The Social Construction of Internal War: Towards a Framework of Understanding

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Introduction
The conceptual challenge of explaining internal war (or, ethnic war, civil war, intra-state war, post-modern war, ‘new wars’) does not necessarily lie in excavating the reasons why communities within states take up arms against each other. Motivations to fight are readily discernible – fear, insecurity, hatred, revenge, control of resources, power. Nor does it lie in the description of structural determinants of conflict: poverty, scarcity, competition, oppression, injustice. Many communities exist under such structures without ever resorting to violence. The more important and more interesting question is how ordinary people in some societies are induced (or seduced) by national and local leaders into extreme forms of violence against other communities during times of civil conflict.

Glen Bowman, commenting on his experiences of the disintegration of Yugoslavia observes,

The brutalities which have characterized ethnic interaction in the succeeding three years could not, I contend, have been foreseen by an observer of the patterns of coexistence which had characterized the post-war years; after the eruption of nationalist fervor, intermarriage, co-residence and economic cooperation were replaced by mutilations such as the gouging out of eyes and hacking off of genitals as well as the rape of women and children, the wholesale massacre of ethnic groups within towns and villages, the desecration and destruction of the properties and houses of those viewed by the perpetrators as ethnic ‘others’, and the collection of men, women and children in concentration camps where torture, murder, and genocidal deprivations of food and water were commonplace. [...] The ethnic hatred which has erupted throughout the territories of Former Yugoslavia may have been instigated from above, but the popular response to that fomentation has been enthusiastic. (Bowman 1994)

Similarly, Rene Lemarchand poses the key question at the heart of Burundi’s bestial inter-communal violence: ‘By what extraordinary combination of circumstances could centuries of relatively peaceful commingling between Hutu and Tutsi, cemented by their shared loyalty to a common set of institutions [including the Kirundi language!], suddenly dissolve into fratricide?’ (Lemarchand 1994:2).

As Stuart Kaufman points out, such inhumanity demonstrated by ordinary citizens cries out for explanation, and ‘no account of ethnic war is adequate which does not explain how such things can happen’ (Kaufman 2001:2). Yet most academic accounts of war avoid such fraught emotional engagement with its central subject-matter. In fact, as Michael Ignatieff suggests, ‘It is not only the victims whose worlds one has to enter, if
one wishes to understand modern war, but the world of the gunmen, torturers, and apologists of terror. […] The horror of the world lies not just with the corpses, not just with the consequences, but with the intentions, with the minds of killers’ (Ignatieff 1999:24-25). At the same time, it is not enough to retreat into moral disgust in the face of fratricidal horror, for ‘disgust is a poor substitute for thought’ (Ignatieff 1999:25). What we need rather, is to explain internal wars as human actions involving agency and intentionality, and not just as historical events or the result of certain structural features inherent to some societies. That is, moving beyond the structure-agency debate to a ‘post-dualist’ approach, we need to integrate both a structural and agentic understanding of internal war in society (Hodgson 2000:20-21). In order to add agency-based explanations to existing structural accounts, we need to understand how internal war as a social continuity is both constructed and reproduced in the actions of individuals, communities, and states.

Consequently, three intersecting questions lie at the center of this research. First, why do very similar societies that share the same structural features most commonly associated with conflict – poverty, salient ethnic or social divisions, minority grievances, failing government institutions, lack of national identity, low levels of state legitimacy – produce radically different conflict histories? Why for example, has violence become endemic in Zimbabwe, but not in neighboring Zambia? Why did only six of the fifteen former Soviet republics fall into internal war, while the others avoided it? How do we explain the contrasting national separation stories of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia? Second, given the longevity and persistence of the structural conditions in most conflict-ridden states, how do we account for the timing of the violence? Why did Liberia collapse into slaughter in 1989 and not earlier? Why did Rwanda erupt into genocide in 1994 and not in 1990 when the RPA first invaded from Uganda? Third, why is it that similar kinds of conflicts – the struggle for autonomy by minorities, the righting of historical wrongs against oppressed minorities – can lead to violence in some kinds of states but not in others? Why has the Sri Lanka-Tamil conflict been so violent, while the Canada-Quebec conflict has been largely peaceful? Why has the New Zealand-Maori conflict remained non-violent, while the Fijian-Indo-Fijian conflict has resulted in political instability?

These questions cast doubt on the ability of structuralist explanations by themselves to properly account for internal war. In this paper, I present a three-level framework for understanding the origins of internal war that builds on structuralist findings, but adds perhaps the most important precipitating factor, namely, the destruction of non-violent discourses and its replacement with socially constructed war discourses. The framework suggests that in order to devise a more complete understanding of internal war, we need to examine three broad areas: the structural determinants of conflict, the processes of elite decision-making in conflict, and the discourses of conflict that are deliberately constructed by ‘conflict entrepreneurs’.

The importance of this theorizing lies in the observation that conflict management at the international level is in crisis. It has proven to be largely ineffective in dealing with the ‘new wars’ of the post-Cold War period; numerous efforts at mediation, conciliation, sanctions, peacekeeping, and humanitarian intervention have failed to properly resolve internal war in Somalia, Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Angola, Kashmir, Israel-Palestine, Chechnya, Karabakh, the Balkans,
Colombia, Myanmar, The Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea, and numerous other states. The primary reason for the crisis of international conflict management rests in the conceptual deficit evident in official discourses in terms of understanding the nature of these wars, and the theoretical vacuum in regards to their causes. Because there is little understanding about the causal imperatives of internal wars, the remedies applied are often misplaced, blatantly mistaken, or poorly applied. It is therefore, an overriding imperative that we devote greater energies to uncovering the roots of internal wars and develop relevant theories for their management and resolution.

The Study of Internal Wars

Key Assumptions

Internal wars received only marginal attention in the scholarly literature on international conflict (Scherrer 1999:52; Licklider 1993:6-7), particularly during the Cold War period. IR scholars were pre-occupied with the global conflict between the superpowers, and it was only the end of that conflict and the rise in salience of civil violence in the former Soviet Bloc that re-directed their energies in that direction. However, the predominance of IR scholars has meant that the field has tended to be dominated by a number of core, mainly neo-realist assumptions which, by and large, are proving unhelpful in the search for a better understanding of the nature and causes of internal war.

First, international conflict, including internal wars, has been approached from a traditional Clausewitzian perspective, with its emphasis on professional military structures, ‘scientific’ military strategy and tactics, military technology and capabilities, and traditional war aims. The application of such approaches to the deconstructed settings and post-modern character of much contemporary warfare (with its criminal aspects, human rights abuses, diverse armed groups, ethnic hatreds, ritualized violence, and external inter-connections) is extremely limited (see Jackson 2002; Kaldor 1999; Duffield 1998).

