

Violence, Extremism and Transformation



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# Violence, Extremism and Transformation

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## Introduction

Political violence and extremism constitute the ultimate challenge to any open society and democratic system. On the one hand, political extremism and the Manichean nature of many of its ideological currents stand in direct opposition to the bargaining and accommodation inherent to democratic processes. Countries undergoing democratization and liberalization are especially vulnerable here. Bringing extremist protagonists into the fold of a comprehensive reform effort may prove complex, exhausting and, at the end of the day, futile or counter-productive. Excluding extremists, however, might hand them exactly the legitimacy they need to gather popular support for the use of violence. Political violence, on the other hand, being a threat to the life and well-being of every citizen, raises the stakes for political decision-makers and engaged citizens. By intimidating and polarizing the public, political violence saps the will to reform and undermines civil society's engagement. As violent attacks bring greater risks to both lives and resources, consensus-building grows increasingly difficult for advocates of reform.

For the Bertelsmann Stiftung, which—together with the Center for Applied Policy Research at the University of Munich—initiated and operates a network of more than 250 international experts to study economic and political transformation on a global scale, examining close-up the nature, strength and potential of militant political extremists in the 119 countries covered by the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI, [www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de](http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de)) was a clear task. We sought to broaden the understanding of the transformation process by expanding on the BTI's assessments of the quality of democracy, a market economy and political management. Thus, we focused on the main roadblocks to successful social change in several transformation countries: violence and extremism. We asked the experts for each country, who authored the BTI 2006 country reports and assigned scores to a set of 19 criteria and 58 indicators, to respond to three additional questions for an auxiliary survey that was carried out separately from the Index:

- How powerful are political extremists of the respective country (in terms of ideological cohesion, organizational capacity, political influence, popular support and foreign support)?
- Do political extremists resort to violence?
- Will the power of political extremists increase?

Succinct and insightful, their analyses of 119 countries formed the backbone of the study “Violence, Extremism and Transformation” by Prof. Aurel Croissant, the BTI regional coordinator for Asia and Oceania. The study relied on and integrated data from the Heidelberg University Conflict Database (CONIS) and the RAND/MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Database and was updated with the support of Nicolas Schwank. The annex to this study contains brief reports on the state of affairs in those 23 countries, which are—as of July 2006—most affected by political violence.

The results of the BTI survey and the study challenge widespread assumptions and stereotypes about the nature of political violence. The study reminds us that despite the common focus on religious extremism and transnational terrorism, the forms of political violence and extremism vary greatly. Although the perception of threat suggests the contrary, religious terrorism, while on the rise, accounts for not even a third of all militant groups. The study shows that the Western countries’ preoccupation with transnational terrorism is misleading as most political violence has been and remains local in its origin and its area of activity. The West’s disproportionate focus on the Middle East also distorts the picture: As the study shows, Asia accounts by far for the highest number of violent conflicts.

Against this backdrop, the results of the study and the BTI survey call for a sober and more differentiated assessment of the threats posed by militants and extremists. First, if political violence and terrorism are predominantly home-grown (though they may be linking up loosely but increasingly with international organizations) the multitude of local causes should receive at least as much attention as the dangers posed by ideologies exported in the form of militant Islamism. The study shows that in Asia particularly, local unrest led initially to militant protest, which only later developed an internationalist superstructure. The study lists a number of root causes of political violence, ranging from socioeconomic grievances to state weakness. It encourages us to keep political violence in perspective and approach



the subject more comprehensively. Secondly, the study points out the pivotal role political institutions play in fostering stability. On the one hand, it shows the high correlation between political violence and the lack of democratic elements in a political system. On the other hand, it elaborates on the institutional choices to be made regarding the nature of the executive, the electoral system and the degree of centralization needed to increase consensus-building capacity and conflict management. This insightful analysis is coupled directly with the broader results of the BTI 2006, which allows us to pinpoint the strengths and weaknesses of a country's political system and highlight the major democratic deficiencies of a region or group of countries. Supporting democratic institutions and good governance is of utmost importance in international efforts to combat terrorism. The BTI is a key instrument in detecting weaknesses and democratic deficiencies.

Finally, the study contributes to and calls for a less alarmed and more differentiated perspective on the subject of terrorism. Currently, international terrorism is widely believed to constitute the most serious threat confronting the world. A representative survey of more than 10,000 people in Brazil, China, the European Union, India, Japan, Russia and the United States conducted in 2006 by the Bertelsmann Stiftung showed that this opinion is prevalent throughout the globe (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2006: 7). While other complex challenges like poverty or environmental destruction came in second and third with 44 percent each, more than half of those interviewed held that terrorist activities posed the greatest danger to global development. This illustrates the degree to which a number of shocking events like the 9/11 attacks or the London and Madrid bombings have captured public concern. But as other sober studies also warn, "international terrorism is actually a relatively minor threat when compared to other more serious global trends" (Oxford Research Group 2006: 4).

It is my hope that this study will encourage its readers to treat political violence and extremism not in an isolated fashion, but link them to the very global challenges from poverty to state failure which are decisive for the evolution of militant protest.

*Prof. Dr. Werner Weidenfeld*

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## Violence, Extremism and Transformation Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2006 Findings

*Aurel Croissant, Nicolas Schwank<sup>1</sup>*

Since 2001, political extremism and violence have been on the forefront of political agendas throughout the world. The tragic events of September 11 made it dramatically clear that civil strife and disrupted states threaten not only humanitarian concerns, but regional and global security as well. Since then, extremely violent transnational terrorism has become a key focus of policymakers and researchers. Recent events such as the London bombings in July 2005 suggest that the topic will rank high on the political agenda for many years to come. Even under highly optimistic counterterrorism scenarios, terrorism is likely to remain a significant threat in the near future.

Given the recent focus on transnational terrorism and religious extremism among Western policymakers, media and scholars, it is important to note that the forms of political extremism faced in most regions vary greatly. These different forms pose different threats, ranging from militant protest to open insurgency, from nationalist separatism and resource wars to state repression, electoral violence and violence in the gray zone between organized crime and politics. Although the amount of attention given to transnational religious terrorism indicates otherwise, this form of terrorism has not been the driving force behind much of the violence witnessed since the end of the Cold War. Most of the world's violent events during this era have been linked, rather, to political developments in the Palestinian territories, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, Colombia and other zones of protracted conflict.

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A study conducted in conjunction with the Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2006 (BTI 2006) on political extremism and violence addresses current debates about military and non-military aspects of counterterrorism, peace-building, post-conflict reconstruction, and stabilization in disrupted states and countries torn apart by civil strife. The following report summarizes the findings of this BTI study and those of the country reports used in assessing and ranking governance in the Bertelsmann Transformation Index.<sup>2</sup> Data provided by the BTI 2006 study have been supplemented by data from the Heidelberg University Conflict Database CONIS and the RAND/MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Database.<sup>3</sup>

Though the Bertelsmann study itself deals with political extremism and violence in general, this report differentiates, when appropriate, between political violence and conflict in general and terrorism as a subset of political extremism and violence. The sections on terrorism deal primarily or exclusively with forms and incidents of non-state terrorism. While the authors of this report are well aware that states also may use terrorist means to control dissent and eliminate opposition (especially, but not exclusively, in harsh autocratic regimes), there is almost complete lack of systematic and comparable data on this phenomenon—a weakness from which terrorism studies as a research field has been suffering since its beginnings (Mitchell et al. 1986). The sections on political conflict and violence in general covers conflicts in which state actors—governments, state agents or surrogate agents such as paramilitary militias, death squads etc.—as well as non-state actors are involved.

There are six key findings:

1. In the 119 countries surveyed by the BTI 2006, the total number of inter- and intrastate conflicts increased and the number of extremely violent conflicts declined. BTI data show that for the
- 2 The Bertelsmann Transformation Index examines and evaluates development and transformation processes in 119 countries. Each country is assessed both qualitatively and quantitatively in reports written by two experts, one internal and one external; these reports are used to establish a ranking for political management (Management Index) and a ranking for the state of a market-based democracy in a given country (Status Index). An additional study assessing the state of political extremism and violence in each of these countries was carried out simultaneously with the BTI 2006.
- 3 CONIS is a new database based on the KOSIMO conflict database and the Conflict-barometer of the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research.

- period 2003–2005, the key zones of intrastate conflict remain Asia and Oceania, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). However, the global magnitude of ethno-nationalist conflicts over autonomy and secession has waned; repression and discrimination of ethnic minorities has diminished in both scope and intensity.
2. The reach and tenor of religious extremism and terrorism has deepened, especially in South and Southeast Asia and MENA. However, realities of political extremism and violence in most of the countries reviewed by the BTI 2006 differ from the perception of threat that dominates in the West. In short, political extremism in many of these countries is more prosaic than believed. Furthermore, a crisis belt of three areas, MENA, South and Southeast Asia, and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) accounts for more than 80 percent of all terrorist incidents reported for the 119 BTI countries. A core group of states within this belt can be singled out as the main cause for concern in the world (Russia, Iraq, India, Pakistan, Thailand, Philippines, and Indonesia).
  3. While the negative effects of political extremism and violence on democracy and development are obvious, the relationship between democratic regime change and economic transformation is more complex. BTI 2006 findings challenge the view that democratization resolves internal violent conflict. Instead, BTI data show that fully institutionalized liberal democracies alone are predisposed to peace. Countries at some intermediate level of democracy, however, are more prone to intrastate armed conflict, and armed conflict in harsh and moderate autocracies is more violent than in defective democracies. Democracy and armed violence thus appear to be in an inverse relationship; the less democratic a regime becomes, the higher the risk of armed violence. BTI findings also show a similar relationship between the status of economic transformation and armed conflict: the better the state of economic transformation in a given country, the lower the likelihood of armed conflict.
  4. BTI study findings show that there is no single factor causing collective violence and political extremism. Instead, findings suggest that political extremism and violence are rooted in a combination of international, social, and economic factors, the effectiveness of states, and political factors. However, study findings also show that a state's institutional settings are particularly relevant in

addressing these factors. Power-sharing systems of governance, proportional representation and federalism—where appropriate—are better suited to managing conflict in deeply divided societies than other institutional settings. Majoritarian institutions in particular provide little incentive for elite accommodation.

