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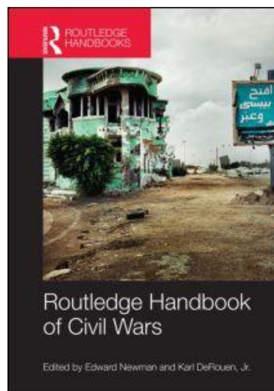

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9

HORIZONTAL INEQUALITIES AND VIOLENT CONFLICT

Conceptual and empirical linkages

Arnim Langer and Frances Stewart

Violent conflicts (or civil wars) continue to wreak havoc in a range of countries around the world. They represent a major source of persistent underdevelopment and those concerned with promoting development must therefore give urgent priority to conflict prevention. Scholars from different disciplines have focused on different factors in order to explain the emergence of these conflicts, such as the role of ethnicity, the individual gain from civil war, relative deprivation explanations and the role of ethnic elites (Brown and Langer 2010). The different conflict narratives and explanations that are associated with these factors are usually complementary and overlap in important ways.

In this chapter we focus on the role of horizontal inequalities (HI), or inequalities between culturally defined identity groups, in provoking violent conflicts, including national-level civil wars and smaller regional conflicts. They are termed 'horizontal' to differentiate them from 'vertical' inequalities which relate to the distribution among individuals. HIs are multifaceted, including socio-economic, political and cultural recognition dimensions. Moreover, it is not only a matter of measurable (or 'objective') inequalities, but also perceptions of inequalities, since people act as a result of perceptions rather than some possibly unknown facts. It is relevant to note here that the identity basis of violent conflict has become increasingly explicit over time, with the proportion of all conflicts that are labelled as 'ethnic' increasing from 15 per cent in 1953 to nearly 60 per cent by 2005 (Stewart and Brown 2007). In the 1990s and early 2000s, politicians, journalists and intellectuals propagated the popular view that the breakdown of multi-ethnic societies and the emergence of ethnic conflicts, in both Africa and Eastern Europe was due to the 'eruption of ancient and irrational tribal antagonisms' (Turton 1997: 80). In non-academic circles, ethnic or religious differences continue to be seen as the major underlying cause for these conflicts.

However, 'primordial' ethnic hatred or, for that matter, cultural differences are generally an insufficient explanation for the emergence of violent conflicts (Cohen 19974). As Gurr (1970: 13–23) argued, discontent stimulated by deprivation relative to contemporaries and discontent induced by unfulfilled expectations, combined with a sense of group cultural identity, are the primary determinants of political mobilisation, both violent and otherwise, of minority groups against the dominant group(s) in society.

The horizontal inequality thesis can be seen as a development of Gurr's 'relative deprivation' hypothesis; yet, it differs from his thesis in important ways. In contrast to Gurr's hypothesis, the HI approach hypothesises that inequalities between any group (minority or not) can be a source

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of conflict and more importantly what matters is inequalities (objective and subjective) not relative deprivation alone. The last point is particularly important as it can be, and often is, rich groups that mobilise against poor ones, fearing a loss of resources or power, and not only poor ones mobilising against the richer ones.

The HI hypothesis focuses on *group* inequalities and grievances. This is in contrast to theories that focus exclusively on individual motives (greed or grievance) for conflict that have had considerable influence (Collier 1999; Collier and Bank 2003; Fearon and Laitin 2003). According to the latter views, groups are used purely instrumentally by individuals. The view that group inequality is of fundamental importance does not preclude the view that individual motivation also plays a part in processes of group mobilisation. In any conflict only a minority of people actually fight and those individuals who participate actively are likely to have special reasons for doing so, such as the desire for security or economic advancement (Guichaoua 2012). A central premise of the HI hypothesis is that over and above individual motivations, inequalities between culturally defined or 'ethnic' groups can play an essential role in inducing and facilitating mobilisation. The HI hypothesis does not necessarily take sides on the greed versus grievance debate: groups may be greedy (for example to take control of the state or of natural resources) and they also have grievances (in terms of lack of access to land or employment or political power, for example). Complicating matters further is the fact that actions by 'greedy' individuals can lead to group grievances, which in turn can provoke group mobilisation and confrontation.

The next section of the chapter will further define HIs. This is followed by a brief discussion on how to measure them. In the fourth section we provide an overview of the evidence linking the HIs to the emergence of violent conflicts. The fifth section presents some policy options for correcting HIs. Finally, we draw some conclusions.

What are horizontal inequalities?