Second, there continues to be a tendency to portray contemporary internal wars as a form of political abnormality or a kind of social pathology; it is the breakdown of a particular system, or the retreat from normally peaceful political forms (Duffield 1998). Such positivist views of civil war ignore the considerable objective (and subjective) rationality of deliberately employing political violence in certain contexts. In some circumstances, violence can perform a variety of functions in alternative systems of profit, power, and protection. In other words, internal conflicts are not necessarily ‘breakdowns’ in normally peaceful political systems, or the aberrant suspension of non-violent domestic politics (Jackson 2001, 2002). Rather, they are the direct result of a particular form of politics – a system of conflict – that is often rooted in the structures and processes of ‘weak states’ (see below), and which has its own political logic. Therefore, contrary to much conventional wisdom,

[…] if we wish to examine conflict we must begin by analysing what is normal. Or at least, those long-term and embedded social processes that define the conditions of everyday life. The purpose and reasons for conflict are located in these processes. From this perspective, political violence is not different, apart or irrational in relation to the way we live: it is an expression of its inner logic. (Duffield 1998:67).
Along with positivist assumptions, the study of internal conflict has tended to employ positivist methodologies in either historical-political case studies, or more recently in large-scale quantitative empirical analyses (see below).

Lastly, the study of internal war has tended to apply modernist rationalist assumptions about human motivations in internal war situations. It is suggested that ordinary people fight civil wars in the rational pursuit of economic gain, or for personal security in times of anarchy, or in pursuit of political goals defined by nationalist ideologies. For example, some internal wars are argued to be the result of security dilemmas: ethnic groups in situations of ‘emergent anarchy’ calculate that pre-emptive self-defense is necessary to ensure group survival, prompting escalatory preparations for violence (see Lake and Rothchild 1998). In other words, internal war, it is argued, is usually the result of structurally determined or bounded rational decision-making that does not have violence as an end in itself or as a key objective in and of itself, but is rather a means to an end. Implicit is the assumption that people in war act in terms of rational calculation, and not, for example, out of hatred or irrational fear.

As will be demonstrated, there may be other more subjective rationalities for employing violence in politically fragile, ethnically fractured, and economically weak states (Herbst 1996/7). Violence may be intrinsically valuable in itself, or may be enacted out of hatred, fear, or chauvinistic beliefs. In any case, internal wars usually involve the creation of political discourses that ‘link passion and rationality in a manner which modernism – with its image of humankind as intellectively rational – is incapable of explaining’ (Bowman 1994).

**Main Approaches**

There are three broad approaches to the study of internal war: the initial ‘ancient hatreds’ approach of the early 1990s, structuralist approaches, and bounded rationality approaches. Each approach, apart from the first, has added to our knowledge about the antecedents of conflict and the actions and decisions of individuals in the midst of war.

First, a section of the current literature focuses on so-called ‘ethnic’ conflicts in international politics. Typically, it is asserted that ‘tribally based warfare’ erupts ‘where ethnic and other hatreds had long been officially suppressed but never extinguished in the hearts and minds of populations’ (Snow 1996: 26, 38). Emphasizing the existence or re-emergence of ‘ancient hatreds’ or a ‘primitive instinct for violence’ (Kaplan 1994), there is also a stress on the element of irrationality, as if persisting civil war ‘is a perversion of reason that would otherwise lead men and women to adopt peaceable behavior’ (Berdal and Keen 1997: 797-798). Quite apart from its ethnocentric baggage (Howard 1995/6:28-29), the ancient hatreds analysis is mono-causal, and risks ignoring the prosaic political and economic roots of ethnic conflict (Keen 1998: 10-11). In addition, while it may be true that ethnic (identity) politics depends on collective memory and tradition, it is also the case that these are often ‘reinvented’ when other sources of political legitimacy - socialism, post-colonial forms of nationalism - fail or corrode (Kaldor 1999:7).

Accompanying the ‘ethnic’ explanation, there is often a focus on mass-led dimensions, as if most internal conflicts are an outburst of spontaneous and uncontrollable social forces. These approaches undervalue the role of the political elite in the social life of particular communities, and in the interaction between the various
political communities constituting the international system. They also fail to consider the logic of perceived threats, constraints, and opportunities that lead elites to make the choices they do in situations of ongoing political crisis (Job 1992:28).

Second, structuralist approaches attempt to describe the broad social, political, and economic factors that are purported to drive internal conflict. There are several different structural approaches. In the first place, there is a booming quantitative literature that seeks to identify the economic and political determinants of civil war (Sambanis 2001:259). Typically, these studies use large-n data sets and sophisticated statistical methods to try to find correlations between the onset of internal political violence and variables related to social divisions (ethno-linguistic division, religious diversity), national attributes (population size, previous war experience), levels of economic development (per capita real GDP, per capita energy consumption, primary export percentage, resource scarcity), type of political system (democracy versus autocracy, political and civil rights, democratic transitions), and international context (Cold War, geographic region, neighbors at war)(see Elbadawi and Sambanis 2000; Henderson and Singer 2000; Maxwell and Rueveny 2000).

In another structural approach, Brown develops a more general framework of the causes of internal wars, distinguishing between background and proximate causes and identifying four main clusters of factors that can lead to violence:

structural factors such as weak states, security concerns, and ethnic geography; political factors such as discriminatory political institutions, exclusionary national ideologies, inter-group politics, and elite politics; economic/social factors such as widespread economic problems, discriminatory economic systems, and economic development and modernization; and cultural/perceptual factors such as patterns of cultural discrimination and problematic group histories (Brown 1996: 573).

Another version of this approach involves abandoning the notion of internal war as a single form of international conflict. Instead, internal conflicts are categorized into types according to their sources or causes. Rupesinghe, for example, suggests five different kinds of internal conflict based on the issues in dispute: ideological conflicts, governance and authority conflicts, racial conflicts, environmental conflicts, and identity conflicts (Rupesinghe 1992:14-20). Brown, in contrast, divides internal conflicts along two dimensions: elite-triggered or mass-triggered conflicts; and internally-driven or externally-driven conflicts. This gives four main types, of which there are a number of sub-types, such as ideological conflicts, ethnic conflicts, power struggles, ‘spillover’ conflicts, and economically motivated conflicts (Brown 1996).

An interesting structuralist account lies in attempts to re-focus attention on state processes in internal war. Efforts to ‘bring the state back in’ to the analysis have so far focused on the process of state-building in the developing world. It is argued that, in a general sense, conflict is the result of state-making – both in terms of territorial consolidation and institution-building (see Ayoob 1995, 1996). The process of European state-building, apart from taking centuries, was often bloody and violent (Tilly 1975, 1985). No less than the European experience, it is argued, the process of creating nation-states in developing regions of the world like Africa also involves war-making (Herbst
Furthermore, irrational colonial boundaries, chronic underdevelopment, external interference, and the attempt to compress the long process of creating a nation-state into a very short timeframe (Howard 1995/6: 52), have made the state-building project in these regions even more prone to violent internal conflict that was the case in Europe. In extreme cases, the erosion of autonomy can lead to states collapsing or failing altogether (see Zartman 1995). During the European experience unviable states were absorbed by stronger states or reconfigured in new forms. However, the nature of the present international system, particularly its normative structures, makes this option virtually impossible.