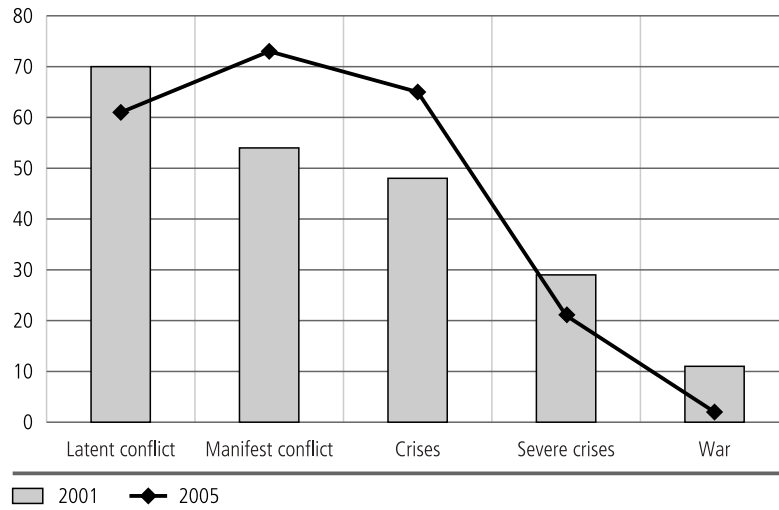
5. Political violence and particularly terrorism confront liberal democracies with normative, political and practical challenges. In many countries, the only viable solution to insurgency and terrorism combines short-term measures of prevention and deterrence with a long-term approach in which political, cultural and economic root causes are addressed. Effective strategies also require that governments recognize the urgency in addressing the disaffection from which both militants and extremists draw strength.
6. Though there are several examples of significant achievements made by externally imposed post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization measures, lessons drawn from other cases underscore some key limits of external engagement. The prospects for success are especially dim in cases of externally supervised or imposed democratization. As a rule, these countries—which are the most likely targets for democratization via international interim governments or liberal protectorates—are unlikely candidates for successful democratization. Iraq is a vivid example of this rule today. While the international community can and must provide assistance, responsibility for conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction ultimately lies with domestic actors, particularly political and social elites.

### **Global Patterns of Political Violence**

The Heidelberg data documents 222 inter- and intrastate political conflicts in 2005 among the 119 countries reviewed in the BTI 2006. The breakdown of conflicts by level of intensity shows a total of 23 highly violent conflicts (e.g., severe crisis or war); sixty-five conflicts were categorized as crises, meaning violence was sporadic. The vast majority of conflicts (134), however, were non-violent (e.g., latent or manifest conflicts).

In terms of general trends in violent intrastate conflict and terrorism in the 119 countries assessed in the BTI, the data points to two

**Figure 1: Global patterns of conflict (inter- and intrastate conflicts in 119 BTI countries)**



All specifications in percent

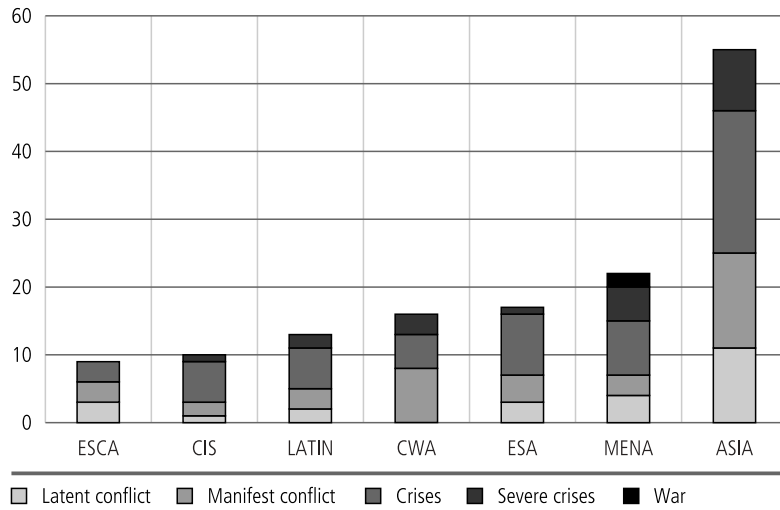
Note: The HIIK annual Conflict Barometer distinguishes five levels of conflict intensity. Latent conflicts (level 1) and manifest conflicts (level 2) are below the threshold of violence; a crisis (level 3) is a situation in which at least one of the involved conflict parties uses violence sporadically; severe crises (level 4) are characterized by the repeated use of organized violence, whereas in wars (level 5), violence is used continuously in an organized and systematic way, and destruction is massive.

Source: HIIK conflict database, [www.hiik.de/en/index\\_e.htm](http://www.hiik.de/en/index_e.htm)

regions in which political violence has intensified since 2001: Asia and MENA. By contrast, the number of conflicts in East-Central and Southeast Europe has declined. In Latin America and Africa, the frequency of conflicts has changed only slightly. Asia was the most sensitive area in both 2001 and 2005, followed by the Near and Middle East and then West and Central Africa, which was the major conflict zone in 2001.

Sudan and Iraq were home to the most violent conflicts in 2005. The explosion of communal violence and religious extremism in Iraq and large-scale genocide in Darfur were some of the most worrisome trends from 2001 through 2005. Other disturbing trends include the civil war in DRC, communal conflicts in India and Burundi, political

**Figure 2: Regional patterns of conflict in 2005  
(intrastate conflicts in 119 BTI countries)**



All specifications in percent

Abbr.: West and Central Africa (WCA); South and East Africa (SEA); Asia and Oceania (ASIA); Latin America (LATIN); East Central and Southeast Europe (ESCA); CIS and Mongolia (CIS); Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

Source: CONIS conflict database

extremism in Afghanistan and the Yemen, and the ongoing insurgencies in Chechnya, the Philippines and Colombia.

Dominating international headlines, these conflicts suggest a profoundly less secure world.

However, the ebb and flow of violent conflicts around the globe underscore positive trends as well. In fact, compared with 2001, the global magnitude of extremely violent conflicts (war) has actually decreased (see also Human Security Center 2005; Marshall and Gurr 2005). Ethno-nationalist wars for independence, which have constituted the primary threat to security and development in the past decade, are in decline. Repression of and political discrimination against ethnic minorities—though still a part of daily life in many transformation countries—diminished in both scope and intensity, particularly in Eastern Europe. Developments from 2001 to 2005 in coun-

**Table 1: Hotspots of extremism and violence (2005)**

Intensity level/ Country	Latent conflict	Manifest conflict	Crisis	Severe crisis	Civil war
Iraq	☉		☉	☉	☉
Sudan			☉☉		☉
Yemen	☉			☉☉	
DRC				☉☉	
India	☉☉	☉☉	☉☉☉☉☉	☉☉☉☉	
Afghanistan				☉	
Colombia			☉☉☉	☉	
Burundi				☉	
Philippines	☉	☉	☉	☉	
Russia				☉	

Note: ☉☉☉☉☉ = Number of conflicts

Source: CONIS conflict database

tries previously torn apart by civil war or genocide (Kosovo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Bosnia) or suffering conflicts (Aceh, Macedonia, Serbia & Montenegro, Guinea) show that peace-building and post-genocide reconstruction is making headway in some cases, despite the daunting challenges and risks of high-casualty terrorism.

A close look at conflict variables during the period under review for the BTI 2006 reveals the recent shifts and continuities in global patterns of conflict.<sup>4</sup> On the one hand, the frequency of autonomy and separatist conflicts has declined as have those variables regarding access to government power. On the other hand, the number of conflicts in which political extremists aim to create a political order legitimized by religion is increasing. Conflicts in which ethno-nationalist, economic and power-related interests are heavily intertwined are also on the rise.

Minority conflicts, although mostly non-violent, shape the patterns of conflict in Eastern Europe. In West and Central Africa, conflicts over access to political power and the exploitation of economic

<sup>4</sup> CONIS permits a coding of conflicts according to several different variables. Some conflicts thus appear more than once.

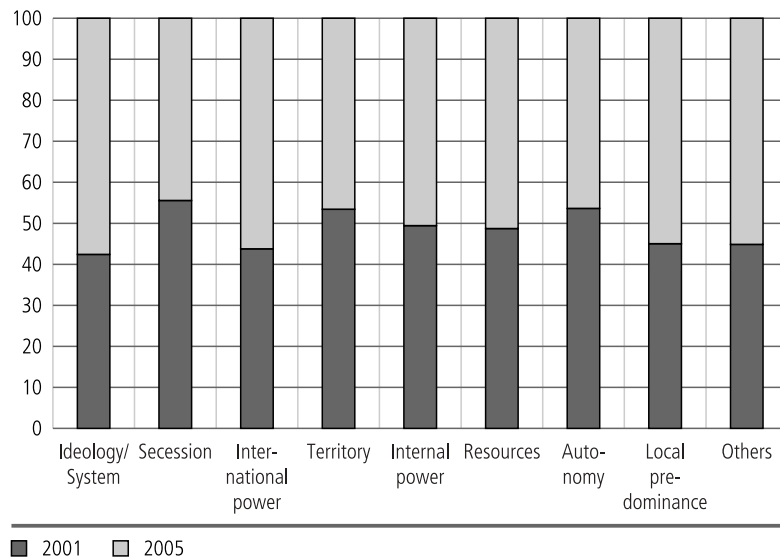


resources overshadow other sources of conflict. Differences in political ideologies are an exception and show no strong effect on the broader patterns of conflict in this region.

As noted above, the number of extremely violent conflicts (e.g., severe crisis and war) is declining. This downward trend is visible in all categories of conflict variables.

