-type policies in the socioeconomic dimension<sup>16</sup>. Yet the negative attitudes are strongest in rural areas where policies have been least applicable. In Nigeria, too, ethnicity appears to be relatively strong as a personal identity and in politics according to CRISE perceptions surveys, and there too there have been direct policies – this time focussed on political power-sharing. Northern Ireland is another case where ethnicity as a perceived identity remains relatively strong following policies to correct HIs. Yet in all three cases – Malaysia, Nigeria and Northern Ireland – peace has been maintained, which might not have been the case in the absence of such policies. On this evidence one can see an association between the policies and strong ethnic identities, but we do not have enough evidence to know whether the policies cause the stereotypes or whether it is in societies where intergroup relations are not good that such policies are more likely to be adopted. Time series evidence on people's attitudes towards members of other groups would be needed to answer this.

In a few cases, it has been suggested that policies to correct HIs were a factor provoking violence. In Sri Lanka it has been argued that affirmative action policies

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<sup>15</sup> Tests of the well-known 'contact hypothesis' show that contact between members of different groups only improves relations when people meet on a basis of rough equality (Hewstone, Rubin and Willis 2002).

<sup>16</sup> The seven countries were Ghana, Nigeria, Bolivia, Guatemala, Peru, Malaysia and Indonesia.

towards civil service employment and education were one element behind the Tamil rebellion, with a sharp shift in access to higher education and civil service employment, which was adverse to the Tamils. However, these policies were accompanied by severe political exclusion and a worsening in the cultural status of Tamils through the adoption of Singalhesse as the official language. This example points to the need for particular care to ensure that there are politically inclusive policies and policies involving equality in cultural recognition. It is important to avoid a situation in which policies to correct socioeconomic HIs are accompanied by adverse policies towards political participation and cultural status.

In summary, it is clear that while policies to correct HIs are desirable to maintain peace and to generate a just society, they need to be introduced sensitively to avoid provoking strong opposition. The Malaysian case also suggests that such policies may best be time limited: while they received national support in the early years, opposition has mounted, as have the corrupt practices associated with their implementation. Indirect policies avoid some of the undesirable consequences of direct policies, but they tend to act more slowly and may be less effective in reducing HIs.

As far as integrationist policies are concerned, these tend to take a long time to have a significant impact in reducing the salience of particular identities, and indeed are unlikely to succeed if sharp HIs persist. Where they are used to conceal or suppress ethnic identity, especially where the identity of the population majority is adopted as the *national* identity, integrationist policies are unlikely to be successful in reducing the salience of difference in the long-term. Historically, policies of the USSR and of Peru are examples of such an approach. Nonetheless, integrationist policies working towards an overarching *shared* identity are clearly desirable alongside the other policies directed towards reducing HIs.

#### **4. Measurement of HIs**

One reason that relatively little attention has been paid to HIs, in either development analysis generally or in conflict research, is that data are often absent or deficient and there has been limited investigation into the best way of measuring HIs. This is a catch 22 situation, as a major reason for the lack of data is the lack of focus on the issue of group inequality. Consequently, data and measurement have been one

important component of CRISE research (Mancini, Stewart and Brown 2008; Stewart, Brown and Mancini 2005).

The first step in understanding the status and dynamics of horizontal inequalities in a country is to classify the relevant identity groups: that is the group boundaries that people mind about, and the boundaries on the basis of which discrimination or favouritism occurs. This raises many problems since multiple identities and their social construction mean that there are few groups for which boundaries are clear cut. For example, among Roma people in Eastern Europe 90.8% of those interviewed stated that they 'feel Roma', but only 47.9% reported that they had declared themselves to be Roma in the census (UNDP 2002). In Guatemala, 'under certain circumstances an individual can be born indigenous and become Ladino during the course of his or her life' (Caumartin 2005: 8).

An initial in-depth investigation of the history and political economy of the country in question will suggest important group distinctions. Where surveys of people's own perceptions of identity distinctions are available, or such a survey can be carried out, this can provide valuable further insights. Such surveys ask about the importance of different aspects of identity to people themselves and which groups they feel are privileged or deprived, which are favoured or disfavoured by the government. Often it can be useful to adopt a multiple approach, examining a variety of group classifications (for example, ethnic, regional and religious), and seeing where the main inequalities emerge. The categorisation should, in so far as this is possible, be sensitive to people's self-positioning and how others in society position them. It is also desirable to explore whether adopting different categorisation criteria changes the results. In practice, data deficiencies mean that typically only rather crude classifications are available. But once the importance of the issue is acknowledged, multiple classifications may emerge, as they have, for instance, in terms of ethnic classification in the UK census.

