

The State as Villain

Weak States as a Cause of Communal Conflict

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Since the end of the Cold War, ethnic and communal conflict has been an ever increasing problem. One attempt to deal with this has been the suggestion that there is an ethnic intrastate security dilemma, similar to the one that realists argue plague states' relations in the international system. The interstate security dilemma arises because, as Barry Buzan has suggested, "in seeking power and security for themselves, states can easily threaten the power and security of other states." (Buzan, 1991: 295) Therefore, uncertainty concerning other states' intentions is central to the emergence of a security dilemma. (Roe, 1999: 184)

Barry Posen proposed in 1993 that the security dilemma could be applied to "the special conditions that arise when proximate groups of people suddenly find themselves newly responsible for their own security." (Posen, 1993: 103) Two prerequisites are required for this: the first is that two or more ethnic groups must reside in close proximity to one another and the second is that "national, regional, and international authorities must be too weak to keep groups from fighting and too weak to ensure the security of individual groups." (Brown, 1993: 6)

Lake and Rothchild point to the security dilemma existing not because "anarchy per se...precludes states from sharing information about their intentions or undertaking agreements not to engage in arms spirals, but rather, information failures and the inability to commit credibly to pacific strategies." (Lake and Rothchild, 1998: 17) They note that the role of the ability of third parties to moderate such a dilemma is limited, because, in part, once incentives to preemptively attack another group are in place, there is little "outsiders can do to mitigate the security dilemma." (Lake and Rothchild, 1998: 18)

However, the ethnic security dilemma (often referred to as a systemic theory of ethnic conflict) assumes that the state itself does not play a role in these events, only that its incapacity

is such that the state cannot prevent conflict from occurring. Given the existing literature on weak states, however, this concept is problematic. Brian Job has argued that:

States (more appropriately, regimes) are preoccupied with the short term; their security and their physical survival are dependent on the strategies they pursue for the moment. Consequently, it is rational for regimes to adopt policies that utilize scarce resources for military equipment and manpower, to perceive as threatening opposition movements demanding greater public debate, and to regard as dangerous communal movements that promote alternative identifications and loyalties. (Job, 1992: 27-28)

Similarly, Barry Buzan has argued that a state may pose a considerable threat to its own people, yet still maintain legitimacy. (Buzan, 1991: 43)

Thus, systemic theories of ethnic or communal conflict are extremely problematic because they do not include the state in “its proper central place in explanations of social change and politics...,” in the words of Theda Skocpol. (Skocpol, 1985: 28) Returning to her argument of two decades ago, these systemic theories need to bring the state back in. Yet, they are flawed precisely because they do not do this. Situations where the state does not possess any form of agency are extremely rare. This does not mean that systemic theories are not salvageable, but they need to demonstrate an understanding both of the modern state, and of the situation of agency within weak states.

Posen argues that what is occurring is a problem of “emerging anarchy.” (Posen, 1993: 103) Yet the state that dramatically collapsed since the end of the Cold War, Somalia, demonstrates the pitfalls of this concept, most notably in the fact that it is the regime of Siad Barre, not ethnic or tribal animosities, which caused the collapse. Therefore, the actions of this regime do not in fact fit Posen’s concept of the intrastate security dilemma, but rather that of the insecurity dilemma, where “the sense of threat that prevails is of internal threats to and from the regime in power...” (Job, 1992: 18)

This paper will use the concept of communal conflict, which is broader than simply ethnicity. While that is a characteristic of communal conflict, this also includes other ascriptive

attributes, such as religious, linguistic, regional, and kinship differences. Such an identity can be chosen, acquired ascriptively, or imposed by outsiders. Ethnic and communal conflict, therefore, is not based solely on ancient animosity (though that, and particularly the myths of that, can create it), but cases when communal differences feature substantively in the nature of the conflict. (Lischer, 1999: 333; see also Kriesberg, 1997)

The paper will begin by reviewing the concept of the security dilemma at the international level. It will then review Posen's, and Lake and Rothchild's arguments. It will then discuss the state formation and weak state literature, before discussing the nature of the insecurity dilemma. Finally, it will demonstrate its arguments empirically through a detailed examination of Somalia prior to its collapse.

I. The International Security Dilemma

John Herz's now classic definition of the security dilemma states that in an anarchic society where otherwise interconnected groups constitute the ultimate units of political life:

[G]roups or individuals living in such a constellation must be, and usually are, concerned about their security from being attacked, subjected, dominated or annihilated by other groups and individuals. Striving to attain security from such attack, they are driven to acquire more and more power in order to escape the impact of the power of others. This, in turn, renders the others more insecure and compels them to prepare for the worst. Since none can ever feel entirely secure in such a world of competing units, power competition ensues, and the vicious circle of security and power accumulation is on. (Herz, 1950: 157)¹

In the mid-1970s, Robert Jervis revisited the idea of the security dilemma, to suggest that, in essence, international anarchy makes it "difficult for states that are satisfied with the status quo to arrive at goals that they recognize as being in their common interest." (Jervis, 1978: 167)