While extremists in South and East Africa do not generally use violence to achieve their ideological objectives, political extremism could, in the future, pose a credible security threat in some of the region's countries. Rebel movements in Angola and Ethiopia, for example, do not currently threaten the stability of state systems. In Uganda, nearly two decades of civil war between government troops and the vaguely Christian-fundamentalist Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) have created a humanitarian disaster in the north. Whereas a number of rebel groups have demonstrated the capacity to bring about instability in the outlying provinces, the government has effec-

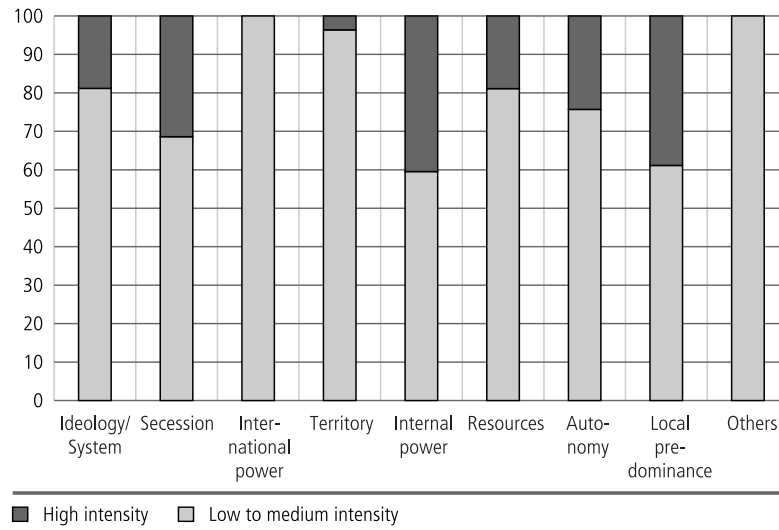
**Figure 3: Global patterns of conflict variables, 2001 and 2005**



All specifications in percent

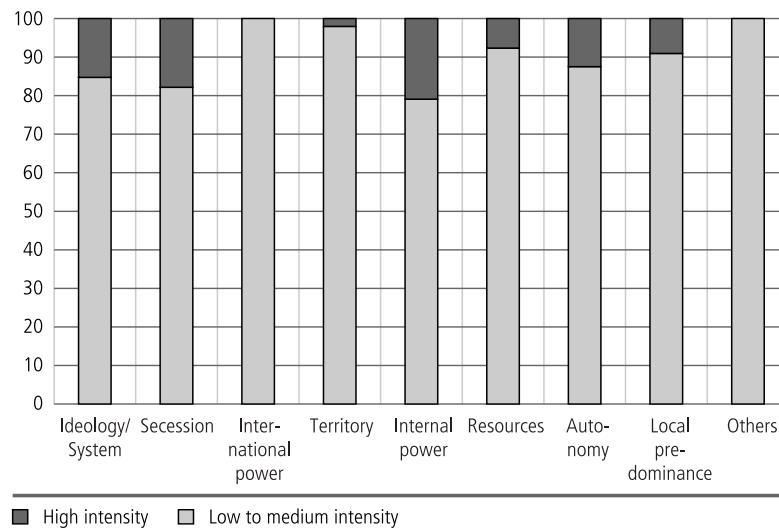
Source: CONIS conflict database

**Figure 4a: Global pattern of conflict variables by conflict intensity (2001)**



Source: CONIS conflict database

**Figure 4b: Global pattern of conflict variables by conflict intensity (2005)**



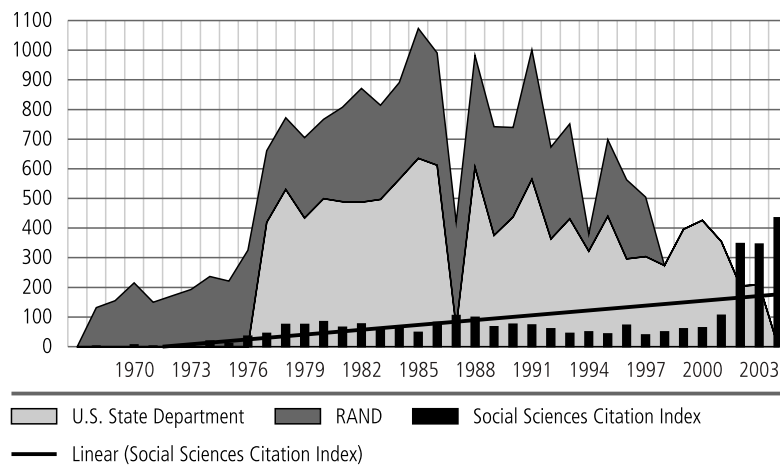
Source: CONIS conflict database

tively confronted these insurgencies by means of negotiation, foreign diplomacy and the use of forceful counterinsurgency strategies (Manning 2005). In Zimbabwe, President Mugabe’s rule increasingly resembles state terrorism directed at the opposition and the Ndebele. Although presently unlikely, continued government repression may in the long run lead to some opposition groups responding with counter-violence.

### Global Patterns of Terrorism

CONIS data encompasses political conflicts and violence in general, but does not distinguish modes of violence such as guerrilla warfare and terrorism. This data is therefore of limited value when analyzing

**Figure 5: Waves of terrorist activities and publication cycles of terrorism studies (1968–2004)**



Notes: RAND and U.S. State Department: number of terrorist incidents per year. Social Sciences Citation Index: Inquiry TS = (terrorism\*), publications registered in the Index, 1968 to Dec. 2004

Source: Authors’ calculation of data from U.S. Department of State, Patterns of Global Terrorism, www.state.gov [accessed January 5, 2005] and RAND-St. Andrews Chronology of International Terrorism, 1968–2000, cited in Bruno S. Frey and Simon Luechinger, Measuring Terrorism, Institute for Empirical Research in Economics, University of Zurich, Working Paper Series, WP 171, October 2003; Social Sciences Citation Index, 1968 to 2004 ISI Web of Knowledge [accessed September 5, 2005].

recent terrorism trends in the 119 BTI countries. For the purposes of this report, terrorism is conceived as a particular subtype or mode of violence in which parties engage in unconventional armed conflict.

Terrorism as a research field has a long tradition among conflict studies. The various “waves” of terrorist activities around the world have had a clear effect on the ebbs and flows of the subject’s scholarly attention. The correlation of U.S. State Department and Rand Corporation incidence data and entries for “terrorism” in the Social Sciences Citation Index illustrates that the events of September 11 have triggered a phenomenal boom in terrorism studies.

Despite the sharp rise in the number of professional publications on terrorism since 2002, there is little agreement on the meaning of the term among political scientists, sociologists, psychologists and criminologists. The events of September 11 have only added to the general confusion and reinforced a tendency, particularly on the part of policymakers and the media, to use terrorism as an umbrella term for a wide range of violent activities—from the criminal to the punitive—as well as for various forms of political extremism and asymmetrical warfare (Stepanova 2003: 3; Kapitan and Schulte 2002: 172).

As both a normative and analytical term, terrorism has proven difficult to define since the inception of its study (Schmid and Jongmann 1988; Crenshaw 2000: 406; Pfahl-Traughber 2004). Indeed, there are virtually hundreds of definitions for terrorism. Because of its negative connotations, terrorists tend to avoid the term, whereas authoritarian governments in particular often try to link their opponents to terrorism in order to deprive them of international sympathy and domestic legitimacy. A “grey area phenomenon” that can refer to insurgency, guerrilla warfare and/or crime, terrorism defies a precise definition (Chalk 1997). Paul Wilkinson (2005: 1–2), for example, notes that “a major characteristic of contemporary ethnic insurgencies is the widespread use of terror both by the insurgents and by the counterinsurgent regime and military and paramilitary forces ranged against them.”

The most common means of defining terrorism—a government labeling a specific enemy of the state—is arbitrary and a matter of political intention and will. Clearly, this approach is less than satisfactory. There does, however, appear to be some de facto consensus among many terrorism scholars, which allows us to define the term’s core more precisely, although peripheral elements of definition may

vary. For example, in a recent literature review, Weinberg, Pedahzur and Hirsch-Hoefler (2004) cited 73 different definitions of terrorism, from which the authors isolated eight recurring elements. Weinberg et al. provide the following “consensus definition” of terrorism based on their survey: “Terrorism is a politically motivated tactic involving the threat or use of force or violence in which the pursuit of publicity plays a significant role. This “consensus” definition stresses terrorism as an activity, a method of conduct, over the psychological.” (Weinberg, Pedahzur and Hirsch-Hoefler 2004: 782); it is close to the most standard definition of terrorism provided by Kapitan and Schulte: “Terrorism is the use of violence or force, or the threat of such, directed upon innocents, civilians, or noncombatants, in order to achieve political objectives.” (Kapitan and Schulte 2002: 173)<sup>5</sup>

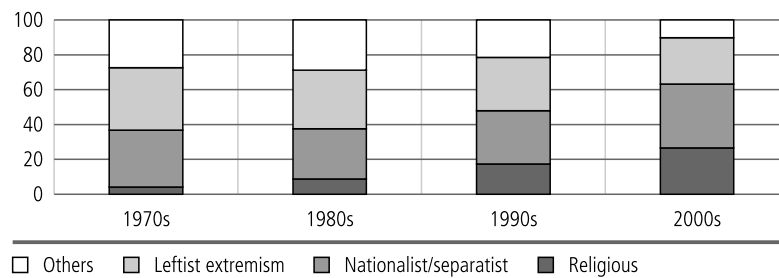
Studies of terrorism identify three general patterns of modern terrorism. Firstly, most scholars agree that terrorism occurs in waves. According to David Rapoport, there have been four successive, overlapping, major waves of terror since the 1880s (Rapoport 2001: 419; Rapoport 2004). The beginning of each is characterized by the rise of a new form of terrorism and, simultaneously, a significant increase in terrorist activities. While the first wave from the 1880s to 1910s marked the high point of European revolutionary anarchism, the second wave from the 1920s to 1960s may be labeled the era of “nationalist terrorism.” A third wave of revolutionary left-wing terrorism began in the mid-1960s and crested toward the end of the 1970s. When the third wave began to ebb in the 1980s and revolutionary terrorists faced defeat in one country after another, a new religion-based extremist movement began to emerge. Shiite terrorists introduced the dramatic new tactic of suicide bombings, which inspired several other groups, even secular groups such as the LTTE in Sri Lanka (cf. Pedahzur 2004). Terrorists from other religious groups, such as the Sikhs in the Punjab, Jewish terrorists in Israel and the Aum Shinrikyo sect in Japan began to take action as well. Islam, however, appa-

5 Very general, both of these definitions suffer from unclear parameters. Both definitions exclude, a priori, overt military actions or systematic repression on the part of governments leading up to mass murder. However, Kapitan and Schulte’s definition does distinguish between combatants and non-combatants as targets of violence, which allows us to discriminate between terrorism and other forms of guerilla warfare. Kapitan and Schulte’s definition of terrorism is therefore the working definition used in this report.

rently produced the most active religious groups with the greatest lethality (Rapoport 2004: 61).