Although there is generally a dearth of data, in many countries it is possible to find enough for estimates of some HIs. Questions about ethnicity or religion appear in some countries' household surveys or censuses. Such variables are included for a larger number of countries covered by the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). In some countries, data are collected according to language spoken and this can be a proxy for ethnicity if most of each group speak their own unique language – although this is by no means always the case. Where populations of different

ethnicity are concentrated in particular parts of the country, regional data can act as a proxy for ethnic data.

The data just described are confined to socioeconomic variables. CRISE has collected some data on political HIs, and plans to extend this, while the Minorities at Risk Project at the University of Maryland has developed a dataset on most dimensions for countries where it is judged there are minorities at risk. In addition, the Ethnic Power Relations data set<sup>17</sup> provides global data on executive level and senior positions for 1945-2009. In short one can usually arrive at conclusions about socioeconomic HIs, often by making use of proxies, but on political and cultural status dimensions data are more limited.

Measurement of political HIs requires information on the distribution of salient groups across positions in parliament, government and the bureaucracy, and so forth. A key concept here is that of 'relative representation' (Langer 2005), defined as each group's share of the positions available divided by its share of the population, which is a useful indicator of political HIs. This requires knowledge of the background of the relevant officials or politicians. In a few cases this is publicly available (for example, in Nepal, see Brown and Stewart 2006). Where it is not, however, 'name recognition' techniques may be employable in some contexts to attribute group background (see, for example, Langer 2005). As far as cultural status is concerned, a list of relevant features can be drawn up and recognition within each category then ranked, from complete equality to complete exclusion. This may be sufficient to indicate broad cultural status inequalities, or an overall index can be derived from the rankings, which is helpful for cross-country research.

Even with adequate data, there remain problems of how to measure HIs. Two critical issues are how to 'add' them up for a society as a whole where there are more than two groups; and secondly, how to deal with inequalities in the distribution within each group when summarising the performance of each group.

On the first issue, the population-weighted group coefficient of variance seems to be the most appropriate measure, as it measures variance while giving more weight to

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<sup>17</sup> Lars-Erik Cederman; Brian Min; Andreas Wimmer, 2009-05-01, "Ethnic Power Relations dataset", [hdl:1902.1/11796](https://doi.org/10.1111/1902.1/11796)

larger groups.<sup>18</sup> Empirically, it seems that this measure of group inequality is quite highly correlated with alternative measures. One problem with the measure is that, where one is concerned with political mobilisation, a somewhat complex measure does not represent the situation people face on a day-to-day basis, and simple contrasts between the salient groups may depict what people experience on the ground more accurately.

The coefficient of variance is normally calculated in relation to the average performance of each group on a particular variable or variables, without allowing for different variances within each group. Yet from a political perspective, how groups compare at different points in the distribution may be relevant. In one case, for example, a group may outperform another uniformly at every income level; in a second case, a group's elite (say, the top 5 per cent) may have incomes far higher than the elite of the other group, but in the remaining 95 per cent of the distribution the groups have the same income levels; in a third case, both groups may be equal at the top, but the bottom 40 per cent of one group is far poorer than the bottom 40 per cent of the other; a fourth possibility is that one group may have higher income levels at the top of the distribution, but lower incomes at the bottom.

These differences have both political and policy implications. From a political perspective, for example, in the first case, both the elite and the masses of the lower-income group have grievances, a situation that may make rebellion more likely. Malaysia in the 1960s and apartheid South Africa are examples. In the second case, the elite has a grievance but not the rest of the population, perhaps making rebellion less likely. In the third and fourth cases, the fact that the elite in the poorer group has similar (or higher) incomes than the elite in the richer group may make rebellion less likely, despite the income disparities among the lower-income groups, unless the elite feel politically disenfranchised or threatened, in which case they may find it easy to mobilise support among the lower-income groups.

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<sup>18</sup> Weighted GCOV =  $\frac{1}{\bar{y}} \left( \sum_r p_r (\bar{y}_r - \bar{y})^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{2}}$  Where y is the value of the variable of interest (such as income, or years of education);  $\bar{y}$  is the sample mean for that variable for all members of the population; and  $\bar{y}_r$  is the mean for members of group r;  $p_r$  is group r population share.