¹Herz has not addressed an intrastate security dilemma. However, recently he did argue that, after the events of 9/11: "Under the ideology of the hard-line extremists this enables governments like the Bush administration, domestically, to restrict citizens' rights and liberties in favour of organizing 'homeland security' under a perpetual banner declaring 'We are at War'. Terror attacks on the enormous scale of 9/11, of course, increase security concerns and require anti-crime action, but their transformation into 'wars', against non-state actors as well as nations and regimes, have added immeasurably to security concerns and dilemmas among countries." Herz, John H. 2003. The Security Dilemma in International Relations: Background and Present Problems. *International Relations* 17 (4):411-416. 415

He suggests that two crucial variables determine how strongly a security dilemma exists: whether defensive weapons and policies can be distinguished from offensive ones, and whether the defense or the offense has the advantage. Technology and geography are the two main factors that determine which has the advantage. Geography can have non-conducting qualities that will allow areas to buffer or slow down attacks. Technology matters because, if weapons are highly vulnerable, they must be employed before they are attacked. Equally important is the ability to differentiate offensive weapons from defensive ones. If the defense is at least as potent as the offensive, the differentiation between them allows status-quo states to behave in ways that are clearly different from those of other aggressors. Therefore, this allows status-quo powers to identify each other and they can obtain advance warning when others plan aggression. (Jervis, 1978)

II. The Intrastate Ethnic Security Dilemma

Barry Posen bases his argument on the idea that the security dilemma can equally exist between groups, as well as states, returning to Herz's earlier incarnation of the idea. In order for this to function, Posen suggests that a process of 'imperial collapse' produces conditions that make the offensive superior to the defense. Further, as these states break apart, there will be uneven progress in the formation of state structures which will lead to windows of both opportunity and vulnerability. He suggests that these factors will have a powerful influence on the prospects for conflict, regardless of the internal politics of the groups emerging from these empires. (Posen, 1993: 105) That is not to say past history of groups do not matter. As Paul Roe notes, it does mean that the implication of his argument "seems to be that threats are as much determined by the nature of group identities as they are by anarchy itself. Even so, a structural explanation is clearly uppermost in Posen's mind." (Roe, 1999: 189)

Posen argues that groups will naturally be predisposed to conflict due to four reasons:

First, the recently departed multiethnic empire probably suppressed or manipulated the facts of previous rivalries to reinforce their own rule... Second, the members of these various groups no doubt did not forget the record of their old rival; it was preserved as oral history... Third, because their history is oral, each group has a difficult time divining another's view of the past... Fourth, as central authority begins to collapse and local politicians begin to struggle for power, they will begin to write their versions of history in political speeches... these stories are likely to be emotionally charged. (Posen, 1993: 107)

Therefore, for him, the result will be a worst-case analysis.

He also argues that technology and geography will continue to hold as important variables, even at the intrastate level. Generally, he argues the military capability of groups will often be dependent on their cohesion, rather than military assets. Political geography continues to be a factor because of the geographic dispersal of ethnic groups: "Some groups will have greater offensive capabilities because they will effectively surround some or all of the other groups. The other groups may be forced to adopt offensive strategies to break the ring of encirclement." (Posen, 1993: 108) Therefore, all groups may have reasons to take offensive action. Isolated groups, and particularly the vulnerability of civilians, may also make it possible for small bands of fanatics not under the control of the political leadership to initiate conflict. (Posen, 1993: 109)

Finally, state collapse may create windows during which action can occur since the "material remnants of the old state (especially weaponry, foreign currency reserves, raw material stocks, and industrial capabilities) will be unevenly distributed across the territories of the old empire... The states formed by the groups will thus vary greatly in their strength." (Posen, 1993: 110)

Posen's theory, however, possesses a number of both explicit and implicit problems. First, at no time does he describe what he means by the word 'empire.' Given his case studies focus on the break-up of the Soviet Union and of Yugoslavia, this seems to suggest that an empire for him is any state composed by two or more ethnic groups that previously had independent sovereignty from one another. This, however, raises two concerns. First, how can he

explain cases where completely peaceful break-ups have occurred? For Posen, the state merely vanishes and becomes reconstituted in separate states, leading to these windows of vulnerability and opportunity. Therefore accepting the peaceful break-up of the Soviet Union challenges his basic theoretical structure. Further, his seems to be a very limited definition- given that each group would have needed to have independent sovereignty and, one suspects, have that sovereignty recognized by other states and by the system as a whole, this theory would have little explanatory merit outside of Europe.