Secondly, many observers hold that parallel to the fourth wave of terrorism “religious-oriented terrorism is (...) supplanting the earlier ethnic and ideological forms of terrorism” (Schmid 2004: 210). While religious terrorism is nothing new—its historical precedents date back as far as ancient Israel—the multitude of these groups is (Robins and Post 1997). In fact, a look at the RAND/MIPT data set shows a clear decline in ideologically motivated terrorism and a rise in religious terrorism. The following figure (Fig. 6) shows that terrorist

**Figure 6: The rise of religious terrorism, 1970s–2004**



All specifications in percent of active groups

Notes: Only groups responsible for a minimum of two domestic or international incidents were counted. Within each decade, only groups responsible for at least one attack were counted.

*RAND/MIPT definition of terrorist group:* A collection of individuals belonging to an autonomous non-state or subnational revolutionary or anti-governmental movement who are dedicated to the use of violence to achieve their objectives. Such an entity is seen as having at least some structural as well as a command and control apparatus that, no matter how loose or flexible, nonetheless provides an overall organizational framework and general strategic direction. This definition is meant to include contemporary religion-motivated and apocalyptic groups and other movements that seek theological justification or divine sanction for their acts of violence.

The Rand-MIPT Terrorism incident database is divided into two different data sets. The incidents collected 1968–1998 account for international terrorism only. The more recent data (2001 to present) include both international and domestic incidents. Domestic terrorism: incidents perpetrated by local nationals against a purely domestic target. International terrorism: incidents in which terrorists attack their targets abroad, select domestic targets associated with a foreign state, or create an international incident by attacking airline passengers, personnel or equipment.

1970s, N = 95; 1980s, N = 115; 1990s, N = 118; 2000s, N = 98.

Source: Authors' calculation based on data from MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, [www.tkb.org/Home.jsp](http://www.tkb.org/Home.jsp) [accessed January 4, 2005]

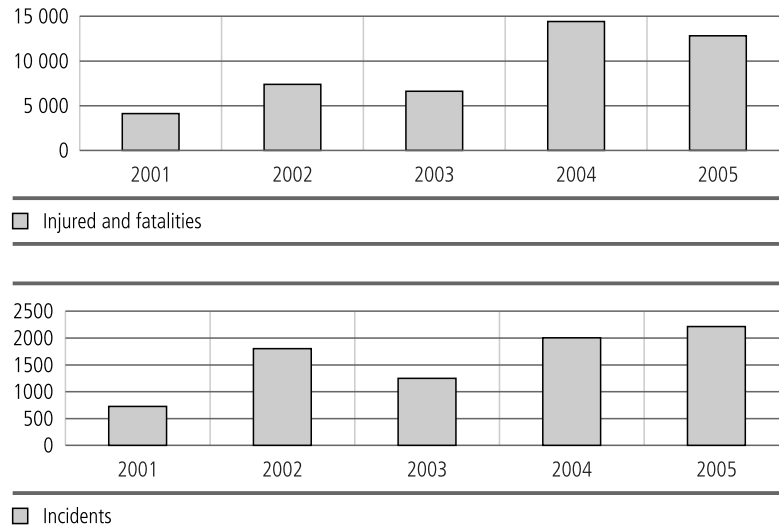
groups motivated by nationalism or separatism continue to make up the largest single segment among domestic and international terrorist groups. Whereas ideology was once a driving force behind terrorism, terrorist groups' motivation grew increasingly prosaic as of the 1990s. The rise of religious terrorism is undoubtedly the signum of the current "wave of terrorism" in the post-Cold War era.

Thirdly, the rise of religious terrorism during the fourth wave is closely related to the transformation of terrorism from "old" into so-called "new" terrorism. According to Walter Laqueur, traditional terrorists were more likely to espouse specific political and social objectives. Generally located on the political left, they often championed the causes of the exploited and downtrodden. For Laqueur, "classic" terrorism was "propaganda by deed." Contemporary terrorists are more likely to demonstrate an intense hatred directed at their targets. They are more volatile, unpredictable, and are less concerned with indiscriminate mass murder and destruction (Laqueur 1999). Violence during the third wave of terrorism was primarily "symbolic violence," or, as Brian Jenkins (1975: 15) aptly noted, previous terrorists wanted "a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead." The terrorism of the fourth wave, however, "has different motives, different actors, different sponsors and demonstrably greater lethality" (Lesser 1999: 2). The greater lethality of current terrorism is closely related to the religious motivation of the 'new' terrorism, as Bruce Hoffman (1999: 19–20) points out.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast to several western countries, many countries elsewhere in the world have given top priority to overwhelming domestic problems over the war on terrorism. Also, many extremists and perpetrators of human rights abuse can be found in government rather than civil society and are often state actors themselves. The cynical abuse of power by privileged elites, corruption, and the scramble for resources by politicians, military leaders and business elites alike have fed and prolonged military conflicts—particularly in the conflict zones of Central Africa and Southeast Asia. In addition, arms trade, drug production and trafficking, and the exploitation of gemstones, timber, oil, minerals or other natural resources have contributed to

6 However, it is important to note that not all observers agree with this characterization of the new terrorism. For a critique of the "new terrorism" concept see Tucker 2001.

**Figure 7: Terrorism trends in 119 countries  
(January 1, 2001–August 31, 2005)**



Source: RAND/MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, <http://db.mipt.org/Home.jsp>, accessed September 9, 2005

the onset, duration and intensity of several violent conflicts, leading to a vicious circle of conflict and despair.

Since September 11, the targeting patterns of and threat posed by transnational terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda and its allies have broadened; out-of-area attacks by groups with a local agenda, but who are loosely affiliated with al-Qaeda, have become more frequent (de Castro 2004: 195). It appears as though some conflict-generated groups, such as those seen in Chechnya and Algeria, are in part supported by the global rise of radical Islamism and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Originally local in nature, these groups have begun linking up with organizations beyond their immediate area of conflict. Although domestic terrorism is more widespread than international terrorism, a number of contemporary terrorist organizations are now operating exclusively on an international scale. Motivated by transnational or transcendental associations, several terrorist groups began to circumvent the limitations imposed by national boundaries in the 1980s and 1990s (de Castro 2004).

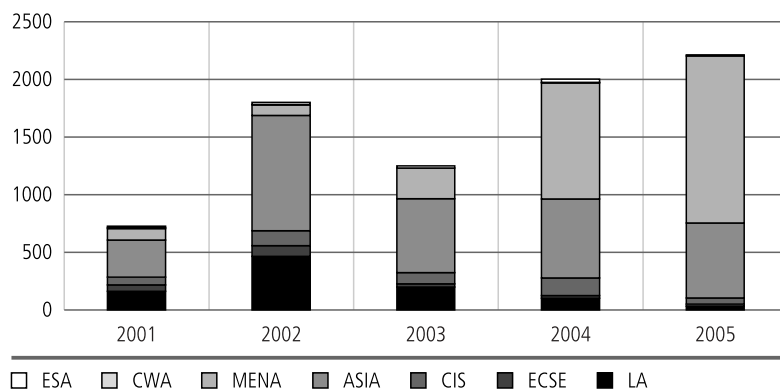


Figures from the RAND/MIPT database, the preferred source of quantitative data on terrorism for journalists, publicists, essayists and social scientists around the world, support these findings. Overall, the data indicates that terrorist activities have increased in recent years in the 119 BTI countries, both with respect to the number of terrorist incidents and the intensity of attacks.

The RAND/MIPT data points to three major zones of contemporary terrorism: Middle East and North Africa (MENA); South and Southeast Asia; and CIS. Further analysis of the data reveals a core group of states that can be singled out as key countries of concern in the world: Russia and Chechnya; Colombia; Iraq; and the two conflict triangles of India—Kashmir—Pakistan and Thailand—Philippines—Indonesia. During the period January 2001 to September 2005, 81.4 percent of all terrorist incidents reported for the 119 countries surveyed in the BTI 2006 were observed in these states and territories. With the exception of Thailand and Iraq, where insurgency and non-state terrorism are recent developments, these areas were already global hotbeds of terrorism in the BTI 2003.

Although attempts by various individuals and groups allegedly affiliated with al-Qaeda have effectively established a “forward presence” of the group’s network in various areas, and terrorist groups appear to have a presence in parts of South America and East Africa,

**Figure 8: Regional patterns of terrorism (2001–2005, incidents)**



Source: RAND/MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, <http://db.mipt.org/Home.jsp>, accessed September 9, 2005

religious or “new terrorism” bears little relevance for virulent violence in Latin America, East-Central Europe and some African sub-regions. In West and Central Africa, for example, Islamist fundamentalism has been posing a significant political challenge in Nigeria and Niger only. Generally imported from North Africa, terrorism is rarely a genuinely local phenomenon in this region. Although some warlords, such as Charles Taylor, are allegedly involved with financing al-Qaeda’s terrorist network, only in Somalia do we see violent religious extremism as a part of daily life.