Horizontal inequalities (HIs) are *inequalities among identity groups*.[1] They are termed 'horizontal' to differentiate them from 'vertical' inequalities, or inequalities among individuals or households. Much discussion of societal inequality refers to vertical, rather than horizontal, inequality. HIs can have socio-economic, political and cultural status dimensions.

- Economic HIs include inequalities in ownership of assets – financial, natural resource-based, human and social – and of incomes and employment opportunities that depend on these assets and general economic conditions.
- Social HIs include access to a range of services – education, health and housing – and inequalities in health and educational outcomes.
- Political HIs consist of inequalities in the group distribution of political opportunities and power, including control over the presidency, the cabinet, parliamentary assemblies, the army, police and regional and local government. Political HIs include inequalities in people's capabilities to participate politically and voice their needs.
- Cultural status HIs refer to differences in recognition and (de facto) hierarchical status of different groups' cultural norms, customs and practices.[2]

The different dimensions of HIs reinforce each other: for example, economic inequalities can lead to political inequalities which in turn perpetuate the economic. Educational inequalities (social) are often responsible for, but also caused by, economic inequalities.

The existence of severe socio-economic inequalities generates a grievance shared by most members of the group, thus making conditions ripe for political mobilisation. Moreover, where

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there are also cultural status inequalities (for example, where a group's religious or ethnic practices are banned) not only does this provide an additional grievance, but it also binds the group together more tightly. Political inequalities provide leaders of a group with a powerful motive for mobilisation, and if peaceful mobilisation is not possible, or is met with violence, it can provide a motive for violent mobilisation. Consequently, although HIs in any dimension may constitute a grievance which provides an incentive for political mobilisation, group leaders are likely to be primarily motivated to lead rebellion by *political* inequalities (such as political exclusion), while the 'masses' may be more readily mobilised to fight because of the existence of severe *socio-economic* and/or *cultural status* inequalities (Langer 2005).

While the four dimensions listed above are relevant to every society, the particular element within any of these dimensions which is relevant may differ across societies. For example, land inequalities are important in some agrarian societies (e.g. Zimbabwe), but employment inequalities are more important in others (e.g. Northern Ireland).

A critical issue is the nature of the groups in question. In practice, race, ethnicity or religion often provide the basis for group conflicts. Yet, people may be categorised into groups in many ways – according to geography, behaviour, language, physical characteristics and so on. The divisions which acquire sufficient salience to become the basis for mobilisation seem to fulfil two criteria. First, they have, or may acquire, strong significance for members of the group or for non-members – so group identities arise partly from individuals' *own* perceptions of identity with a particular group — but they are also determined by the perceptions of *those outside the group* about others.[3] Second, the identities are, or could become, the basis for political power and favours. Posner (2005) has shown how in Africa a country's ethnic demography can affect the workings of its political system and lead to a situation where ethnic differences become the basis of power and political favours, which in turn may reinforce ethnic identities. In line with Posner's arguments, surveys in West Africa indicate that people generally consider religion more important than ethnicity in terms of their self-identification, yet they regard ethnicity as a much more important factor in the public sphere, and it is ethnicity, not religion, that is mostly used for political mobilisation in Africa (Langer and Ukiwo 2008).

Identifying group categories and measuring horizontal inequalities

There are many well-known ways of measuring vertical inequality, but much less attention has been paid to the measurement of horizontal inequality. Among the reasons for this are problems in determining which are the relevant groups as well as a lack of consistent and systematic data. Determining the relevant group divisions in a country requires a study of people's own perceptions of identity and of the linkages between politics and group identities. Conflict itself, of course, hardens divisions and the salient categorisations are normally very clear in conflict-ridden societies. But in peaceful societies it can be more difficult to identify potentially important distinctions, and multiple classifications may be possible and appropriate. Group boundaries, it is argued, are made and remade (Anderson 1983). Nonetheless, as Turton (1997: 82) puts it, the power of ethnicity or 'its very effectiveness as a means of advancing group interests depends upon its being seen as "primordial" by those who make claims in its name'. Leaders often aim to create or accentuate perceptions of difference to gain support. For example, Akindès (2007) has analysed how identities were 'marketed' by the media as well as by political leaders before and during the Ivorian conflict of the 1990s and early 2000s.