The final broad category of studies on internal war involves bounded rationality approaches. These studies suggest that given certain structural conditions – emergent anarchy, economic scarcity, weakening state structures due to globalization – elites and groups make rational decisions to pursue their aims by violent means. Within the bounded context of their decision-making parameters, going to war may be entirely rational. For example, it has been noted that many current internal wars involve substantial economic aspects as entrepreneurs make use of opportunities to profit from the uncertainties created by widespread conflict (see Berdal and Keen 1997; Keen 1998). That is, ruling elites (and their rivals) may calculate great benefits in the creation and maintenance of ‘war economies’, and there is now an increasingly substantial body of research detailing the significant economic benefits of maintaining ‘complex emergencies’ and the accompanying flow-on political capital that can accrue (see Berdal and Keen 1997; Reno 1998; Duffield 1998; Kaldor 1999; Keen 1998).

**The State of the Art?**

Research on internal wars has so far produced few systematic models or cumulative results. Conducted almost exclusively from within positivist assumptions and employing positivist methodologies, studies have focused mainly on the structural characteristics of societies in conflict, or on the processes of bounded rational decision-making. As important as they are for highlighting the key background, or necessary but not sufficient, causes of internal wars, these explanations are limited. As already suggested, the main problem is that empirically they fail to explain why very similar societies that share the same structural features most commonly associated with conflict – poverty, salient ethnic or social divisions, minority grievances, failing government institutions, lack of national identity, low levels of state legitimacy – produce radically different conflict histories. And why internal wars erupt when they do, and not earlier or later.

The answer to this puzzle, I believe, lies in the pivotal role of ‘conflict discourses’ as a key variable in generating internal war. This is a third level of explanation that brings agency back into the study of war. Internal wars are after all, social constructions instigated by political entrepreneurs, but rooted in the social continuities of weak state structures and processes and reproduced through the violence itself. In other words, it is the rise and domination of certain kinds of conflict discourses (and not simply the presence of certain structural features or processes of political conflict) that turn weak states into societies at war. In this paper, I argue that it is only through a careful examination of all three levels – structure, process, and discourse – that a more complete understanding of internal war is possible. Research into the causes of internal war needs to examine how conflict discourses arise, what distinguishes them from other non-violent
discourses, the ways in which they ‘defeat’ alternative (non-violent) discourses, and how they can be de-constructed and replaced with democratic and inclusive discourses.

In this paper, discourse signifies ‘a socially and historically specific system of assumptions, values and beliefs which materially affects social conduct and social structure’ (Hodgson 2000:59). War discourses furthermore, are large-scale power-knowledge regimes akin to Foucault’s discourses of medicine, education, or humanism, and achieve hegemony at particular historical junctures which we call civil wars. The power of war discourses rests in their ability to allow personal consciousness and political consciousness to coexist but not to confront each other. In other words, even if there is within an individual a questioning doubt about the war they are fighting, ‘there are no newspapers, no radio stations, no alternative language in which he can frame his doubts and discover that others have doubts just like him’ (Ignatieff 1999:37). The discourse has foreclosed certain kinds of thought, and with it, certain kinds of action.

Although language and text as being constitutive (and not merely representational) is crucial to the notion of discourse, society is not reducible to language and linguistic analysis (Hodgson 2000:62). Discourses are broader than language, being constituted not just in texts, but also in definite institutional and organizational practices; they are discursive practices. For example, a discourse of education includes not just the language and content of school texts, but also the physical arrangements of the classrooms, the shape of the tables, school songs and mottos, disciplinary practices, school uniforms and dress codes, and so on. A political discourse similarly involves not just speeches by politicians, or their pamphlets and writings, but also the symbols they appropriate (flags, colors, dress-codes), the myths and histories they refer to, the laws they pass, the organizational structures they create, the decision-making procedures they follow, the actions they undertake (marches, demonstrations, boycotts), and so on. In other words, discourses can be considered as an amalgam of material practices and forms of knowledge.

A Three-Level Framework for Understanding Internal Wars
While not claiming to be a formal causal model, the three-level framework presented here is nonetheless a useful analytical tool that can help scholars organize the literature on internal conflict, and practitioners evaluate its policy implications. Each level of explanation provides new insights into the causes of conflict. In a general sense, Levels 1 and 2 – the nature and politics of weak states – highlight the background causes of internal war, while Level 3 – the construction of conflict discourses – suggests more immediate causes. The first two levels will be only briefly described, as they are more fully explained elsewhere (see Jackson 2001, 2002).

Level 1: Weak States
The key to these first two levels of analysis is the premise that ‘state making, the political variable of primary concern to political elites and decision-makers in Third World countries must form the centerpiece of any paradigm we attempt to construct for the explanation of internal and external behavior of Third World states and regimes’ (Ayoob 1992:64). In other words, state processes – state construction or adaptation, ruling class formation and consolidation, patronialism and alliance creation – are important preconditions of internal war.
There is no singular definition of the weak state, but it is possible to distinguish between strong and weak states using a matrix of social, political, and economic factors. Strong states, it is argued, involve ‘the willingness and ability of a state to maintain social control, ensure societal compliance with official laws, act decisively, make effective policies, preserve stability and cohesion, encourage societal participation in state institutions, provide basic services, manage and control the national economy, and retain legitimacy’ (Dauvergne 1998:2). Beyond the issue of state capacity, however, strong states also possess high levels of socio-political cohesion that is directly correlated with consolidated participatory democracies, strong national identities, and productive and highly developed economies. Perhaps most importantly, strong states exist as a ‘hegemonic idea’, accepted and naturalized in the minds of the population such that they ‘consider the state as natural as the landscape around them; they cannot imagine their lives without it’ (Migdal 1998:12; see also Skinner 1978).

Weak states, on the other hand, are defined by an almost mirror opposite set of characteristics. They are characterized, first of all, by unconsolidated or non-existent democracies, and may face serious problems of legitimacy. Typically, the legitimacy crisis is expressed through very low political participation rates (and correspondingly high levels of disengagement or ‘exit’ by significant sectors of the population such as peasants), a reliance on coercion to ensure compliance, unstable politics (e.g., governmental crises, coups, plots, riots, rebellions), severe social cleavages (ethnic, religious, or class), and the centralization of power in a ruling elite, usually focused on a single leader or political party.

Second, weak states invariably lack cohesive national identities. Primary loyalties are often expressed in sub-national terms, and ‘exit’ from the state – psychologically, socially, economically, and/or politically – is common. In essence, the ‘hegemonic idea’ of statehood is missing or only weakly present (Cornwell 1999:62), and relates to the conditions of their emergence into juridical statehood. Unlike European states, the colonial state was an alien intrusion forcibly imposed on an arbitrarily defined territorial unit. Lacking very little in terms of substantial statehood – particularly, a national identity, legitimate sovereignty based on a social contract, internally created national institutions – de-colonization gave these territories formal sovereignty, or juridical independence, before a cohesive national identity was ready to emerge.