Warlords at the Horn of Africa show little interest in realizing vague ideologies or religious fantasies. They seek instead to seize political power and control over territories for primarily economic reasons. The bulk of militant Islamist terrorist organizations in East Africa are native to the area and operate with local agendas, often pursuing local, ethnic or clan-based objectives (Piombo [under review]). For South, Southeast and Central Asia and parts of Russia (Chechnya), the ideological spectrum of organizations involved in conflict-related terrorism suggests a continuum from secular nationalists to transnational religious fundamentalists, such as those radical Islamic organizations that adopt Islam as their way of life, but do not emphasize nationalism as an ideology (Stepanova 2003: 47).

While al-Qaeda and its loose confederation of affiliates have successfully connected with local struggles in the Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Algeria, Morocco and Iraq, it is important to note that the genesis of current terrorist movements in Asia and CIS has been predominantly internal. In many cases, extremism has been predating the seminal events of September 11 and is highly intertwined with ethno-religious separatism.

Southeast Asia presents a prime example, as only a small segment of extremists in the region can be characterized as transnational terrorists. Most groups in the region can be characterized rather in terms of the more traditional type of conflict-related or conflict-generated terrorism, i.e., militant groups created in the course of armed conflict (Kadir 2004; Wright-Neville 2004). Groups of this type are most closely related to ongoing armed conflict and often employ various violent methods. In most cases, such groups should be labeled “organizations involved in terrorist activities” rather than “terrorist organizations” (Stepanova 2003: 4). An even smaller portion of the extremist groups involved in political violence and terrorism belongs

to the more recent and still highly contested phenomenon of 9/11-style “global mass-casualty terrorism” (Stepanova 2004: 4).

However, many of the conflicts in Asia and MENA, which began as nationalist insurgencies, have directly or indirectly contributed to the recent rise in terrorist groups, in two ways. First, some Islamist terrorist organizations have evolved from an ongoing armed conflict. Secondly and more frequently, the shifting kaleidoscope of conflicts and their socioeconomic and political consequences have created an “enabling environment” in which local and transnational terrorist groups take root. In fact, terrorist groups in several countries are entrenched within a network of decades-old insurgencies and organized crime. They have learned to take advantage of porous borders and large unregulated areas for smuggling people, arms and drugs, and other forms of illicit crime. Furthermore, weak state institutions, ineffective law enforcement agencies, a rudimentary rule of law and high levels of corruption within public administrations throughout most of South, Southeast and Central Asia, Africa, and even in Latin America create the ideal operational environment for terrorists to conduct “soft” actions such as money laundering and training, raising and transferring funds for specific operations (Croissant and Barlow 2006; Steinitz 2003).

### **The Impact of Political Extremism and Violence on Democratization and Development**

Few would disagree with John Keane’s claim that political violence “is the greatest enemy of democracy as we know it. Violence is anathema to its spirit and substance” (Keane 2004: 1). Political extremism and armed conflict, as well as fragile states and crumbling societies, constitute severe obstacles for democratization and sustainable development. Post-conflict and violence-torn societies must transition to democracy under extremely obstructive political, social and economic conditions, with scores of refugees and internally displaced persons. State institutions are moribund in these societies and political power is concentrated in the hands of military leaders and entrepreneurs of violence. Most post-conflict societies have neither democratic experience nor traditions of constitutionalism and civil society from which efforts of post-conflict peacebuilding could benefit. Instead, demo-

cratic institutions must operate within a culture of violence and intolerance. This is particularly true of countries devastated by genocide such as Bosnia, Cambodia and Rwanda, where autocratic rulers' deliberate deepening of social conflicts has left traditional patterns of conflict resolution shattered and sources of social capital drained (see Colletta and Cullen 2000).

Securing law and order and providing security in these countries is exceedingly difficult. Warring parties must be disarmed, their troops demobilized and reintegrated into civil society. Also, former combatants must be reconciled while anti-democratic ideologies remain prevalent. Typically, peace agreements in civil war countries are the result of a "hurting stalemate" (Zartmann 2001) between the warring parties, not that of a successful "elite settlement" (Burton, Gunther and Higley 1995). Peace elections in post-conflict societies are therefore dramatic events, with the stakes raised higher than those in the founding elections of other young democracies (Austin 2003). As Guttieri and Piombo (2006) point out, timing elections correctly thus becomes vital: "If elections are held soon after the transition from hostilities, there may not be sufficient security for the electoral administration to organize the elections and for political parties to campaign freely. With insufficient lead time, voter education programs are likely to have reached only a small portion of the potential electorate, and so many people may not understand the electoral process and what (or whom) they are voting for."

In addition, if elections are held too early, they may lead "to the elevation of ethnic, religious, tribal or other non-ideological political activities" (Guttieri and Piombo 2006). For example, in Bosnia, rushed elections empowered ethno-nationalist hardliners. In Angola before the 1992 election, and in Cambodia in 1993, the principal combatants had not yet been disarmed and demobilized, which left open the "exit" option for the loser in the elections. By the time the votes were counted, both Jonas Savimbi's UNITA movement in Angola and Hun Sen's CPP in Cambodia claimed that the election had been rigged and refused to accede. Whereas in Cambodia, the political compromise of a coalition government between the winner (FUNCINPEC) and the loser (CPP) discredited the election outcome (Guttieri and Piombo 2006; Croissant 2006), in Angola, the loser's refusal to honor the outcome of the election returned the country to war and traumatized its population: "They taught the population that elections

can lead to greater violence; that they are a less effective source of power than weapons; and that the people's choice is ultimately meaningless because leaders do not respect it." (Ottaway 1998: 150) Events in Angola, Bosnia and Cambodia demonstrate that there can be such as thing as too early elections.

In terms of economic development, empirical studies show that the reconstruction of civil strife-torn economies is a long-term process. Most economies rarely recover within the first decade following a civil war (Haughton 2001: 294). With their ill-functioning markets and an unstable macroeconomic environment, these economies remain void of development investment as long as civil war, organized crime or international drug-trafficking continue to undermine political stability. Most economic and social resources needed for reconstruction are absent, and these societies suffer from the legacies of war destruction, social anomy, underdevelopment and widespread poverty.

A weak state and inadequate rule of law complicate efforts to spur economic stabilization. At the same time, state capacity building is impeded by the politicization and underdevelopment of the bureaucracy and security apparatuses, which are bloated far beyond national security needs. Bosnia and Cambodia exemplify how war-torn countries lack the ability to develop sustainable growth without extensive international assistance. In such contexts, development policy can achieve the desired effects only if its efforts are flanked by measures designed to increase these countries' political stability and security. Extensive international aid, however, may create an extreme type of rent-seeking economy, in which the accumulation of external rents and their transformation into local rents becomes the most attractive form of economic activity (Ehrke 2003: 142).

### **The Effects of Democratization and Development on Political Extremism and Violence**

Countries torn apart by collective violence, political extremism and moribund state systems are the most unlikely candidates for viable democracy and sustainable development. The effects of democratization and economic reforms on political extremism and violence are less clear, however. Research published since the mid-1990s increas-

ingly challenged the idea that democratization will bring an end to internal violent conflict. Many quantitative studies indicate that the transition from authoritarianism to democracy (and vice versa) bears an enormous potential for the sudden eruption of violent political conflicts. In fact, intrastate bloodletting increased dramatically in many states immediately after authoritarian regimes liberalized (Zielinski 1999; Hegre, Ellingsen, Gates and Gleditsch 2000).

BTI 2006 findings show that intermediate political regimes are particularly susceptible to intrastate armed conflict. On average, nearly 50 percent of all autocracies, moderate autocracies or defective democracies are affected by at least one violent conflict (intensity

**Figure 9: Status of political transformation and conflicts**



All specifications in percent

Note: The BTI 2006 classifies Afghanistan as a highly defective democracy—despite the fact that Afghanistan’s index score for political transformation status is below the threshold separating (moderate) autocracies from (defective) democracies—because elections held following the Taliban regime’s downfall were conducted in a sufficiently correct manner.

Source: Authors’ calculations based on data from the BTI 2006 and CONIS conflict database

level: crisis or higher). By contrast, no single violent conflict could be observed in fully institutionalized democracies. States with autocratic or moderately autocratic political systems suffer from politically motivated violence at 56 and 57 percent respectively.

The data also suggests that armed conflicts in autocracies and moderate autocracies are more violent than those in defective democracies. Among defective democracies affected by violence, only four of sixteen conflicts could be considered extremely violent. In contrast, among autocratic states, nineteen suffered from violent conflicts. In eight states, conflict intensity levels reached that of extremely violent. In addition, the only two wars (Iraq insurgency) and Sudan (Darfur crisis) of 2005 were conducted in autocratic countries.

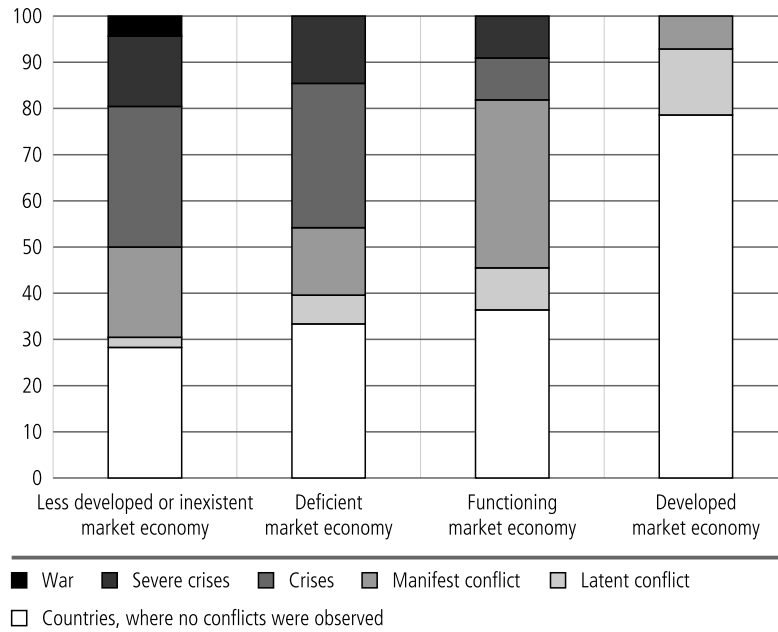
The results for autocratic regimes are quite similar to those for moderate autocracies: twelve states with moderately autocratic regimes have violent conflicts—five of which are extremely violent conflicts. This means that for both types—autocratic and moderately autocratic—the rate of extremely violent conflicts is much higher than in defective democracies. States with a fully institutionalized democratic regime are, as mentioned above, not at all affected by violent conflicts.