The view that HIs are an important cause of conflict does not assume a reification of groups, in a primordial way, but is sensitive both to the social construction of groups, and also to their power as a source of mobilisation. Complicating matters in this respect is the fact that group boundaries

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may become endogenous to group inequalities. If people suffer discrimination and disadvantage vis-à-vis other groups (i.e. experience horizontal inequality), they may feel their cultural identity more strongly, particularly if others categorise them into groups for the express purpose of exercising discrimination (thereby creating or enforcing HIs). As Gurr (1993: 3) has stated:

> The psychological bases of group identification are reinforced by cultural, economic and political differentials between the groups and others: treat a group differently by denial or privilege, and its members become more self-conscious about their common bonds and interests. Minimize differences and communal identification becomes less significant as a unifying principle

Does this discredit any attempt at measuring HIs? Not necessarily, because even though socially constructed and fluid, these differences do matter to people, as argued above. However, the categorisation should, in so far as is possible, be sensitive to people's self-positioning (and how others in society position them). And it is also desirable to explore whether adopting different criteria for categorisation changes the results. The appropriate classification can usually be established on the basis of historical and political analysis, and from surveys of people's perceptions of identities.

The second problem we encounter when attempting to measure HIs is a lack of consistent and systematic data. While it is neither possible nor desirable to collect data on *every* aspect of the four dimensions of HIs, it is important to get an idea of the prevailing distributional group disparities regarding the most important elements of every dimension, which may differ from one society to another. While longitudinal HI data remain relatively scarce, for most countries one can establish a fairly comprehensive picture of the prevailing HI situation on the basis of country-specific surveys and other sources of information, as follows.

Socio-economic HI data: Such data are often sparse because ethno-cultural variables are not included in surveys, sometimes because of their political sensitivity – for example, in Nigeria ethnic data are not collected for this reason (Okolo 1999). Working with recipient countries to develop appropriate mapping tools forms an important part of the agenda in such countries, but for the quick assessment needed in fragile societies and post-conflict contexts, it may be necessary to take some other characteristic as a proxy for ethno-cultural difference. Two options are regional data and language. Regional socio-economic data are often available, from household surveys for example. Whether regional data are useful depends on how far identity groups are geographically segregated. In addition to these proxies, there are often local surveys, or even censuses that do include ethnic or religious variables (e.g. Demographic and Health Surveys and Living Standards Measurement Surveys).

Political HI data: Information needed to assess political HIs includes the group distribution of positions in the cabinet, parliament and bureaucracy; the army and police; and so forth. This requires knowledge of the background of the relevant officials or politicians. In a few cases this may be publicly available (for example, in Nepal, see Brown and Stewart (2006); for Kenya see Kanyinga (2007)). But generally such information is not available. In some contexts, political data can be collected through 'name recognition' techniques to attribute group background (see, for example, Langer 2005). Moreover, where group distinctions are important, most informed political observers in a society can readily provide broad trends on important political positions. A key concept here is that of 'relative representation' (Langer 2005), defined as each group's share of the positions available divided by its share of the population, which can be used as a measure of political HIs. For a true understanding it is necessary to go beyond the numbers to an understanding of how the political system works in practice and where power lies.

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Information on cultural status inequalities: is a matter of recording the cultural recognition given to the various groups; how far their holidays, places of worship and other 'cultural' buildings, languages and practices are respected, and changes over time in these aspects. Judgement enters here as much as numbers. Sources for information include the media and local academics.

A third issue in the measurement of HIs is a more technical one concerning how to measure group inequalities in a way that is comparable across countries and time (Brown and Langer 2010; Mancini *et al.* 2008). In developing aggregate measures of HIs the aim is to arrive at a single figure, which is a good representation of the entire population and distribution. While there are some similarities with measuring vertical inequality, there are also important differences. When dealing with a large population of individuals in a society it is essential to find aggregate measures of inequality to be able to comprehend the mass of information available. There are fewer groups in a society than individuals – in fact for many countries there may be only a small number of salient ethnic or religious groups and then a straightforward comparison of means is possible. However, in some countries there are large numbers of potentially relevant groups. In Nigeria, for example, there are more than 300 ethnic groups. We then need to move beyond simple comparisons of means.

A further complication in measuring inequality among groups is that the population size of groups generally differs. Hence it is necessary to decide whether to weight the measure by the size of the group. With an unweighted measure, the position of small groups would get the same weight as those of large groups. Yet, from a well-being and a political perspective, the number of individuals affected is relevant. Therefore, a population-weighted index is generally desirable for comparisons of the extent of horizontal inequalities across societies or across time. A third difference between group and individual inequality is that each group is made up of a number of individuals – so the *intra-group* distribution may be of interest as well as the *inter-group*.

Because of the essentially multidimensional nature of HIs, the question arises of whether and how to amalgamate the dimensions into a single index. This issue also arises for measures of vertical inequality, and a number of methods for developing multidimensional indices have been developed (Bourguignon and Chakravarty 2003; Deutsch and Silber 2005). However, there is a basic incommensurability about the various HI dimensions, so it is better to present information about each type of inequality separately even though some aggregation of the elements within each dimension is desirable. When it comes to measurement, the objective is to quantify group inequality as such, not the contribution of group inequality to either social welfare as a whole or to (vertical) income distribution as a whole, which is a common approach to group inequality (Kanbur and Zhang 1999).