Third, weak states are defined by varying levels of institutional weakness and a frequent inability by governments to implement their policies (Byman and van Evera 1998:37). At the extreme end of the scale, the institutions of state are incapable of even a minimal level of operability and may even be in a terminal spiral of collapse. At the least, weak states possess under-resourced and underdeveloped institutional capacity, and face enormous difficulties in mobilizing the population or regulating civil society. Even relatively straightforward governmental tasks such as tax collection or maintaining minimal levels of law and order can prove difficult for weak states. Institutional weakness, furthermore, is both cause and consequence of ongoing economic crisis. Weak states typically exhibit all the symptoms of economic underdevelopment and dependency – dualistic and poorly integrated mono-economies, heavy debt burdens, low or negative growth rates, high inflation and unemployment, low levels of investment, and massive social inequalities.
Finally, weak states are characterized by an external vulnerability to international actors and forces which is the direct result of their internal fragility. As Ayoob puts it, ‘Fragile politics, by definition, are easily permeable. Therefore, internal issues in Third World societies [...] get transformed into interstate issues quite readily’ (Ayoob 1986:14). Mujaju argues that because the political systems of weak states ‘are internally incoherent and because aspects of their internal form are projections of the external environment, they are easily manipulated from the outside’ (Mujaju 1989:260). External vulnerability can be observed in the permeability of weak state borders to arms smuggling, refugee movements, and general contagion effects that are manifest in areas like West or Central Africa.

As the previous section showed, there is empirical evidence to show that weak states – states exhibiting economic weakness, low levels of legitimacy, institutional weakness, ethnic divisions, external vulnerability – are statistically at far greater risk of experiencing internal war than strong states, and can be usefully used as predictors of conflict. As Holsti suggests, the main source of war in the last fifty years has been internally-derived, and he argues that it is the characteristics of weak, strong, and failed states that explains war today (Holsti 1995:319). In reality, the regions populated by strong states have long been arenas of peace, while regions of weak and failed states are continually zones of turmoil and war.

Level 2: Weak State Elite Strategies

The politics of weak states – the actions of elites in response to internal and external demands and opportunities – are conditioned by the underlying structural characteristics described above: institutional weakness, economic scarcity, problems of legitimacy, political instability, and external vulnerability. The structural characteristics of weak states place extraordinary pressures on decision-makers, bounding their choices. In effect, they transform weak state politics into a continual process of crisis management, or what Migdal calls ‘the politics of survival’ (Migdal 1988:227-229). Political elites have to manage both internal and external pressures, usually through forms of ‘elite accommodation’, in order to sustain a meaningful semblance of sovereignty (Reno 1998:2). Internally, they have to continually secure hegemony and manage local ‘strongmen’ – individuals or groups who exercise power in their own right (Reno 1998), and who pose challenges to weak state rulers. Externally, the demands of great power patrons, international financial institutions (IFIs), and multinational companies (MNCs) have to be accommodated or carefully manipulated to maintain access to resources and to avoid sanctioning behavior. A number of key strategies are employed to these ends.

Ethnic politics, or the politics of identity, are often a strategy of first choice for many weak state elites. Ethnic politics in Africa’s weak states, for example, has its roots in the contradictions inherent in the exercise of state power by colonial powers seeking to establish hegemony (Boone 1994: 111). Ethnic identity formation facilitated indirect rule, which in turn retarded emergent class consciousness. Following independence, weak state elites also used the appeal to ethnicity in their own attempt to establish hegemony, ‘institutionalizing the divisions which exist by making ethnic identity the basis for political and (to a lesser extent) economic participation, and by striving to improve the competitive strength of the ethnic groups of the top leaders of the ruling faction’ (Ake 1976:9). The politics of identity can also serve as a source of political legitimacy when
other sources – socialism, nationalism – fail or corrode (Kaldor 1999:7). By creating vertical links across class strata (e.g. through identity-based patron-client networks, political graft, and resource allocation), it helps to maintain a level of integration quite out of proportion to objective class differences, which in weak states are often severe. Of course, the danger of strategies involving the appeal to ethnicity is that they can easily spiral into all out war, or for a time, out of control of the elite and into mass civil violence.

The patterns of exclusive politics, political centralization, and authoritarian forms of governance that are so evident in post-colonial states, and which are so often at the root of internal conflicts, have similarly deep historical roots. In the exercise of state power, the colonial authorities in Africa, for example, subjected the economy to very strict control in order to restrict the flow of wealth to the population. The most serious consequence of this was to leave the bourgeoisie, or the elite, with a precarious material base and a need to establish hegemony. The absence of a bourgeoisie grounded in a solid and independent economic base and successfully engaged in the private accumulation of capital compelled them to take direct control of the state, thus transforming politics into a material struggle. It provided the opportunity to build class power through the mechanisms of the state in the context of increasing scarcity (Fatton Jr 1988:254-255).

Exclusive politics, political centralization, and authoritarianism arises in weak states because the state is deprived of the relative autonomy needed to make reform possible, despotism unnecessary, and genuine democracy viable. These modes of governance mask the incapacity of the ruling elite to transform its power into effective, political, economic, and cultural policies (Fatton Jr 1988:254-255). From this perspective then, it can be argued that exclusive politics – the one party state, for example – is in fact, class action by the elite to establish and retain hegemony. As with ethnic mobilization, these strategies also carry their own risks. The struggle for hegemony or the application of severe repression can spiral into out-right armed conflict when excluded or targeted groups attempt to protect themselves or take control of the state.

The situation of extreme competition and internecine class struggle in weak states also provides the ideal conditions for the emergence of ‘Caesarism’, whereby a great personality is entrusted with great power and arbitrates in an absolutist form of government. These presidential monarchs maintain their patrimonial power through the illegal appropriation of state revenues and the establishment of corruption in a network of patrons and clients (Fatton Jr 1988:259). The widespread practices of corruption, political graft, the establishment of patron-client networks, and patrimonialism in weak state politics is not simply the result of a breakdown in normal politics, or the unfortunate rise to power of unusually corrupt leaders. Rather, it can be construed as class action necessitated by the fragility of the material conditions of the ruling elites. The patronage and corruption inherent in the structure of the state, furthermore, are enhanced when there is the absence of effective institutions to check the abuse of power and ensure administrative accountability, as is the case in many African states where political institutions are poorly articulated (Diamond 1987:583). Reform coups are often launched to combat unacceptable levels of corruption, which can in turn lead to internal conflict. In cases of extreme governmental corruption and mismanagement, such as in Mobutu’s ‘kleptocracy’ in Zaire, dissatisfaction can reach levels where rebellion, coup, or general civil violence becomes likely.
In short, weak state politics and internal conflicts are linked in two primary aspects. In the first and most extreme case, weak state rulers (and their rivals) see great benefits in the creation and maintenance of ‘war economies’. Far from being a breakdown in normally peaceful politics, or an irrational outburst of ethnic hatred, a number of Africa’s current internal conflicts, for example, are the direct result of deliberate, calculated strategies aimed at accumulation. In the environment created by intrusive globalization processes, with increased external demands and decreasing internal resources, conflict and instability may be associated with innovative and expanding forms of political economy (Duffield 1998).

At the less extreme end of the scale, internal conflict may be the inadvertent result of nonetheless risky strategies by elites to hold onto power, or establish hegemony, and manage political demands. Pursuing exclusionary politics, the indiscriminate use of state coercion on civilian populations, unleashing ethnic chauvenism, or manipulating multi-party elections are all high-risk strategies that can create the conditions where war is likely. Similarly, the failure to deal appropriately with spillover or contagion effects, or eroding state autonomy (state collapse), can also result in the emergence of internal conflict. The important point is that the structural features of weak states and the strategies of elites are important background causes of internal war.