In the years since Posen's model has come out, a number of other criticisms have emerged against it. The first, as this paper does, critiques it on the basis of the role of government. Saideman, Lanoue and Campenni, for example, have noted that there is a key flaw in this approach: "Because it starts with the existence of anarchy within states, it fails to explain why governments collapse, limiting how widely we can apply Posen's theory."(Saideman, Lanoue, and Campenni, 2002: 106) The second critiques it on the basis of the need to examine group differences in order to understand conflict. Lapid and Kratochwil, for example, have argued that contrary to Posen's thesis, "one would be justified in arguing that the dissolution of central authority was not the 'cause' of the outbreak of the conflict (in the former Yugoslavia)... In short, without an explicit theoretical treatment of group differences, which, in turn, generate the 'anarchical environment,' structural arguments do not explain conflict, they merely re-describe it."(Lapid and Kratochwil, 1996: 115). Finally, the third, while generally accepting of the argument, has suggested that it is only one part of the overall problem. Stuart Kaufman, for example, has stated that hostile masses and belligerent leaders are also required if conflict is to break out. Further, while he does accept the need for a de facto situation of anarchy, he notes that "the neorealist concept of a security dilemma cannot be mechanically applied to ethnic conflict:

anarchy and the possibility of a security threat are not enough to create a security dilemma between communities which may have been at peace for decades. An ethnic security dilemma requires reciprocal fears of group extinction...” (Kaufman, 1996: 12)

These criticisms have led Lake and Rothchild to reform the argument in order to suggest that the security dilemma rests on information failures and the problems of credible commitment, and that the unique problem faced with the security dilemma is when one or more disputing parties have incentives to resort to the preemptive use of force. (Lake and Rothchild, 1998: 17) In essence, different ethnic groups are having to wrestle with collective fears of the future, but, more importantly, it is a future when “states lose their ability to arbitrate between groups or provide credible guarantees of protection for groups.” (Lake and Rothchild, 1998: 8) Therefore, when central authority declines, groups will become fearful and invest and prepare for violence, thereby making violence possible. Intriguingly, they also suggest two points. The first is that state weakness may not be obvious to the groups themselves or to observers, and second that “if plausible futures are sufficiently threatening, groups may begin acting today as if the state were in fact weak, setting off processes... that bring about the disintegration of the state.” (Lake and Rothchild, 1998: 8)

Thus, Lake and Rothchild present a reformulation of Posen’s argument which revolves around collective fears of the future. They abandon the empire terminology to instead utilize state weakness. However, this fails to deal substantively with any of the criticisms leveled against the earlier argument. Most notably for the purposes of this paper, it remains a concept of potential, not actual state weakness- therefore, merely the fear that the state may eventually be weak enough to cease to protect ethnic groups is enough to spark off violence in the present. Yet,

if the situation of anarchy does not yet exist, how is it that the state does not take action? The next section will focus on the role of the state at both the domestic and international levels.

III. The State

The definition of the state that is most relied on is Max Weber's argument that the state is "a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory. Note that territory is one of the characteristics of the state... the right to use physical force is ascribed to other institutions or to individuals to the extent that the state permits it. The state is considered the sole source of the 'right' to use violence." (Weber, Gerth, and Mills, 1958: 78)

This definition is extremely problematic when it comes to dealing with weak states. First, by assuming the ability to legitimately monopolize force, Weber not only assumes an ordered military force- after all, a force operating on banditry would not be seen as legitimate- but the ability of a state to pay such a force, and consequently institutions designed to extract revenue from its population or other sources. Second is the territorial conception of the state. Jeffrey Herbst has pointed to pre-Colonial African states existing without unique control over territory. (Herbst, 2000) But, more than that, given that states are today assumed to occupy a fixed amount of space, if the state ceases to wield legitimate force in part of its pre-determined territory, does it cease to be a state? Third, what if the state decides to use illegitimate force, such as death squads or random executions. Does that too cease to be a state? Thus, we begin to see the difficulties in Weber's definition. The state needs an institutional structure, a monopoly of force, control over all its territory, and to refrain from using illegitimate forms of violence. This appropriately describes what we would see to be the modern, developed, democratic state, and this was the state that Weber was writing about. (Migdal, Kohli, and Shue, 1994)

This, not surprisingly, does not describe the vast majority of states in the international system, and, more importantly, does not describe the vast majority of states where we might expect to see communal conflict. In fact, what we see are two levels of states: those which fit the Weberian definition and would be considered legitimate and those which do not. Mohammed Ayooob suggests that there are fundamentally different factors that need to be considered when dealing with the security problems of these two different sets. Therefore, the following three sections will look at these two different tiers, as well as the problematic principles of legitimacy that the state is often based on.

A. The Modern State

Ayooob notes that most modern states, representing the first tier of states, were not created overnight, rather they “went through a long period of gestation (during which most embryonic and also some not-so-embryonic states were aborted) before they acquired the functional capacities as well as the legitimacy they have today in the eyes of the populace that they encompass territorially and over which they preside institutionally.”(Ayooob, 1991: 266)

For Charles Tilly, the modern state became dominant because it was the most successful form of organization to fight wars. For him, men who controlled concentrated means of coercion would try to extend their power over other groups: “When they encountered no one with comparable control of coercion, they conquered; when they met rivals, they made war.” (Tilly, 1992: 14) Expansion could not continue indefinitely. Every form of organization faces limits to its effectiveness within a given environment, and upon exceeding these limits, rulers face either defeat or fragmentation of control. (Tilly, 1992: 15) Rulers also could not fight indefinitely. Over time, they therefore settled “for a combination of conquest, protection against powerful rivals, and coexistence with cooperative neighbors.” (Tilly, 1992: 15) The state structure was the most

effective at performing these two tasks and therefore won out over other systems (Tilly, 1992: 21): “within limits set by the demands and rewards of other states, extraction and struggle over the means of war created the central organizational structures of states.” (Tilly, 1992: 15)