The differences are relevant from a policy perspective, too, as different policies are needed to address inequalities in different parts of the distribution. In the first case, for example, policies are needed both to increase entrepreneurial and civil-service opportunities at the top and to provide basic services and economic opportunities to the masses. In the second case, the focus of efforts to reduce tensions should be on elite opportunities.

To explore these issues, we can compare the whole distribution; but it is also helpful to have aggregate measures that summarise such differences. Our preferred measure for this is one developed by James Foster known as a measure of  $\alpha$ -means: this calculates a range of measures of inequality according to the group means for each group at different points of the income distribution, by using parametric means. The value of the parameter,  $\alpha$ , determines how much weight is given to different sections of the distribution. Hence the estimate of HI varies according to the chosen value of the parameter, and thus shows how HIs vary according to how one values the rich, the poor, the middle income etc.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to 'objective' measures of HIs, it is also helpful to find out how people themselves perceive their situation, since, as noted above, action depends on individuals' perceptions. One would expect a fair amount of correspondence between the actual situation and perceptions, but perceptions can be influenced by leadership, the media, and also by how visible different groups are to each other. For example, people in a remote part of the country may have very little idea about how others live, with such knowledge as they have being filtered through the media and migrants' tales. People living side-by-side in an urban setting, however, may be well aware of

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<sup>19</sup> The formula is  $\alpha$ -means=

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \bar{y}_{r\alpha} = \left( \frac{\sum_i^n y_{ir}^\alpha}{n} \right)^{\frac{1}{\alpha}} \quad \alpha \neq 0, \alpha \in \mathfrak{R} \\ \bar{y}_{r\alpha} = \exp \left( \frac{\sum_i^n \ln(y_{ir})}{n} \right) \quad \alpha = 0 \end{array} \right.$$

where  $\bar{y}_r = \frac{1}{n_r} \sum_i^{n_r} y_{ir}$  is group  $r$  mean value,  $p_r$  is group  $r$  population share,  $y_{ir}$  is the value

of  $y$  for the  $i^{\text{th}}$  member of group  $r$ ,  $Y_r$  is group's  $r$  total value of  $y$ ,  $Y$  is the grand total value of  $y$  in the sample/population, and  $\alpha$  is a scalar.

See Foster, Lopez-Calva and Szekely (2003); Foster and Szekely (2006).

particular inequalities – e.g. in getting housing or jobs. Because of the importance of perceptions, CRISE has conducted perceptions surveys in seven countries, and would generally recommend that such surveys be carried out periodically in multiethnic societies.

## **5. Conclusions and further research needed**

In summary, this lecture has elucidated the meaning of HIs, pointing to the multidimensionality of the concept. We have shown that severe HIs can be an important source of conflict, especially where they are consistent across dimensions. While socioeconomic HIs can create fertile ground for conflict to emerge and cultural status inequalities act to bind groups together, political HIs provide incentives for leaders to mobilise people for rebellion. In conditions of severe HI, abrupt changes in political HIs, or cultural events in which important cultural or religious symbols are attacked, often constitute powerful triggers to conflict.

Evidence presented in this lecture has supported three propositions:

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

Other factors are, of course, also important in determining whether a conflict emerges. One is the nature of the state and its reactions, another is the role of local institutions in pacifying or exacerbating conflict once it has started, a third factor is the presence of natural resources, often working through the impact this has on HIs. However, for the most part, especially within the international community, too little attention is paid to the issue of horizontal inequalities, and the policies that are implemented in practice often accentuate them. This is true both of economic policies – such as structural adjustment – and policies towards governance and the political system. Our research into post-conflict situations has shown that the agenda adopted rarely takes into account the impact of socioeconomic policies on HIs, although at the political level, power-sharing agreements are more common (see Langer, Stewart and Venugopal forthcoming; Stewart and Ohiorhenuan 2008).

The review of policies showed a large range of direct, indirect and integrationist policies to tackle the different dimensions of HIs, but also emphasised the need to introduce such policies sensitively to avoid provoking excessive opposition. What is needed above all is both national and international recognition that an inclusive society that avoids sharp HIs is essential in order to achieve a fair and stable system. Once this is accepted as a critical agreed objective, consensus will be more likely on the precise policies needed to achieve it.

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