Level 3: Conflict Discourses and the Construction of Internal War

As already suggested, it is not sufficient to explain internal wars solely by reference to certain structural preconditions, or the existence of contextually limited decision-making matrixes for elites. After all, there are too many states which possess both weak state structures and forms of weak state politics, and have not yet experienced internal war or any large-scale political violence. What actually needs to be explained is ‘how neighbors once ignorant of the very idea that they belonged to opposed civilizations begin to think – and hate – in these terms; how they vilify and demonize people they once called friends; how, in short, the seeds of mutual paranoia are sown, grain by grain, on the soil of a common life’ (Ignatieff 1999:36).

The key necessary variable in explaining internal war, I believe, is the deliberate construction of a totalizing war discourse, a ‘vast cultural complex’ (Roach 1993:8) that deconstructs existing anti-war discourses and destroys sites of opposition, and then replaces it with new discourses of hatred, fear, and the justified use of extreme violence. This approach brings back the notion of agency to war analysis, linking micro and macro levels of explanation – the intersection and interaction of the social and the psychological (see Bowman 1994). It suggests that ‘conflict entrepreneurs’, ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’ (Lemarchand 1994), or ‘military entrepreneurs’ (de Waal 2000) purposefully attempt to manipulate the thoughts and feelings of people to create conflict and motivate violence. Broadly, there are two main processes at work in the creation of a totalizing war discourse.

In the first process, conflict entrepreneurs attempt to deconstruct or discredit alternative discourses that oppose their own war aims – anti-war and anti-violence discourses, cultural inclusiveness discourses, moderate nationalist discourses. As Michael Ignatieff puts it, ‘violence must be done to the self before it can be done to others’; the living tissue of connection and recognition that binds inter-ethnic communities together ‘must be cauterized before a neighbor is reinvented as an enemy’ (Ignatieff 1999:54). In
her analysis of the Sudanese civil war, for example, Sharon Hutchinson concluded that military leaders in the South were ‘intent on undermining, if not destroying any mediating institutions standing between themselves and the loyalty of their recruits, including, if necessary, bonds of family, kinship, community and religiosity’ (Hutchinson 2001).

At the political level, this often involves restructuring political rules and institutions to centralize power and limit the activities of opposition groups. Typically, laws are passed which limit democratic participation or curtail opposition groups’ activities, while simultaneously establishing new government structures. Other laws may make it a crime to criticize the leadership or express dissent; at the same time, security organizations are usually given greater freedom and powers to harass, detain, or spy on citizens. New organizations are often created to discredit or replace existing organizations that are deemed disloyal. Parallel military, cultural, educational, or religious organizations, such as new churches or new paramilitary neighborhood defense units, may be formed by nationalists. In Zimbabwe, for example, the government introduced a ‘youth training scheme’ run by war veterans to instill in young people an ‘unbiased history of Zimbabwe’. It was argued that school teachers and parents had failed in their patriotic duty because young people did not know ‘true Zimbabwean history and culture’ (Ranger 2002:15). Recruited from unemployed boys and girls in the townships, they were deployed all over the country during the recent elections:

They were given basic training in military drill and put under the command of war veterans. Wearing T-shirts marked ‘Chimurenga Three’, they were sent out to defend and to extend the revolution. They were used as electoral shock troops – to erect barriers on roads, to beat people who could not produce ZANU/PF cards, to attack MDC activists. (Ranger 2002:15).

At the social-cultural and individual level, the rules and norms of ethical behavior regarding the killing of friends and neighbors, for example, must be deconstructed and replaced by the justified belief in self-defensive pre-emptive violence. Or, as Bowman puts it, the moral scruples which had regulated social interaction previously have to be overwhelmed and replaced with a will to efface the presence of that ‘other’ from the earth (Bowman 1994). Hutchinson describes more concretely how ethical restraints on intra and inter-ethnic warfare were systematically dismantled in Southern Sudan during the war:

[…] up until the 1991 splitting of the SPLA, Nuer and Dinka combatants did not target unarmed women, children or elderly persons in violent confrontations between themselves. Local ethical codes also condemned the burning of houses and the slashing of crops. Any breach of these ethical limits was considered a direct affront against God or Divinity (kuoth nhial), as the ultimate guardian of human morality. The expectation was that God would punish the transgressor (or someone closely related to him) through manifestations of sudden death, disease or some other misfortune. Acts of inter-Nuer homicide, moreover, were governed by an even stricter set of
ethical norms, which required, among other things, that the slayer be ritually purified of the ‘embittered’ blood of his victim. (Hutchinson 2001).

Convinced that these local prohibitions were impeding the war against the Sudanese government, SPLA commanders instigated a program of ‘violent coaching’ among recruits to convince them that homicides in anti-government war were completely devoid of the social and spiritual risks normally associated with homicide, and there was no need to purify the slayer of his deed, no possibility of claiming blood wealth compensation, and no need to memorialize the slain. The results of this program were predictable:

[...] Nuer SPLA recruits came to accept this revolutionary pronouncement. And in the process, they jettisoned any lingering feelings of personal accountability for slayings carried out under military orders. Consequently, when Garang and Machar squared off in 1991, the one remaining pillar of local ethical codes – that prohibiting the purposeful killing of unarmed women and children of all ages – soon crumbled. Both military factions swung their guns around on each other’s entire civilian populations. God, it seems, was no longer watching. (Hutchinson 2001).

The violence itself, furthermore, acts as a discursive practice, reproducing the norms and beliefs required for its continuance and spread. In the Sudanese case described above, the increasing replacement of spears with guns in regional patterns of warfare created a degree of ‘social distance’ and ‘spiritual ambiguity’ about the ethical and spiritual ramifications of homicide. This is because unlike a spear, the source of a bullet lodged deep in someone’s body could not be traced with any accuracy, and soldiers could not know for certain whether or not they had killed someone (Hutchinson 2001).

At the same time, conflict entrepreneurs work to overwhelm and submerge alternative oppositional spaces and voices. Academic institutions, schools, families, religious institutions, the media, popular culture, democratic and participatory political institutions, and even traditional cultural authority structures are all powerful discursive institutions that must be discredited if necessary, and then brought under control – by state coercion, if necessary. This is the Gramscian notion of hegemony, where consensus must be enforced for the nationalist cause. For example, it is not uncommon to see in the early stages of a war discourse construction moves to take control of the media so that dissenting voices can be eliminated from the public arena. Similarly, critical academics may be dismissed from their posts, ‘unpatriotic’ teachers replaced by more ‘patriotic’ teachers, and religious groups may be ordered to ‘stay out of politics’.

Lemarchand describes how the Tutsi minority in Burundi consolidated control over the government, army, educational system, and media, and then exercised a form of social hegemony over the Hutu to perpetuate its rule (Lemarchand 1994). In Rwanda between 1990 and 1994, the Hutu leadership used locally organized civil defense to give people the experience of conducting roadblocks, house searches, security meetings, night patrols, and to develop the shared vocabulary and techniques for identifying ‘enemies of the people’ and their ‘accomplices’ (Wagner 1999). In Serbia in early 1991, there were still sites of struggle and protest. Thousands of students and members of the political opposition took to the streets in opposition to the emerging discourses of hate, singing
‘give peace a chance’, to which Milosevic responded by sending in tanks and soldiers (Neuffer 2001:23).