Hendrik Spruyt suggests that the decline of the feudal system did not lead directly to a system of states, but rather to a number of institutional arrangements which were more viable and efficient than feudal organizations in mustering resources and fostering trade. (Spruyt, 1994: 18-20) He therefore analyzes three cases: the rise of the sovereign territorial state in France, the emergence of the Hanseatic city-leagues, and the rise of the Italian city-states. However, Spruyt notes that by the time of Westphalia, the variety in the types of units that existed in the Late Middle Ages was gradually being reduced, until later only a system of states remained. (Spruyt, 1994: 27)

Spruyt argues that the state triumphed over these other forms of organization because its internal organization had less deficiencies; sovereignty had proved to be an effective and efficient means of organizing external, interunit behavior, and sovereign states selected out and delegitimized actors who did not fit the system. (Spruyt, 1994: 28) In contrast to the state, the Hanseatic city-league did not differentiate its authority by territorial specification, nor did it recognize a final locus of authority. And while the city-state did have a strict demarcation of jurisdiction and externally acted like a state, it was divided internally as one leading city dominated other towns, with the latter always contesting the rule of the leading center: “Sovereignty in the city-state...was fragmented.” (Spruyt, 1994: 153-154)

He accepts that the ability to wage war is an important selective mechanism, but suggests that the nature of institutional arrangements is equally important. (Spruyt, 1994: 157) It was through these institutional arrangements that the state triumphed over its adversaries, through

three forms of selection. In essence, “the agents that make up the state system thus create a particular structure of interunit behavior...unit change imposes a particular structure on international relations...” (Spruyt, 1994: 17) Therefore the first stage of selection was a Darwinian survival of the fittest: those best able to adapt to the new post feudal environment gradually grew dominant. But, by the second stage, as the ascendancy of the state became more readily apparent, this Darwinian existence transformed into a system of mutual empowerment: Sovereign, territorial actors preferred similar systems of rule to prevail elsewhere. The third stage became deliberate mimicry, as political elites copy institutional forms that they perceive as successful. (Spruyt, 1994: 158)

Once a state is accepted into the system, it is unlikely to lose its position. Robert Jackson argues that many “African states are juridicial artifacts of a highly accommodating regime of international law and politics which is an expression of a twentieth-century anticolonial ideology of self-determination.” (Jackson, 1987: 519) These states exist “almost exclusively as an exploitable treasure trove devoid of moral value... Moreover, the typical African state’s apparatus of power is not effectively organized. (Jackson, 1987: 527) Thus Jackson concludes that whereas statehood may have been equated with effectiveness in the past, today, the criteria is no longer that of actual effectiveness, but of title to exercise authority within a certain territory. (Jackson, 1987: 531)

B. State Legitimacy

Consequently, the international system became dominated by states. But, these states are not equal. Returning to Ayoob, he notes that state making in the developing world did not take place in an international vacuum. Rather, the colonial inheritance “fundamentally determined the internal cohesiveness of most Third World states during their initial and crucial stages of state

building and, therefore, the intensity of internal challenges to their boundaries and institutions.”
(Ayoob, 1991: 271)

Thus, the problem with most weak states is that they are often perceived as illegitimate. As Patricia Marchak has recently argued, while “legitimacy is an implied and occasionally explicit agreement on the part of the governed and outsiders, that a state has the right to determine the domestic rules for citizens, to act on their behalf, and to control the armed forces of the country... the term is extremely flexible: what is regarded as legitimate in one context may be entirely unacceptable in another, even by the same population.” (Marchak, 2003: 7) For her, if a government finds itself in the position that it has to rule by force on more than an occasional basis, it is admitting to a loss of legitimacy.

Legitimacy, John Locke argued, occurs as "the community put power into hands they think fit..."(Locke, 1993: 184) A state retains legitimacy by continuing to enjoy the support of the people, a support that may be based on a government pursuing 'higher' and 'nobler' purposes, (Dahl, 1982: 16) through binding rules, or through fear. (Dahl, 1982: 53) Similarly, a state that possesses legitimacy must "successfully [uphold] a claim to the exclusive regulation of the legitimate use of physical force in ensuring its rules within a given territorial area.” (Dahl, 1982: 17)

An existing state that loses this legitimacy may also lose its identity. When "large numbers of people begin to doubt or deny the claim of government to regulate force, then the existing state is in peril of dissolution.” (Dahl, 1982: 18) A government can always be challenged. This idea, too, evolved from Locke, who saw that a state that acts on its own authority, without the consent of the people, subverts the end of government. (Locke, 1993: 187)

Therefore, any state must possess a binding conception of what principles the population holds in common and classifies as 'the national interest'.