Ratios of average performance of pertinent groups are the most straightforward and intuitively appealing measure of group inequality (for example, the ratio of black to white per capita incomes in South Africa).[4] However, such ratios only apply to two groups, and other measures are needed where there are a larger number. Østby (2003) deals with this problem by choosing the two largest groups and calculating the ratios for these groups. Another possibility would be to choose the two groups that seem to be politically competitive (not necessarily the two largest in population size) in the particular context.[5] However, this would impart a large element of political judgement into the choice. In general, both to assess how fair a society is and to test how far group inequality affects various objectives, there is a need for a synthetic measure, which incorporates inequalities among *all* groups into a single measure. Nonetheless, it is possible that the synthetic aggregate measure may be influenced by 'irrelevant' alternatives in the sense that it incorporates information about groups, which may not be considered relevant comparators by other groups. Hence for some purposes, especially when the number of relevant groups is small, it is helpful to look at simple ratios of each group to

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the mean, and/or ratios of major groups to each other, as well as the synthetic measures to be discussed below.

Three possible measures are:

- *the population-weighted coefficient of variation* which compares each group's performance with the mean and weights extreme observations most heavily: this is a common measure of regional disparities (for example, Williamson 1965; Quah 1996);
- the *group Gini* which compares each group with every other one and puts more weight on the middle of the distribution; or
- a *group Theil index* which attaches equal weight to redistributions at different income levels.

The mathematical formulae for these measures are provided in Box 3.1.

Other measures of inequality are utility-based with normative implications including some element of inequality aversion in the measure – for example, Atkinson's index (Atkinson 1970), which are not suitable for measuring HIs because of the strong element of evaluation.

Box 3.1: Measures of HIs (population weighted)

$$\text{GCOV} = \frac{1}{\bar{y}}\left(\sum_{r}^{R} p_r(\bar{y}_r - \bar{y})^2\right)^{\frac{1}{2}}$$

$$\text{GGINI} = \frac{1}{2\bar{y}}\sum_{r}^{R}\sum_{s}^{S} p_r p_s |\bar{y}_r - \bar{y}_s|$$

$$\text{GTHEIL} = \sum_{r}^{R} p_r \frac{\bar{y}_r}{\bar{y}} \log\left(\frac{\bar{y}_r}{\bar{y}}\right),$$

where $\bar{y}_r = \frac{1}{n_r}\sum_{i}^{n_r} y_{ir}$ is group *r* mean value; *R* is group *r's* population size; p_r is group *r's* population share; y_{ir} is the quantity of the variable of interest (e.g. income or years of education) of the ith member of group *r*; Y_r is the value of y for group *r*; and *Y* is the grand total of variable *y* in the sample.

Besides assessing group differences on the basis of averages it can be important to explore differences across the whole distribution since the political and policy implications may differ according to the size of disparities in different parts of the distribution. Foster *et al.*'s (2003) parametric means methodology is a helpful way of providing summary measures comparing whole distributions.

Evidence on the relationships between horizontal inequalities and violent conflict

Research has not shown a consistent relationship between *vertical* inequality (or inequality among households) and violent conflict (Collier 1999; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Auvinen and Nafziger 1999). This finding led many to dismiss inequality as a source of conflict. Yet, investigations of the relationship between *horizontal* inequalities and conflict provides strong evidence that the probability of conflict increases as socio-economic HIs rise, and that it rises most when there are both socio-economic and political inequalities. Data problems have prevented econometric research into the effect of cultural status inequalities. Empirical evidence

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linking HIs to conflict comes from cross-country econometric work, econometric investigations within particular countries and detailed case studies. Yet not all countries with high HIs experience conflict. For example, both Ghana and Bolivia have high socio-economic HIs, yet have avoided substantial conflict. It is therefore important to investigate when high HIs lead to conflict and when they do not.

It is useful to differentiate three types of conflict, although the distinction between them is not watertight: these are 'communal' conflicts; separatist conflicts; and civil war (Brown and Langer 2010). Communal conflict refers to conflicts between groups *not* involving the state; separatist conflict is conflict in which particular regions seek separation from a state; and civil war concerns conflict where the aim is control over the state.