In Zimbabwe, a nation wracked by ongoing political violence, the ZANU/PF government has made concerted efforts to destroy the universities as sites of alternative oppositional discourses by enlisting a few sympathetic academics to publicize studies confirming the government’s view of history (with the ZANU/PF ‘liberation from colonial oppression’ at the center), and economic studies demonstrating the benefits of land re-distribution (see Ranger 2002:10). Having respected academics taking such diverging positions in support of both the government and the MDC facilitates the discrediting of these institutions as authoritative discursive sites. The Church in Zimbabwe – once a powerful source of moral authority in Zimbabwe – has been similarly divided through deliberate government tactics. While the Jesuits, for example, have taken an active role in condemning state violence, other parts of the church have spoken out in support of the regime. The government has attempted to discredit the recalcitrant parts of the church by accusing them of supporting ‘terrorists’ and of historically being part of the colonial enslavement process. Observing the recent elections, Terence Ranger noted that

At the same time that Mugabe attacked church critics he wooed other Christians. At a February prayer day in Harare he addressed an audience which included ‘hundreds of Madzibaba Nzira’s Apostolic sect members, holding and lifting placards inscribed with ZANU/PF political messages [...] They sang a chimurenga song as they were toyi-toying.’ The new Anglican Bishop of Harare, Kunonga, told Mugabe that he had put all Christians to shame by distributing land: ‘Actually, you have been more merciful than God Himself!’ Baba Nzira announced a prophecy that Mugabe was ‘divinely appointed King of Zimbabwe and no man should dare challenge his office.’ (Ranger 2002:18).

In other words, ZANU/PF has successfully neutralized two authoritative discursive sites, while at the same time retaining full control over the entire coercive capabilities of the state.

The second process in the creation of a war discourse, once other discourses have been discredited or captured, involves the mobilization and coordination of multiple discursive sites – politics, media, popular culture, religion, education, the arts – in the pursuit of the conflict entrepreneurs’ designs. For example, churches and other religious actors will be used to give religious sanction to the conflict entrepreneurs’ message and values, schools will teach a particular version of history, historical myths will be appropriated into popular television programs, musicians will write and perform patriotic songs, academic studies will ‘prove’ the authenticity of political statements or programs, and the media will sanitize or slant its reporting. Such a sustained and carefully choreographed assault on the collective psyche can create new collective norms, new or altered collective memories and histories. In this way, it is possible to control social opinion and action. There are several discernible characteristics of war discourses that these sites are mobilized to promote, including: the construction of exclusive identities, or the designation of the Other; the stereotyping, dehumanization, and the designation of the
Other as ‘enemy’; the creation of a sense of victimhood and grievance; and incultation of beliefs about the justification and sometimes the necessity of violence against the Other.

First, there is the well-known, and well-researched notion of identity formation. The creation of ‘the Other’ as a constitutive outside to the Self (Derrida in Hodgson 2000:71) is a critical precondition to internal war. As Slavenka Drakulic states, ‘once the concept of “otherness” takes root, the unimaginable becomes possible’ (Drakulic quoted in Neuffer 2001:32). It is a well-worn path how in the initial stages, this involves the (re)creation, usually by political elites, of group or ethnic identity based on shared language, religion, and historical mythology. In contrast to primordialist accounts, Kaufman has argued that in Eastern Europe at least, and it is certainly true in Africa as well, that

Ethnic nationalism is a modern ideology which, for most of the eastern half of Europe, has been current for little over a century. Before that time, the peasants of the Balkans and the South Caucasus did not usually identify themselves as, say, ‘Croats’ or ‘Georgians’ or ‘Azerbaijani’ at all: it is only in the twentieth century that they were convinced to adopt these identities on the basis of shared language, religion, and historical mythology. Before that, identities were typically much more local. (Kaufman 2001: 4-5).

These separate identities form the initial bedrock of the ‘imagined differences’ between groups that can then be exploited by ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’, usually through transforming ordinary feuds and ‘normal’ political grievances into ethnic ones (Nueffer 2001).

The creation or re-creation of ethno-national identities is carried out most powerfully through the discourses of ‘symbolic politics’ (Kaufman 1994), and is vividly seen in the lead up to the war in former Yugoslavia. Bowman describes the articulation of a Serbian discourse that was designed to reconstitute ‘Serbia’ as a locus of identity and ‘Serbian interests’ as a focus of concern:

There was […] an official blessing and promotion of old traditions (frowned upon as ‘folklore’ during Tito’s regime) recounting the heroic struggle of the Serbian nation against the invading Ottoman armies. Vidovan, the annual celebration of the defeat of the armies of Prince Lazar Hrebeljanovic by the Ottoman armies in the ‘Field of Blackbirds’ on 15 June 1389, became an official ceremony […] Prominent members of the Serbian government, including Milosevic, would listen to village minstrels lament the melancholy fate of the Christian heroes who died six hundred years earlier defending Serbia against foreign invasion […] On Vidovan 1989 […] the bones of Prince Lazar, which had rested in Serbia since his defeat six centuries before, were ceremonially paraded through the towns and monasteries of Serbia before being ‘returned’ with great fanfare to the Orthodox monastery of Graanica at the heart of Kosova. (Bowman 1994).

Political symbolism is not the only means of constituting identity. Schools and education, along with family socialization, are also potent sites for the discursive formation of
Neuffer’s account of a young girl’s education in Rwanda leading up to the 1994 genocide is revealing:

[…] teachers stood at the front of the classroom and asked who was Tutsi and who was Hutu. As soon as JJ raised her hand to proclaim herself a Tutsi, she was forever teased and bullied by Hutu children. They would corral her in the schoolyard and repeat what their parents had told them about how ‘evil’ the Tutsi were. When the teacher was frustrated with the students, as they stumbled over their sums or grammar, he would simply blame the Tutsi in the class. ‘Oh, you Tutsi, wake up!’ the teacher claimed with exasperation.

History classes were also awkward. There the teacher would talk about Rwanda’s history: the history of the Tutsi ‘oppressors’ and their injustices to the Hutu. (Neuffer 2001:92).

However, for internal war to become possible, it is also necessary that groups stereotype, dehumanize, and scapegoat the Other. This is part of what Bowman calls the ‘discursive project of transforming neighbors into enemies’, or the ‘discourses of ethnic antagonism’ (Bowman 1994). Russian characterizations of Chechens as ‘a bunch of bandits’, or ‘criminals’ and ‘terrorists’, and Chechen beliefs about Russian imperialism and chauvenism is a typical example of such processes (see Bennett 2001). In Zimbabwe, Mugabe has stated that ‘whites are evil’, and has attempted to brand MDC as ‘traitors’, ‘terrorists’, and ‘colonial stooges’ (see Ranger 2001:9). In Rwanda, popular radio station Radio Mille Collines referred to Tutsi as ‘inyenzi’, or ‘cockroaches’, while the pictorial newspaper Kangura stated: ‘A cockroach cannot give birth to a butterfly. The history of Rwanda shows us clearly that a Tutsi stays always exactly the same, that he has never changed. The malice, the evil, are just as we knew them in the history of our country’ (quoted in Neuffer 2001:100).