C. Weak States

Where, however, does this argument leave those states which are not modern or may not be legitimate? Barry Buzan considers legitimacy, in the form of a common conception of state identity, to be of core importance. However, for him states must also possess two other attributes. A state must have a physical base, some territory that it alone controls. Otherwise, its citizens can never be unique and independent participants in the international community. And a state must have a government as an institutional base for the expression of its unique being. (Buzan, 1991: 64-65)

However, states can exist that do not possess all these attributes. In general, a state's legitimacy benefits from the simple feeling that its citizens believe anything is better than a return to the state of nature, (Buzan, 1991: 43) where life was "nasty, brutish and short." (Hobbes and Tuck, 1996: 220) Therefore, the historical record shows that a state may be viable even if it only provides some security, and in fact a state may pose a considerable threat to its own people, yet still maintain a degree of legitimacy and consequently, of ability to act. (Buzan, 1991: 43)

Therefore, weak states do not fit any one archetype. Rather, they can range the gauntlet from states still in the process of consolidation -which do not yet have political and societal consensus- to states that did not even have a coherent or accepted idea, nor enough power to impose unity. (Buzan, 1991: 99-101) A weak state does not yet, and may never have, a legitimate monopoly of the use of force, nor legitimacy in the eyes of its population.

This does not mean all weak states will fail or cease to exist. States are notoriously hardy, and some have existed for far longer than one would have expected without possessing any of

the vital attributes of 'stateness'. Similarly, a state may evolve. They may also continue to exist through international support and domestic political payoffs. Weak states in Africa have been characterised as 'Lame Leviathans,' defined as where the state has the capacity "to incarcerate its internal enemies, tax international agencies (by threatening to disintegrate) but not its own population, and provide domestic order through foreign-funded police surveillance. It also has the capacity to reward its sycophants with relatively attractive employment."(Laitin, 1999: 155)

What is crucial to this argument, however, is that this state continues to possess the ability to *act*. The state that appears in Posen's and in Lake and Rothchild's writings is the quintessential failed state. A weak state reaches this stage when the basic functions of a state are no longer performed. As the decisionmaking centre of government, the state is paralyzed and inoperative. Laws that are required are not made, order is not preserved, and societal cohesion is not maintained. It no longer creates a unique identity. Its territorial integrity is no longer assured. As a political institution, it has lost its capacity to command and conduct public affairs. And it ceases to function as a socio-economic organization. In other words, the state has lost the right to rule. (Zartman, 1995: 5) Further, as civil conflicts within a failed state increase, the state begins to replicate "the well-known pattern of Hobbesian competition for security in the 'state of nature', where no sovereign power protects fearful individuals from each other. In this anarchical setting prudent self-help may require preventive attacks to hedge against possible threats..." (Snyder and Jervis, 1999: 16-17) Therefore, a security dilemma can begin to take hold.

Joel Migdal takes a different tack than Buzan in defining weak states. He is seeking to examine the capabilities of states to "achieve the kinds of changes in society that their leaders have sought through state planning, policies, and actions... Strong states are those with high capabilities to complete these tasks, while weak states are on the low end of a spectrum of

capabilities.” (Migdal, 1988: 4-5) In weak states, leaders confront societies that are weblike, rather than hierarchical, and consequently “host a mélange of fairly autonomous social organizations.” (Migdal, 1988: 37)

For him, it is possible to still build a strong state. However, “if domestic and international dangers can be countered through political mobilization, gained by constructing state agencies and viable strategies of survival, strengthening those state agencies may at the same time hold its own perils for state leaders.” (Migdal, 1988: 208) Therefore, leaders are trapped in a bind where they often will not take the necessary actions to strengthen their state due to fears that they will lose their own power. However, crucially to our argument, this does not mean that the state disappears. He notes that “in many countries the state still is the most prominent organization in this environment, but its leaders have not established it as predominant, able to govern the details of most people’s lives in the society. The leaders have been unable to transform many aspects of the society according to their liking.” (Migdal, 1988: 34) The result is that the:

Conditions of structural dependence characterizing these regimes leave them without the institutional machinery, economic resources, or political will to address opposition challenges through more accommodative programs of reform. Thus, escalating repression is perpetuated not because it has a high probability of success but because the weakness of the state precludes its resort to less violent alternatives. (Mason and Krane, quoted in Job, 1992: 29)

The result is that weak states suffer from an insecurity dilemma, which Job argues differs in at least four ways from the traditional security dilemma. First, there is often no single nation in the state, rather communal groups contending for their own security. Second, the regime lacks support from significant component of the population, the result being an absence of perceived popular legitimacy to the existence and security interests of the regime. Third, the state lacks effective institutional capacities to provide peace and order. Fourth, the sense of threat that prevails is of internal threats to and from the regime in power. (Job, 1992: 17-18) While the first three concepts can fit into Posen’s model, the fourth can not, and this is the fundamental idea that

within a weak state, it is not necessarily the population alone that feels for its safety, but rather that the regime, too, can feel threatened, can choose to take pre-emptive action, and often in a far more abrupt and vicious manner.² Saideman et al have argued that:

Our view of the ethnic security dilemma starts with the idea that the government of any state is the greatest potential threat to any group inside its boundaries. It usually takes a state's resources to commit genocide, and the fear of group extinction is an important element of ethnic identity and group conflict. Groups may fear that others control the government and may use its resources (the army, the secret police, the courts, economic influence) against them. Thus the search for security motivates groups in divided societies to seek to control the state or secede if the state's neutrality cannot be assured. Obviously these efforts can exacerbate the situation, because one group's attempts to control the state will reinforce the fears of others, so they respond by competing to influence and even control the government. (Saideman, Lanoue, and Campenni, 2002: 106-107)

Further, Caroline Hartzell has noted that in order for successful peace agreements to occur, "The state, not rival groups, must now be vested with a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, must reconstitute political power and enforce rules for the management of conflict, and must make decisions regarding the distribution of resources. Yet, it is precisely these dimensions of state power that raise the specter of the security dilemma for groups in conflict."(Hartzell, 1999: 5)

Therefore, a weak state is not benign or absent when it comes to the possibility of ethnic conflict. Without checks on their arbitrary use of powers, these leaders can and do often take measures to start or stop these conflicts, measures that have not been reflected in Posen's and in Lake and Rothchild's arguments. This paper will now examine the archetypal case of emerging anarchy that occurred through communal conflict.

IV. Somalia

By 1991, Somalia was no longer an example of emerging anarchy, but of anarchy full-fledged, with no remaining vestiges of state power to stop conflict between its different tribes.

² Some more recent work has implicitly accepted this critique of Posen's argument. Lischer (1999), for example, does an effective job at arguing that changes in the strength of the state, rises in oppression, and the unavailability of negotiating forums may all help to create the climate of fear and windows of opportunity and vulnerability that Posen discusses.

Ethnically and culturally, the Somali people belong to the Hamitic ethnic group. (Lewis, 1988: 4) However, they are a population who are broken into a complex clan structure of six different Clan-Families: the Hawiye, Darod, Isaq, Dir, Digil-Mirifle, and Rahanwayn. These families embrace twenty-one different clans, which are in turn broken down into subclans, sub-subclans, and down to lineages and extended families. (Metz, 1993: 71-73; Adam, 1995: 69) These clans were and remain an integral part of Somali society with elders and chiefs wielding substantial power and individual clans claiming traditional territories throughout the country. (United Nations, 1996: 9) It is an Islamic country, however Islam was not politicised, and “Somali sheikhs are not normally political leaders and only in exceptional circumstances assume political power. (Lewis, 1988: 15)

Historically, there was little to suggest the conflict that would eventually break out. The Somali community succeeded in preserving its basic unity because of the relative homogeneity of its society, (Metz, 1993: xxi) even without a centralised instituted authority. This led to both a strong sense of individualism and a spirit of independence, coupled with a government based on kinship. (Hashim, 1997: 33)

At the end of the nineteenth century, Somalia became vital to the European Great Powers due to its position on the Red Sea and its proximity to the Suez Canal. (Lewis, 1988: 40-41) Therefore, Great Britain, France and Italy partitioned its territory into five parts. (Hashim, 1995: 47-48) Somalia remained so divided until it gained its independence in 1960, when the British and Italian Somalilands were combined into one independent Somali republic. For nine years, it was ruled under a presidential/parliamentary system, which proved to be incredibly ineffective. The multiparty system rapidly disintegrated into greed and corruption as the government and clan structures fought for political positions and state resources: “During elections, parties

multiplied, as organisations and clans splintered; and following elections, there was a rush to join the leading party in order to obtain ministerial positions and other official prerequisites.” (Adam, 1995: 69) Further, financial and administrative incapacity limited the scope of the government, with politicians and politically-appointed bureaucrats venturing into rural areas only during elections. (Adam, 1995: 70)

In 1969, the government introduced new electoral regulations that discouraged lineage parties and encouraged national ones, through which “each constituency was assigned an ‘electoral quotient,’ determined by dividing the number of votes cast with the number of seats available. Only parties polling more votes than this target quotient could gain seats.” (Lewis, 1988: 204) This resulted in the Somali Youth League, the dominant party throughout the 1960’s, being re-elected, with the opposition doing very badly. (Lewis, 1988: 204) This, combined with Somali politics as usual, resulted in the extinguishment of the democratic process:

As usual, as soon as the National Assembly opened, a large number of members crossed the floor of the house to join the government, hoping to share in the spoils of office. The unedifying stampede of deputies left ‘Abd ar-Razaq Haji Husseyn (a former Prime Minister of the SYL who had been ousted [Lewis, 1988: 202]) sitting alone as the sole opposition member of the Assembly! In company with the majority of its peers, the Somali Republic had at last become a one party state. (Lewis, 1988: 204)

This resulted in widespread disillusionment in the republican government, and following the assassination of the President on 21 October 1969, the military staged a coup and a new government was formed, headed by General Mohamed Siad Barre. (United Nations, 1996: 9) Barre initially followed a path of ‘Scientific Socialism,’ however as his popularity waned, he increasingly reverted to playing the clans against each other.