In general, the results show a high correlation between the democratic orientation of regimes and their propensity for violent conflicts: The fewer democratic elements to be found in a state, the higher the risk of the occurrence of violent, politically motivated intrastate conflict.

BTI results related to the status of economic transformation point to a similar dynamic. In 2005, fifty percent of countries with a less developed or nonexistent market economy were affected by at least one violent political conflict. Seven states in this category have been afflicted by severe crises, including Sudan and Iraq with their intrastate wars. States with a deficient market economy show also a high proclivity toward violent conflict. Twenty-two of these 48 states have had at least one violent conflict; seven have been confronted with severe crises.

Although countries with a functioning market system are not immune to violent conflict, the likelihood of these countries being affected by politically motivated violence is much less than in the previously mentioned categories. Thailand was the only country with a functioning market system in which a severe crisis was observed. Sri Lanka, also assigned to the states with a functioning market system, is the only country with a conflict at the “crisis” intensity level. Coun-

**Figure 10: Status of economic transformation and conflicts**



All specifications in percent

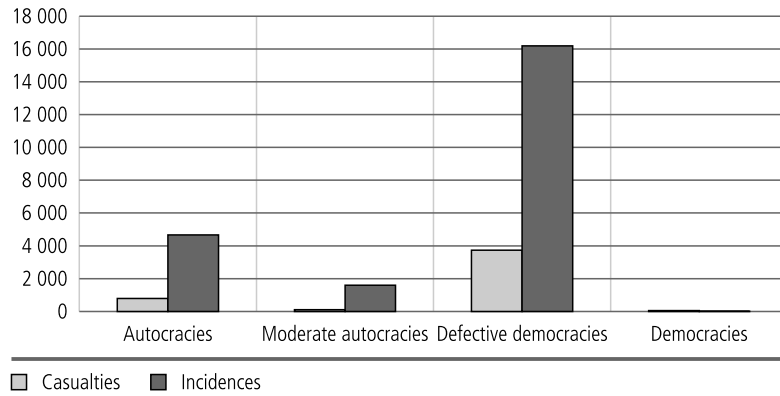
Source: Authors' calculations based on data from the BTI 2006 and HIIK conflict database

tries with a developed market economy show the best results. Not one of these fourteen states was confronted with violent conflict.

A comparison of BTI data on transformation to democracy with RAND/MIPT terrorism data shows that defective democracies are, by far, the most prone to international and domestic terrorism. This finding in part supplements the results discussed above, in the sense that the level of political violence is lower in fully consolidated democracies. However, the lower rate of terrorist incidences in autocracies seems to contradict the understanding of an automatic inverse correlation between democracy status and level of political violence. Three reservations need to be mentioned. First, the sheer number of violent incidents points to the (quantitative) frequency and intensity and not to the (qualitative) emergence of terrorist activities as such. Frequency and intensity, however, might be related to the fact that democracies



**Figure 11: Status of political transformation and terrorism (January 1, 2001 to August 31, 2005, without Iraq)**



Source: Authors' calculations based on data from the BTI 2006 and RAND/MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base (Iraq not included)

generally offer a more conducive operational environment for (domestic and transnational) terrorism. Secondly, the findings on political violence in general are based on event data covering only intrastate violent conflicts, whereas the RAND/MIPT data includes domestic as well as international terrorism. Thirdly, the fact that the BTI classifies Afghanistan as a defective democracy contributes significantly to the high incidence rate in this category.

The BTI 2006 classifies Afghanistan as a highly defective democracy—despite the fact that Afghanistan's index score for political transformation status is below the threshold separating (moderate) autocracies from (defective) democracies—because elections held following the Taliban regime's downfall were conducted in a sufficiently correct manner.

Iraq represents a special case. Due to the recent outburst of terrorist violence, Iraq was not included in the sample for Figure 11. However, data available from the same sources illustrates the dramatic extent to which the country has transformed into a hotbed of non-state terrorism (rather than state terrorism against an opposition and against ethnic groups such as the Shiites and the Kurds) following the U.S.-led regime change in 2003. The fact that (according to data

in Figure 11) autocracies are more terrorism-prone than moderate autocracies seems to contradict the conclusion in the previous section that ‘intermediate’ regimes are more dangerous than clearly autocratic or well-institutionalized (liberal democracies). However, the data simply reflect the fact that much of the terrorist activities in recent years took place in countries in the Near and Middle East. Most MENA countries in the BTI 2006 are coded as autocracies. Furthermore, coding Afghanistan as a moderate autocracy would significantly alter the results.

### **Causes of Political Violence**

The BTI 2006 study shows that collective violence and political extremism per se are not caused by any single factor. Rather, findings show that extremism and violence result most often from a combination of several contentious religious, cultural, economic and political factors specific to each country.

However, this study gives particular emphasis to the examination of the impact which institutional choices are likely to have on political violence and extremism. One reason is that political institutions and particularly ‘formal’ institutions are one, if not the most important, political access point for conflict management in political regimes transitioning from autocracy to democracy. This also reflects best the BTI’s approach of measuring democratic transformation with a special focus on the institutional dimension of democracy.

### **Socioeconomic Grievances**

It is widely believed that poverty and economic deprivation are the main causes of political violence in many countries in the world, particularly where they overlap with ethnic cleavages. However, the role of grievance as a driving force behind political violence is a subject of controversy in conflict studies. BTI 2006 findings indicate that perceived grievances—particularly over social inequality—influence violence levels as long as these perceived grievances are widespread enough to be common across societies and time. Forms of political extremism and violence such as terrorism are never straightforward

extensions of poverty or underdevelopment. Many societies are both poor and underdeveloped but show no signs of terrorism or other forms of political violence. Terrorism prospers in those areas most dramatically affected by incomplete, unbalanced or failed socioeconomic and political modernization. As Stepanova recently pointed out, the roots of terrorism and other forms of political violence as sociopolitical phenomena are always socioeconomic rather than purely economic (Stepanova 2003: 32).

The likelihood of grievances over social inequality and economic deprivation leading to violent political protest is also enhanced by other factors. These include a low degree of trust in political authorities combined with a high degree of belief among dissident groups that the use of violence in the past has helped their course; semi-repressive political structures in intermediate political regimes; defects of the democratic order such as low accountability and shallow patterns of political representation; and state weakness (Muller 1972: 954; Rule 1988; Collier and Hoeffler 2001: 17; Schock 1996).

### **Ethnic Heterogeneity**

Ethnic heterogeneity and conflict between ethnic groups is often viewed as a primary source of political instability and violence, particularly during processes of political transition and in new democracies (Linz and Stepan 1996; Mousseau 2001; Gurr 2000; Fearon and Laitin 2003). Ted Gurr, Jack Snyder and others have argued that political liberalization may provide political incentives for ethno-nationalist political entrepreneurs to engage in political tactics such as ethnic outbidding and utilizing democratic procedures to establish a “democratic tyranny” of the ethnic majority (cf. Riggs 2002: 42–44; Rothschild 1981; Lijphart 1977; Horowitz 1985 and 1993; Snyder 2000; on outbidding specifically, see Rabushka and Shepsle 1972). Similarly, Heller (2000: 485) points out that political opening in ethnically heterogeneous societies “has often produced a vicious cycle in which the ineffectiveness of formal democracy procedures increased social tensions, which in turn trigger autocratic political responses and ‘movements of rage.’” This cycle may cultivate an ethnic security dilemma where efforts by one group to enhance its security have the effect of making other groups less secure. In the end, this dynamic leaves all

ethnic groups worse off as the spiral of escalating tensions and hostility eventually leads to ethnic war (see Snyder 1993; Posen 1993).

However, no direct correlation between ethnic heterogeneity and conflict could be established by the BTI study. Indeed, the scope of political violence in ethnically divided societies ranges from relatively peaceful coexistence to outright civil war. While the ethnic and religious composition of countries matters, ethnic heterogeneity in itself does not cause political violence, armed conflict or extremism.

In fact, data culled from the BTI 2006 country reports indicate that ethnicity is a badge of legitimacy exploited by political entrepreneurs in their struggle for power rather than a root cause of organized violence. For example, the rejection of citizenship for first- and second-generation immigrants in Côte d'Ivoire may well be characterized as an instrumentalization of ethnicity resulting in ethno-nationalist extremism. The conflict between Hutu and Tutsi in Burundi and Rwanda with its extension into eastern DRC demonstrates a similar phenomenon. In resource-rich countries such as the DRC, resource wealth often constitutes a curse as conflicts develop over the distribution of these resources. To make matters worse, this wealth of resources is also used to finance warring parties, which prolongs conflict.<sup>7</sup>

In the terminology of Paul Collier (2003), greed and economic viability have stronger explanatory power than grievance in these cases. Furthermore, in some conflicts such as the genocide in Rwanda, economic viability combines with factors of environmental scarcity to produce collective property conflicts between ethnic groups within one state. These combined factors also diminish the state's capacity to provide economic capabilities for group members (Homer-Dixon 1993; Diamond 2005, chapter 10).