Such stereotypes can be used to justify certain harsh or disproportionate measures against the Other, such as the Russian contention that Chechnya needs to be ruled with an iron fist, as Chechens are naturally lawless and uncontrollable, and the use of overwhelming force is all that the Chechens respect or understand. Alternately, in extreme cases, the process of dehumanization can justify violence, as in the Hutu belief that the murder of Tutsi was simply a matter of ‘sweeping out the cockroaches’. An important consequence of such discourses is the creation of a world divided between two camps in which there is no neutral place to stand, and those who don’t support the cause and its leaders are by definition supporters of the ‘enemy’ (Bowman 1994).

Another part of creating discourses of the enemy, typically also involves a sustained effort to characterize the Other as aliens or interlopers, such as the Hutu characterization of Tutsi as being Nilotic settlers from the North. This myth, widely perpetuated by the Hutu leadership in Rwanda leading up to the 1994 genocide was based on a Belgium anthropologist’s mistaken theory of Tutsi origins (see Neuffer 2001:87-88). It had the effect of creating a Tutsi identity infused with ‘alien-ness’, and became the justification for ‘sweeping the cockroaches’ out of the Rwandan house. In the former Yugoslavia, Muslims were identified with alien Ottoman invaders, despite that fact that they were predominantly converted Slavs.
Once group identities have been established and made concrete, and stereotyping has helped to dehumanize the Other and identify them as the enemy, it is also possible to create a sense of victimhood, based on real or perceived historical or contemporary grievances, which can then function as another precursor to internal war. This is the second strategy employed by conflict entrepreneurs; it is the story of how ‘communities of fear are created out of communities of interest’ (Ignatieff 1999:39). The role of the press is crucial in this process, as seen in the former Yugoslavia. In Serbia, the official press started to run stories about Albanian Muslims raping Serbian women, the expulsion of Serbian families by Albanian officials, and the desecration of orthodox monasteries in Kosova (Bowman 1994). In relation to Croatia, the Serb media revived memories of the Ustasha regime, which appeared to be reincarnated in the declarations and symbols of the new Croat government. Newspapers and bookshops filled with stories illustrating the history of the ‘Croatian’ attempt to exterminate the ‘Serbs’. At the same time, in Croatia and Slovenia, the press published pictures of thousands of allegedly Slovene and Croat victims of partisan reprisals from the second world war: ‘Photographs of caves full of stacked bones flooded the newspapers of both republics giving rise to campaign rhetorics in which these persons, previously referred to in non-national terms as “Nazis” or “ quislings”, became “Croatian victims” or “Slovene victims” of communist brutality’ (Bowman 1994).

In Zimbabwe, Mugabe has called his campaign of land redistribution and struggle against the MDC ‘The Third Chimurenga’ (Ranger 2002:13). This is a powerful myth revolving around African resistance to colonial invasion in the nineteenth century that was brutally suppressed. The second chimurenga was the liberation war against the oppressive white Salisbury government in the 1970s. Similarly, Armenian grievances surrounding the Turkish massacre of Armenians in the early part of the twentieth century, and Chechen memories of Stalin’s deportation, are other examples of the creation of a potent sense of victimhood based on re-invented or re-interpreted historical grievances. In Rwanda, the Belgian authorities created a new sense of victimhood in 1959 when they transferred power from Tutsi to Hutu, telling them that Hutu had been grievously mistreated and they were the country’s ‘suppressed masses’ (Neuffer 2001:89). The anger and rage given to the immediacy of these grievances can then become the basis for and justification of violence directed towards self-defense or righteous revenge.

A key part of conflict discourses that leads to war is the creation of new norms of violence, and the destruction of old norms of tolerance, ethical behavior and peaceful conflict management, as we have mentioned. The foundation for the discursive legitimation of the violence already exists in most societies through doctrines of just war, state monopoly of violence, the justified use of revolutionary violence, and defense of the family (Nation) (see Jabri 1996). It is a relatively small step to convince people that warfare is legitimate if it is in defense of homes and families, or a revolution against an oppressive and illegitimate regime, or to right an historical injustice – particularly if it is against stereotyped ‘evil’ people or ‘cockroaches’.

Typically, the threat posed by the Other is expressed in extreme and zero-sum terms. In Zimbabwe, for example, the conflict is defined as a struggle between ‘good’ and ‘evil’, a mortal combat between ‘patriots’ and ‘traitors’ (Ranger 2001:14). During the recent election in Zimbabwe, Mugabe reminded the voters that one of the heroes of the first chimurenga, Chief Makoni, had his head cut off by the British in 1896; and now they
wanted his head (Ranger 2001:19). Often, leaders present a view that the very survival of the nation is at stake, especially if communities are geographically mixed: ‘When the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ do not run along defensible territorial borders but through the middle of towns and villages and, all too often, through the middle of families, the desired ‘national entity’ can be discursively presented as penetrated and occupied by ‘enemies’ who must – at least – be disarmed by disenfranchisement and – at best – be neutralized by exile or extermination’ (Bowman 1994).

Violence itself can have several functions, including ritual initiation, the creation of collective guilt, and to polarize attitudes, heighten fear, and neutralize moderates. Often, violence will be deliberately employed to socialize fighters. In the Sudanese civil war, the SPLA used violent training methods, including starvation, abandonment, beatings, drownings, and firing squads for disobedient recruits, to create a ‘socially-isolated contingent of armed youth who were brutally trained not only to kill on command but, also, to torture whomever their military superiors designated’ (Hutchinson 2001). Many SPLA soldiers were forced to participate in disciplinary firing squads aimed at fellow recruits. In an increasing number of wars, including Sierra Leone and Uganda, violence is also used as a ritual to bind armed militias together (see DFID 2000), often by creating a sense of collective group guilt. Ritual violence can also break down inhibitions against murder, torture, and human rights abuses.

The creation of war discourses is not simply a linear process whereby conflict entrepreneurs take control of discursive sites and then proceed to construct a new social reality. Rather, it is a positive feedback process where all the causes – structures, processes, and discourses – reinforce each other in an escalatory cycle. Weak state structures of poverty and social divisions, for example, lead to the ‘politics of survival’ by elites, which then provides fuel for conflict entrepreneurs. The discourses of victimism and identity-hatred, in turn reinforces those structures by intensifying social divisions, threatening law and order, and so on. The importance of this to understanding internal war is that ‘because all of the causes reinforce each other in an escalating spiral or positive feedback loop, events need not happen in any particular order. The causes are universal, but the paths to ethnic war are multiple’ (Kaufman 2001:36).

Implications for Conflict Management
There is not the space to discuss all the implications for conflict management of the theoretical approach presented here. Clearly, there is a desperate need for more effective conflict analysis, for without an effective diagnosis, remedial strategies are bound to be ad hoc and even misplaced. The traditional realist approach of brokering a bargain that distributes power between the main warlords in an internal conflict is based on a faulty diagnosis of the problem, and has resulted in agreement breakdown in numerous places – Angola, Bosnia, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, DRC, Liberia, and others. Current diplomatic strategies are focused too narrowly to bring about genuine conflict resolution or long-term peace.