Between 1977 and 1978, Somalia launched an unsuccessful war against Ethiopia in an attempt to regain the Ogaden region. This gave the Soviet Union the opportunity to abandon Somalia and instead support Ethiopia, which had greater strategic significance. Further, because it launched an aggressive war in clear violation of the Organisation for African Unity’s Charter,

Somalia became an international pariah. (Hashim, 1995: 100-101) Most damning for the Barre regime, however, was the fact that Somalia lost the war. Much of the Somalia National Army was destroyed. The retreating army was followed by some 500,000 Somalis from the Ogaden, who would become a seemingly permanent refugee population. (Metz, 1993: 184-186) Far worse for Barre was the fact that the defeat marked the end of Somali irredentism as the sole unifying factor in Somali politics. (Cohen, 2000: 200)

A failed coup by dissatisfied Somali National Army officers led to the formation of the first armed opposition group, the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) in Northeast Somalia. (Lewis and Mayall, 1996: 100) A second group emerged in 1981 after the Somali National Movement (SNM) was launched in the Northwest. (United Nations, 1996, p. 9-11; Hashim, 1995: 103) Furthermore, the war and ensuing rebellion resulted in a flood of weapons into the country, allowing most groups to be fully supplied with their own arsenals. (Hashim, 1995: 104)

The emerging insurrection caused Barre to rely increasingly on his family clans while marginalizing the others. (Sens and Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia., 1997: 71) He increasingly acted like a tyrant, applying “absolute principles of governance, irrespective of human cost.” (Adam, 1995: 71) Very early on, Barre had targeted other clans by systematically seeking to destroy any bourgeois elements within them by either sending them to jail or into exile. After the Ogaden War and the insurrection, he increasingly relied on coercive force:

[Barre] went beyond shouting about treason to bombing villages, towns, and cities, destroying water reservoirs vital to nomads in what he called enemy territories, indiscriminate jailings, utilising terror squads and assassination units, and intensifying interclan wars. He allowed no space for a non-violent opposition movement... At first he used his army to conduct punitive raids, similar to those under colonial rule. Later his troops armed so-called loyal clans and encouraged them to wage wars against ‘rebel’ clans. The damage caused by elite manipulation of clan consciousness contributed to the inability of civil society to rebound when [Barre] fell from power. (Adam, 1995: 73)

He also fortified his position among supporters. He began to use patronage to appoint them to the highest positions, and allowed them to freely embezzle funds, (Hashim, 1995: 104-105) and he rebuilt the Somali National Army with military aid from the United States. (Metz, 1993: 211) This replaced the losses of the Ogaden War and allowed the army to grow to a 1982 peak of 120,000 men.

Barre also began to use the international community to support himself in other ways. He manipulated the numbers of refugees in Somalia from the Ogaden War in order to siphon off food supplies and give them to the military fighting the insurrection, which became dependent on this assistance. While Somalia government statistics claimed 1.4 million refugees, the number over this period appears to have been closer to 400,000. (Lewis and Mayall, 1996: 105) The US also supported Somalia militarily and economically with about \$100 million a year of aid throughout the 1980s.

However, these monies created an economy of dependence on humanitarian aid throughout the government (Lewis and Mayall, 1996: 100) with the result that: “Military, economic, and food aid perpetuated a political system that was not self-sustaining, nor did it fulfil the basic requirements of a sovereign government.” (Weiss, 1999: 74)

During this time, the economy was increasingly in trouble. The Somali government chose not to implement needed changes in rural production or economic reforms and allowed inflation to spiral out of control. Export commodities collapsed and the civil service, paid essentially the same rate as in the 1960’s after years of hyperinflation, became virtually non-existent. (Lewis and Mayall, 1996: 105)

In 1988, the Issaq clan under the SNM banner launched an open rebellion against the Barre regime in the Northwest. The SNM captured Hargeisa, the region’s largest city, and the

government then destroyed the city through a combination of aircraft and artillery. (United Nations, 1996: 11) The human rights atrocities perpetrated by the regime during the battle and retaliations against the civilian population- mainly belonging to the Issaq clan- caused international humanitarian aid to be cancelled, (Metz, 1993: 211-212) and the end of the Cold War meant that Barre no longer had any international military cards to play. (Mayall, 1996: 9) By 1990 this resulted in a cessation of virtually all aid. (Lewis and Mayall, 1996: 105) As long as he received assistance, Barre was able to manipulate the situation in Somalia so that he was able to maintain power.