### State Weakness

As much a consequence of as an incubator of political extremism and violence, state weakness enables both in conflict-prone countries (Rotberg 2003). State weakness spans a wide variety of forms, ranging

7 As Michael Ross (2003) demonstrates in his study about the varying role of natural resources in armed conflicts, resources most frequently linked to civil conflict in this and other world regions are diamonds and other gemstones, oil and natural gas, timber and illicit drugs.

from porous and ill-defined boundaries to weak central governments, from ineffective security services and weak rule of law to neglect of outlying areas and corrupt institutions. State weakness can also vary in terms of intensity level, with ineffective government, rudimentary rule of law and high levels of political extremism being the most frequent. In extreme cases such as state disintegration, central authority collapses completely (Somalia and DRC) (Erdmann 2003).

Weak states are attractive to terrorist networks for several reasons. Weak or failed states have feeble or nonexistent law-enforcement capabilities, permitting external or transnational terrorist networks opportunities for relocation, sanctuary and transshipment of arms and people (Takeyh and Gvosdev 2002). Reflecting mutual ecologies, organized crime, guerrilla wars and terrorism are often intertwined and related in complex and diverse ways. “Global organized crime, which increasingly links local actors with their transnational counterparts, coupled with chronic warfare and insurgency (which yields economic benefits to some of its participants) can propel local or regional conflicts into genocidal humanitarian disasters” (Sullivan 2002: 241) and turn full countries into “chaotic ungoverned badlands” (Jenkins 2004). Synthetic nation-states that manifest dictatorial oppression, religious conflict, periodic wars and periodically changing borders are especially attractive to terrorists (Rathbone and Rowley 2002: 6). The decline in state power is mirrored by a rise in privatized violence where terrorists, organized crime, warlords, pirates, rebels, governments and private armed companies collude, thus creating conditions in which transnational terrorism can proliferate.

Yet even terrorist organizations generally prefer minimum levels of law and order. In Africa, for example, terrorist groups tend to use failed states such as Somalia more as staging grounds and transit points, rather than as places where they build long-term organizational and financial networks (Piombo [under review]). These transnational groups find the clan-based warfare and seeming anarchy of acephalous societies difficult terrain in which to generate recruits. Furthermore, moving commodities and illicit goods that fund activities is difficult in countries void of a reliable infrastructure.<sup>8</sup>

8 Gunaratna (2002) quotes several al-Qaeda operatives who state that they found their ability to expand the organization in East Africa hampered by tribal loyalties.

### Political Institutions

Given that political violence is much more the result of a combination of factors specific to a particular country rather than a function of socioeconomic deprivation or primordial elements per se, the degree to which political institutions have sufficiently adapted to the ethnic diversity of a population is very important (Vanhanen 1999). Clearly, Linz and Stepan (1996) are correct when they note that no institutional arrangement is likely to hold together peoples who do not want to live in the same polity. Nevertheless, appropriate institutions can provide incentives that deter the escalation of conflict and increase the robustness of peace in ethnically or otherwise divided societies. There are three basic institutional aspects relevant to the institutional choices of a political system in consensus-building and conflict management: the nature of the executive; the type of electoral system; and the distribution of power between central government and subunits.<sup>9</sup>

Concerning the nature of the executive, the crucial question is which type of government (presidential, semi-presidential, or cabinet system) can lower the likelihood that deeply entrenched ethnic, religious or class conflicts will escalate into armed conflict and political extremism.<sup>10</sup> Discussions about the virtue and perils of different institutional settings for the stability and consolidation of democracy surface time and again in democratization studies. However, this debate has focused primarily on whether parliamentary or presidential systems of government are more supportive of a successful transformation from authoritarianism toward liberal democracy.<sup>11</sup>

At the onset of this debate in the early 1990s, several scholars criticized presidentialism as detrimental to the consolidation of liberal democracy and facilitative of political conflict and instability in

9 It is worth noting that Martin Brusis and Peter Thiery (2005) use the same set of institutional variables in their quantitative analysis of data from the Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2006.

10 In parliamentary systems, the executive authority emerges from, and is responsible to, legislative authority, whereas in presidential systems executive and legislature are elected separately and neither branch can act to shorten the term of the other. Semi-presidentialism is a system where cabinets are accountable to parliament *and* a popularly elected president; see Brusis and Thiery 2005; Lijphart 1984; Shugart and Carey 1992.

11 For an analysis of the effects of presidential and parliamentary systems on the transformation from authoritarianism to liberal democracy based on data from the Bertelsmann Transformation Index, see Brusis and Thiery 2005.

new democracies. The winner-takes-all nature of presidential elections is a particularly relevant concern in terms of political extremism and violence, especially in ethnically divided societies. “The major disadvantage of presidentialism for divided societies is the propensity of the office to be captured by one political or ethnic group. This can create particular difficulties for multiethnic societies” when the office of the president becomes a highly majoritarian device, ensuring almost complete political power for the majority and powerlessness for the minority (Reilly 1998: 185). Recent studies, however, show that a wide variety of institutional factors rather than presidentialism per se influence stability as well as the level of political conflict and violence in presidential democracies. These institutional factors include the strength and types of the president’s legislative powers, the configuration of institutional veto points, the nature of the political party system, the pattern of competition between political parties, and the electoral system used in presidential elections (Mainwaring and Shugart 1997; Mainwaring and Perez-Linan 2005; Carey and Shugart 1998).<sup>12</sup>

Most authors agree that simple majoritarianism is associated with a less effective representation of ethnic minorities and, thus, with a higher risk of conflict. Effective minority representation, however, concerns the second institutional aspect of conflict management: the introduction of an electoral system—rather than a type of government—able to provide a high degree of political inclusiveness and incentives for political parties to form political coalitions that span ethnic, regional or other social or economic cleavages.

12 Quantitative studies on the virtues and perils of presidentialism—for example concerning interethnic conflict management—are also, in fact, inconclusive. In one such study, Alonso and Ruiz (2004) find that ethnic violence is significantly lower among parliamentary regimes than among (semi-)presidential systems in the new democracies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Their results also show that the more fragmented the party system, the higher the chances for the ethnic minority opposition to influence decision-making. They thus conclude that the degree of effective parliamentary representation is the institutional key to explaining why, in new democracies, ethnic minorities rebel. On the other hand, Saideman et al. (2002), Roeder (2006: 32), and Schneider and Wiesehomeier (2005) conclude that presidential regimes endure lower levels of ethnic conflict. Roeder, for example, states that “parliamentary government is consistently associated with higher likelihood of escalation.” Indeed, in countries in which ethnic minorities constitute a third of the country’s population (or more), the probability of ethno-political conflict escalating to an ethno-national crisis is nearly twice as high in parliamentary democracies as in other democracies.

Many empirical studies have shown that the electoral system is the most relevant institutional variable in nurturing or preventing ethnic violence in multiethnic societies. While proportional representation (PR) electoral formulas have a lower probability of group rebellion, ethnic conflict is more likely in political systems utilizing majoritarian electoral formulas (see also Reynal-Querol 2002). Already in 1965, historian and political scientist W. A. Lewis characterized the relationship between plurality systems and ethnic conflict as follows: “the surest way to kill the idea of democracy in a plural society is to adopt the Anglo-American electoral system of first-past-the-post” (Lewis 1965: 71). Thus, proportionalization of electoral systems carries a great potential to pacify intrastate relations, especially in societies with marked cleavages.

Clearly, when federalism—the third institutional aspect—serves to grant autonomy to ethnic minorities, ethnic conflicts can be accommodated. However, territorial federalism (in contrast to non-territorial or “cultural” federalism) is associated with decentralized government. In weak states, decentralization or even regional autonomy may aggravate governance problems, particularly if it provides opportunities for institutional gridlocks and the utilization of state revenues by local elites for purposes of political patronage. It may increase grievances borne of inconsistencies in the distribution of natural resources and revenues between provinces or regions. If the political boundaries of federal states are drawn so as to approximate the social boundaries, ethnic heterogeneity in the federation’s population is transformed into a high degree of homogeneity at the level of the component units. However, this may increase the likelihood of territorially recognized political fiefdoms emerging (cf. Sisk 1999; Horowitz 1985).

Drawing political boundaries to reflect social boundaries can also exacerbate alienation between ethnic groups. Territorial federalism is therefore a double-edged sword. On the one hand, ethnic rebellion and minority violence is significantly less likely in federal systems than in unitary systems (Saidemann et al. 2002). On the other hand, the institutional make-up of a certain type of federalism matters; under some circumstances, federalism may negatively impact other aspects of political and economic transformation.

Overall, empirical evidence suggests that power-sharing systems of governance, proportional representation and federalism (where



appropriate) are better suited for the political management of deep-rooted conflicts in ethnically or otherwise deeply divided societies than other institutional settings. Majoritarian institutions in particular such as unitary state, unicameral parliaments, plurality systems and weak constitutional constraints on executive power provide little incentive for power-sharing between ethnic groups.

In a nutshell, consensus-oriented forms of democracy offer better institutional solutions to problems associated with conflict and violence in ethnically fragmented societies than a Westminster-style, majoritarian democracy that is not only “undemocratic” in tendency, but outright destabilizing as well. Minorities might feel permanently excluded from politics and therefore may withdraw their support for the democratic system. Because of its tendency to exclude minorities, this type of democracy is acceptable under two conditions only: the minority’s status as being excluded from government is not permanent; and the division between majority and minority does not lead to social and political polarization (Lijphart 1984: 37–45). However, new democracies rarely meet both conditions.

### **International Factors**

Most scholars agree that in addition to domestic factors such as intra-state political change, economic, demographic and cultural change, international contexts in which terrorism occurs are also important—especially when they increase the probability of popular support. Ironically, some of the same factors that facilitated the third wave of democratization in the 1970s and 1980s have induced changes in the “enabling environment” of terrorism and insurgency. These changes have, in turn, contributed to the rise of “new terrorism,” or terrorism motivated by religion. Examples of these changes include the internationalization of “successful” techniques (suicide attacks), and the globalization of travel opportunities and communication technologies, which have facilitated international networking and coordination among different terrorist groups.