An initial implication is that the model has important implications for early warning and conflict prevention. To date, early warning systems (EWS) have focused on the measurement of structural features (economic crises, famines, de-stabilizing political events, etc), which usually have a threshold of concern, that once crossed will (theoretically) spur preventive diplomatic action. The model presented here suggests that
a careful monitoring of the important discourses of an at-risk country is also necessary. Attention needs to be paid to the use of symbolic politics and hostile myths in political discourse, as well as identity manipulation, the creation of victimhood, stereotyping, and so on. When these features become apparent and start to gain social acceptance, the international community – the UN, NGOs, other states and organizations – need to intervene in appropriate ways. The work of the OSCE’s High Commissioner for Minorities falls into this category, and needs both greater priority and to be a model for other organizations.

The model also suggests that in addition to third party intervention for securing ceasefires and the end of violence itself (peacemaking and peacekeeping), a multidimensional approach needs to be taken that targets both state reconstruction (eliminating the structures that cause conflict), and discourse transformation. This concept of peacebuilding involves a range of social transformation strategies, from economic development activities to institution building, local capacity building, human rights training, demobilization of soldiers, and local conflict management training. Many of these activities are presently considered peripheral to the main diplomatic activities of mediation, negotiation, or humanitarian intervention. However, they must become mainstreamed if international conflict management is to be effective in internal wars.

A critical new addition to the range of conflict management strategies must be activities aimed at de-constructing discourses of hate, intolerance, and violence. In fact, some organizations are involved in exactly this. Search for Common Ground, a conflict resolution NGO in 1982 in the United States, works in several conflict-ridden countries (including Burundi, Macedonia, and Angola) producing television programs, songs, radio programs, and publications aimed at countering stereotypes, encouraging cooperation, and building inter-communal understanding (see Search for Common Ground website). This kind of discourse reconstruction is not yet taken as seriously as it needs to be, and the failure to dismantle war discourses is a direct precursor to the outbreak of further conflict.

In conjunction with outside actors attempting to remold war discourses, greater emphasis must also be placed on strengthening the internal sites of opposition and alternative (non-violent) discursive formation. Peace groups, genuinely democratic and inclusive political organizations, independent universities, and tolerance-promoting religious groups are just some of the sites of struggle. The international community, instead of taking a hands off approach until it is too late, or supporting dubious political factions for strategic reasons, needs to consider lending support to those groups and social movements promoting tolerance, genuine democracy, and human rights values.

**Conclusion**

Several conclusions follow from this study. In the first instance, there needs to be a change to our dominant beliefs about internal wars. Civil conflict and violence is not necessarily abnormal or a ‘breakdown’ of social systems or political compacts. In fact, in many societies it is normal and ingrained into daily life and political practice, and making sense of it involves understanding the way it is socially constructed and reproduced in discursive formations. In other words, the atrocious violence associated with internal wars is not anti-social anomalous behavior, but rather the expression of precisely the sort of society that has developed, or been constructed, in those cases. Rather than the
breakdown of a social system, internal war is the creation of a special kind of social system. The importance of this re-conceptualization of conflict lies in the logical implication that attempting to reform a broken down social system (as much international conflict management attempts to do) is unlikely to be successful if, in fact, we are not dealing with a systemic breakdown. It implies that socially transformative strategies must be employed instead.

Second, understanding internal war involves appreciating how it is a multi-level social construction involving both structures and processes. Internal war cannot be explained solely by reference to the structures of weak states, or to the actions of conflict entrepreneurs. All three levels described in this framework are required to create the conditions for the emergence of internal war. In a strong state where democratic politics are the norm, conflict entrepreneurs are unlikely to be able to convince society to go to war. Similarly, many weak states do not fall into political violence because conflict entrepreneurs and accompanying war discourses have not yet been constructed. The implications of this conceptualization are important, particularly in terms of the dominant view that conflict is the result of certain structural features inherent to particular societies. It is also important that we do not overestimate the effectiveness of discourse as some kind of unidirectional dominatory force that forecloses the possibility of resistance. Such a view actually implies a form of determinism and a return to structuralism, denying autonomy, ethics, or responsibility (see Hodgson 2000:73). The framework presented here suggests that there is still room for human agency, as individuals can construct their own identities by drawing on certain discourses, including anti-war discourses. People construct wars, which also means that people can de-construct them.

In a sense then, perhaps the most important conclusion from this study is actually fairly optimistic: while internal wars are difficult to stop, they are also difficult to start. It takes a great deal to create totalizing war discourses, or ‘self-affirming social realities capable of both sustaining and reproducing themselves’ (Bowman 1994), and along the way it is possible to strengthen alternative discourses fighting for supremacy in different arenas. There are multiple sources of moral and social authority where opposition can be organized and bolstered, and the process of constructing internal war actually involves profound and sometimes, prolonged struggle. Academics can speak out and de-bunk racist myths or incorrect economic data. Churches can urge their members to love their enemies and unite in the universal family of God. Women’s associations can build networks of solidarity across ethnic and political lines. School teachers can refuse to teach racist curricula. In fact, in many weak states wracked by economic crisis and torn apart by serious social divisions, this is exactly what has happened: there have been enough sites of opposition, and sufficiently strong voices countering the ‘conflict entrepreneurs’ that violence has been averted. South Africa’s transition to democracy in 1994 is an important example. Here, in spite of the actions of clandestine military elements and certain political elites to destabilize the country and cause a spiral into violence, the work of the Peace Committees and other civil society groups working together under the general Peace Accord averted an internal war.
References:


Understanding the Conceptual Evolutionary Path and Theoretical Underpinnings of Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Sustainability by Mehrnaz Ashrafi. This is to meet the interests and expectations of internal and external stakeholders, the basis upon which stakeholder theory is constructed. Wartick and Cochran [31] extended the CSP model by recasting the three aspects of CSR, social responsiveness, and social issues into a framework of principles, processes, and policies. The contemporary CSR reflects corporate responsibility towards different stakeholders with respect to the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance [64]. A Research Framework for Understanding the Causes of Civil War in Sub-Saharan Africa’s most conflict-intensive region. But why have some African states experienced civil war, while others have managed to maintain political stability? A social contract is a framework of rules that governs state-society relations and the distribution of resources, rights and responsibilities in an organised society. Yet this study suggests that corruption is partially driven by internal processes of capital accumulation and global structural forces. Unlike utopian spaces social reality is not created according to a framework of pure reason. Those, who try to construct it on purpose, are unlikely to entertain full knowledge about constructed object as well as the consequences of embodied ideals. According to a critical rationalist K. Popper, it is analytical reason, which can restrict the play of imagination fraught with dictatorship of big goals, and be a basis for "piecemeal engineering" [3. P. 64-70]. The sociality in its proper sense fades away, since a social action presupposes understanding of the others and oneself as purposeful actors dealing with comparatively common facts and problems. War is a species in the genus of violence; more specifically it is collective, direct, manifest, personal, intentional, organized, institutionalized, instrumental, sanctioned, and sometimes ritualized and regulated, violence. These distinguishing features and dimensional delineations are not limitative. It should be perfectly clear, however, that war, or the state of belligerence, is a very special category of violence (van der Dennen, 1977). Some of the listed war terms reflect concern for attitudes and behaviour, linked with assumptions about the cause of war. The term "imperialist war" ref...