In 1989, Barre realised that he could no longer had sufficient power to continue to play the different tribes against each other, and sought to open negotiations with the opposition. However, they insisted it was too late (Cohen, 2000: 202). There was little international pressure to negotiate because at the time Somalia was not considered vital and, as Herman Cohen, the then Assistant Secretary of State for Africa put it, “we continued to have access to the port and airfield at Berbera, and the Somali people were ‘naturally warlike,’ so why panic?” (Cohen, 2000: 216) Similarly, in 1990 a manifesto calling for a national conference to reconcile the various movements and ethnic groups is published and signed by 144 well-known and moderate political leaders. However, there was no support within the rebel groups for the move and little concerted actions in the international community. Therefore, nothing came of it. (Sahnoun, 1994: 7-8)

The end of the Barre regime came quickly. In November 1990, Mogadishu exploded into violence when he attempted to attack the Hawiye clan, which primarily made up the United Somali Congress (USC), another factional group that was already heavily armed. (Weiss, 1999: 76) In December Barre was forced to declare a state of emergency in the city, and in January

1991, he fled south from Mogadishu with a rump force after the army collapsed. (United Nations, 1996: 11) The USC assumed control of the city, and appointed several of the signatories to the manifesto to provisional positions. Ali Mahdi, a member of the Abgal clan, was appointed president, but was rejected by other groups, including General Mohamed Farah Aidid of the Habr Gedir clan, the USC's military leader. (Sahnoun, 1995: 9; United Nations, 1996: 12)

Somalia was about to enter dark times. As opposed to other countries where victorious opposition forces force dictators to abdicate and one single armed force, or the most powerful single group within the opposition, can seize power, such as in Uganda, (Khadiagala, 1995: 38) the opposition forces in Somalia had no single group to fill the power vacuum. Further, the complete collapse of the state meant that there was little remaining centralised administrative structure that could be used to assist in state reconstruction and the reimposition of authority and domination. Therefore, even to the day that Barre left power, no single group existed that could even attempt to, let alone successfully, make a claim to legitimacy throughout the country.

Attempts were made in June and July 1991 by the provisional government to hold a national reconciliation conference, but these fell apart after only lukewarm support from the various rebel groups. (Cohen, 2000: 206) The failure of the conference resulted in the government breaking apart into the various military factions (based on clan lines), who then started to fight amongst themselves over the remains of the country.

By this stage, no central government existed, rival militias were fighting over different regions and towns, and looting and banditry are widespread. The SSDF successfully took power in the Northeast. The rival factions of the USC began to fight over Mogadishu. The SNM proclaimed an independent state in the Northwest, named 'Somaliland'. In the south, the Somali National Front emerged out of the remains of the old Somali National Army and was led by

Barre until his death. Elsewhere, several new factions came into being as clans not originally involved in the fighting sought to secure their own territory. (United Nations, 1996: 12) “On the whole, the Somali opposition movement was weak, inexperienced, decentralised, clan-based, and unable to provide capable national leadership and vision.” (Adam, 1995: 78)

V. **Conclusions and Future Research**

Intrastate conflict rarely occurs without the direct or indirect involvement of the state and the governing regime. Job’s work clearly shows that an insecurity dilemma may exist in weak states, the consequences of which are to increase the likelihood that the regime will assume a worst case scenario, that opposition movements and even neutral events are in fact targeted toward removing the regime from office. Posen and Lake and Rothchild have all made use of the traditional security dilemma to attempt to explain ethnic conflict as a consequence, respectively, of imperial breakup or of the presence or possibility of weak states. Yet each assumes that the state itself, due to its weakness, fails to possess agency, and consequently the ability to either prevent or create communal conflict.

By examining the nature of the state, and particularly the differences between ‘modern’ and weak states, this paper has sought to dispel this argument. Quite simply, even very weak states can take action, and it is often the weakest that resort to violence simply because they have no other avenues open to them. Somalia is the perfect example of this. It is a state that has collapsed into anarchy, yet Posen’s and Lake and Rothchild’s work holds little explanatory merit in describing it. Rather, it is the insecurity dilemma that seems to hold sway.

This argument is currently limited. Arguing that the state possess agency in most cases is not difficult to make. Rather, what is interesting is to reformulate the conception of these systemic theories of ethnic conflict to take into consideration the possible role of the state. Too

often, it has been the state that has been involved or complicit in ethnic violence. Therefore, we need to take into consideration not just treats posed by other ethnic groups in a period of emerging anarchy, but the threat posed by the state itself. The state may very well possess even greater reasons to engage in pre-emptive warfare beyond those of ethnic groups, thereby significantly complicating the situation and the opportunities for the international community to successfully intervene in order to prevent the conflict. At several points during the long drawn collapse of the Somalia state, such opportunities existed. But, because of Cold War and New World Order geopolitics, little was done.

In other cases, the state has played a similar, or more active role. In Rwanda, it was the regime in power that orchestrated the genocide, and targeted both Tutsis, but also moderate Hutus. In Indonesia, the state choose not to intervene in, or illicitly supported efforts directed towards, ethnic conflict. These are but two more examples of the wide range of action states may have in situations of ethnic conflict, actions that need to be examined more thoroughly and incorporated into a more robust model of systemic ethnic conflict- one that is not based solely in the intrastate security dilemma, but also in the insecurity dilemma. As it stands, the explanatory potential of systemic theories are simply too limited to be of significant use.

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