Also important are the snowball effects unleashed by key events such as the Iranian revolution, ethnic cleansing in Bosnia and Kosovo, the Israeli-Palestine conflict, September 11, and last, but not least, the U.S.-led interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, which have bolstered

anti-Christian and anti-western sentiments. Furthermore, as Ashley Tellis notes, there is strong evidence that the relevance of transnational terrorist groups as international political actors today is fundamentally nourished by the effects of globalization and the exploitable resentments resulting from various superpower actions aimed at maintaining a global regime. Transnational terrorist groups today draw their sustenance and effectiveness from the increasingly free flow of people, goods, capital and ideas across borders (Tellis 2004: 41).

### **Combating Extremism and Violence: The Democratic Challenge**

Although a detailed engagement with the debate over the relationship between terrorism, counterterrorism and democracy lies beyond the parameters of the BTI 2006 study, the experiences in many of the countries surveyed suggest that militant political extremism—especially when culminating in terrorist activities—is confronting liberal democracies with a threefold challenge.

First, the normative challenge: political violence and terrorism violate the core principles of liberal democracy. In liberal democracies, consensus is the fruit of political bargaining based upon a give-and-take process between ethnic, political, religious, cultural and linguistic groups, or lobbies of particular interests. All of these groups recognize the relativity of truth and acknowledge the need to balance various interests. Terrorists, particularly religious extremists, however, have enormous difficulty in compromising, because their “truth” is eternal, an either-or affair, anchored in a demand for everything now (Israeli 2000: 163). An effective terrorist organization, whose operations are characterized by instrumental rationality and which aims for specific world-historical goals, may be difficult to defeat in practice. At the very least, however, it represents a tractable problem in principle. In contrast, terrorist groups that are motivated by truly transcendent impulses, have radically solipsistic aims, and employ unrestricted violence in seeking outcomes that lie beyond the capacity of their targets to satisfy, pose a more difficult challenge. They cannot be placated by conventional political solutions (Tellis 2004: 51–52).

Secondly, liberal democracies are facing the challenge of democratic self-constraint. The commitment to upholding individual human rights is inextricably linked to the principles of democracy and the

rule of law; democracies must combat political violence and terrorism while remaining true to the liberal founding vision of a democratic constitutional order. This said, some effective counterterrorism measures might constitute unacceptable violations of individual rights, civil liberties, and the principle of limited rule (Carpenter 2004; Lawyers Committee for Human Rights 2002). Others are permissible, but pose enormous threats to the quality of democracy if not used restrictively and subject to judicial review. Whereas the examples of anti-terrorism measures in Europe and Japan during the 1960s–1980s suggest that fully established liberal democracies are impressively successful in containing political extremism, and in limiting its political damage (Dror 1983: 70–71), terrorism in new, not yet firmly consolidated democracies can be pivotal in undermining the political regime by aggravating strains and weakening fault lines (Abadie 2004: 1; Rapoport and Weinberg 2001: 2–3). In the past, terrorist violence and state repression in several countries left two basic purposes of the state unfulfilled: security and integration. Citizen confidence declined as a consequence, whereas democratic instability increased, as Jennifer Holmes' study on terrorism and democratic stability in Uruguay, Peru and Spain suggests (Holmes 2001).

Thirdly, democracies must avoid unintended negative side effects of counterterrorism. Because terrorists aim to legitimize their actions, governments, when combating political violence and terrorism, must be concerned with both the legitimacy and effectiveness of their policies (Crenshaw 1983: 32). Violent responses on the part of government to violent terrorist acts risk initiating a continued tit-for-tat exchange that generally inflames tensions and further removes the possibility of a peaceful settlement. Government repression and violence directed toward terrorists tends to strengthen their resolve and facilitate recruitment—especially when the violence used against terrorists hurts innocent civilians (Ackoof and Strümpfer 2003: 289). The net effect of indiscriminate force and repression is to promote recruitment for terrorist organizations, particularly where these organizations are affiliated with a specific ethnic or religious community. Arguments advocating the use of terrorist methods to combat terrorism are not only morally abhorrent, but politically disastrous (Crenshaw 1983: 33). If democracies adopt responses to political violence and terrorism that are at odds with their basic values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, they will lose the moral high

ground as they help create new generations of extremists filled with hatred for the government and democracy.

Though understandable to some extent, the current tendency of many governments to emphasize short-term military measures in combating political extremism and violence ignores half the equation. To be sure, decades may pass before a long-term preventive strategy that clearly addresses the root causes of conflict and terrorism yields noticeable results. Indeed, the scale and scope of the terrorist threat faced by many states today are such that waiting is not an option; we must address the problem as soon as possible. Furthermore, democratically elected governments are subject to several pressures that frustrate attempts to prioritize long-term needs in addressing the social, economic and political roots of extremism and terrorism. These pressures include electoral cycles, public opinion and the media, or, as in the case of less-developed countries, a lack of resources (Stepanova 2003: 41). A viable solution to insurgency and terrorism in many countries therefore requires a strategy that combines short-term measures focusing on stabilizing the security situation with a long-term approach that redresses the political, cultural and economic roots of the problem.

Such a strategy requires a broad recognition in government of the need to address the disaffection from which both militants and extremists draw their strength. Strengthening formal state institutions where state weakness permits an enabling environment for terrorists is one crucial short-term measure. Where this kind of measure appears limited in effectiveness or problematic in terms of human rights, internal constraints on terrorism could be imposed by a broad national political alliance or national front instead of a formal central authority. Externally sponsored state entities imposing constraints on a competing Islamist movement, like an inefficient or corrupt central authority, are unlikely to persuade disaffected groups to cooperate. Alliances and fronts, however, have the advantage of including organizations and groups of concern on the condition that they moderate or halt their terrorist activities (Stepanova 2003: 25). Long-term measures should emphasize social development, democratic reforms and building sound economic institutions. Such measures are absolutely essential to addressing thoroughly the root causes of the conflicts that generate terrorism. However, tying development directly to concrete anti-terrorist needs appears more problematic.

## Conclusions and Outlook

The United States, the European Union, Japan, the United Nations and international donor agencies carry great responsibility in influencing the course of violent conflicts. They have several policy tools at their hands that they can put to effective use. They can increase the opportunity costs of repressive government policies and the violent pursuit of objectives by non-state actors. In cases of social conflict, they can provide domestic parties with incentives to reach peaceful solutions. However, the recent increase in the number of violent conflicts in the world, the rising levels of political extremism in some world regions and various policy failures in the GWOT suggest a flat learning curve among western governments. Despite an increased focus on conflict prevention in foreign and security policy, western governments and international agencies have made negligible progress in addressing prevention successfully. However, international actors have made great advances in managing post-conflict situations, especially when it comes to economic reconstruction. The examples of divergent cases like Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Cambodia, East Timor, Liberia and Sierra Leone prove that while none of these countries demonstrate overwhelmingly successful peacebuilding and democratization, post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization have yielded significant gains in each.

There are crucial limits to external engagement to bear in mind. The more ambitious cases of democratization and state-building under the aegis of an international transitional authority painfully underscore how narrow the prospects of success for externally imposed democratization are. In terms of sustainable democratic development, external engagement can create unintended negative side effects. For example, international interim governments, such as the U.N. transitional authorities in Cambodia and East Timor, bear a double accountability. They are accountable *de jure* to the external principal organizing, controlling and financing its mission. *De facto*, however, the interim government is also accountable to domestic elites and the people of the territory it rules—and for whom it has to construct a self-sustainable democratic system. This can lead to tensions between both aspects of accountability, which in turn can curb democratization. This is particularly true where there is a trade-off between the short-term needs to provide security, establish an effective adminis-

tration and assist in the development of civil and social services, and the long-term strategic objectives of supporting capacity building and preparing a mandate country for democratic self-government.

Clearly, transitional regimes or international interim governments may become stable institutional bridges toward sustainable peace. Nevertheless, crucial questions of ownership, stakeholders' accessibility to public institutions and citizens' participation in the process of democratization require that establishing effective stateness, aiding democracy and supporting economic reconstruction must not become the exclusive business of "liberal protectorates," but a participatory process of partnership between international actors, domestic decision-makers and citizens. Ultimately however, the responsibility for conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction lies with domestic actors, particularly the political leadership.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, ethnically divided societies do not necessarily result in ethnic conflict. The historical record of some plural societies show that conflict may be mitigated with a creative approach in developing social and political institutions that accommodate divergent interests. The quality of leadership and political management is decisive in preventing social divisions from transforming into collective violence. Indeed, there are several formal and informal institutional tools at hand to support political systems in preventing outbursts of political extremism and violence, and in inducing peaceful solutions to armed conflicts. These tools include interethnic elite pacts, consociational practices, parliamentary government, PR electoral systems, and—where appropriate—federalism. Successful implementation of these tools requires management aptitude, able social institutions and political institutional arrangements, and the political will of both governments and non-state actors to seek a broader consensus. In short, good governance is the key to combating political extremism and violence effectively—now and in the long run. This is why the BTI devotes so much attention to the quality of political leadership in the form of its Management Index, which elucidates the strengths and weaknesses of governance in 119 countries.

Finally, we must bear in mind that political extremism and violence are often consequences of a complex manifestation of history, ideology, experience and animosities that have been brewing for decades. When these factors coalesce, tensions mount and eventually lead

to rebellion. To be sure, even the most skillful political management and leadership face a long list of daunting challenges: economic sclerosis; exploitative economic policies that have deprived indigenous populations of a large percentage of “their” regional wealth and government-sponsored transmigration; unequal patterns of development; blocked modernization and fragile political institutions; a moribund state system and chronic insecurity; the transnational contagion effects of civil strife and terrorism; persistent demographic factors that can motivate political extremism; and the global expansion of radical-fundamentalist religious beliefs.<sup>13</sup> Tackling these issues effectively and building peace in post-conflict societies may take decades.

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13 The relationship of population growth to political instability is both important and complex. The age composition of populations, which interacts with poverty and other socioeconomic factors, is often neglected. The vast majority of known terrorists, particularly suicide terrorists, and the vast majority of violent anti-social behavior is generated by young males, who are often unemployed or underemployed. See Ehrlich and Liu 2002: 187.

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