Communal conflict and HIs. There is less systematic evidence on this than the other two types because this has not yet been widely studied due to data deficiencies. Nonetheless, the available investigations show a relationship between HIs and the extent of communal conflict. For example, econometric evidence of conflict in different parts of Indonesia after the fall of Suharto's New Order finds a statistically significant relationship between the level of inter-communal inequality and the extent of communal violence (Mancini 2008). Similarly, statistically significant results were found for the Southern Philippines in the Christian–Muslim communal conflict that preceded the separatist conflict – the best predictor of conflict was found to be the level of relative deprivation in education among the local Muslim population (Magdalena 1977). Similarly, sociological research in the US has shown that racial inequalities are an important explanatory factor of urban interracial violence (Macall and Parker 2005).

Case studies tell a similar story. For example, in Ambon, Indonesia, previously privileged Christians took to violence to protect their position against a potential reversal of their position (van Klinken 2001) and evidence has shown similar developments elsewhere in Indonesia (van Klinken 2007). In Nigeria (Ukiwo 2008) tells a broadly similar story concerning communal violence in two cities – Calabar and Warri. The colonial era managed and ruled by giving privileged position to one or more particular group(s). In Calabar, most groups were included in local governance structures and had 'relatively equal socio-economic standing, in Warri non-indigenous groups suffered both political and relative socio-economic exclusion' (Brown and Langer 2010: 40). Ukiwo argues that this difference accounts for endemic violence in Warri, while Calabar was largely peaceful.

The case studies show how HIs enter the dynamics of violence. But they also emphasise the way in which local 'ethnic entrepreneurs' are able 'to generate, manipulate and utilise perceptions of such inequalities in order to mobilise individuals to violence' (Brown and Langer 2010: 41). The existence of HIs thus becomes a necessary condition for violence, but the manipulation of perceptions plays a critical complementary role.

Spatial-ethnic HIs and separatist conflict. The intersection of regional inequalities with ethnic difference is likely to be particularly provocative because where ethnic groups are regionally concentrated, inequalities are likely to be more visible, and regions may have distinct histories, often involving conquest, that they can draw on to mobilise people.

Quantitative analysis has shown, indeed, a strong relationship between HIs and separatist conflicts. For example, investigating federal contestation, Bakke and Wibbels (2006) find that the level of ethnic contestation is linked to the interrelationship between regional inequalities and the ethnic diversity of subnational regions. Brown (2008) finds that both economic and political HIs increase the likelihood of separatist violence, but that the effect is more powerful when a variable which interacts socio-economic HIs and political decentralisation is included. Interestingly, for high GDP per capita regions, political decentralisation reduces separatist

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pressures, but for low GDP per capita it actually exacerbates it. The story of the Aceh uprising illustrates the dynamics of the relationship between HIs and violence. Aceh suffered from two sources of HIs: relative deprivation for the region compared with Indonesia as a whole, and an influx of Javanese who were privileged within the region relative to the rest of the population. An independence movement emerged after the discovery of oil and natural gas in Aceh in the 1970s, which were perceived as benefitting the Javanese and Jakarta, but not Aceh, while an influx of rich Javanese that followed the discovery exacerbated the situation. Not only was urban unemployment far higher among the Acehnese than the Javanese – particularly among the more educated – but the Javanese landholdings outstripped those of the Acehnese. Similar evidence of a connection between regional HIs and secessionist tendencies has been shown for post-Soviet Russia (Hale 2000). Some of the separatist regions are distinctly richer than the country as a whole (such as Aceh or Biafra), and some distinctly poorer (such as Bangladesh or Eritrea).

A critical factor determining whether separatist tendencies turn into fully-fledged violent movements is the reaction of the state. For example, in Sabah in Malaysia, the Malaysian state made some political and economic concessions, while in other regions, the movements were met with violence from the state, not concessions (Brown 2008).

HIs and civil war. In these conflicts, rebels aim to control the state or the richer communities take pre-emptive action to suppress potential claims for power and resources by poorer ones. An early econometric test of this was conducted by Barrows who found perceived inequalities to be the strongest predictor of violence in 32 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, where his variable of perceived inequalities combined socio-economic and political exclusion (Barrows 1976). Østby has undertaken a series of studies investigating the relationship between HIs and violence using cross-country data derived from DHS. Her analysis across countries, for 1986–2003, reveals a significant rise in the probability of conflict in countries with severe economic and social HIs (Østby 2008). In her models, she defines groups alternatively by ethnicity, religion and region, and finds a significant relation between HIs and the onset of violent conflict for each definition. Economic HIs are measured by average household assets and social HIs by average years of education.

The effect of HIs is quite high: the probability of conflict increases threefold when comparing the expected conflict onset when all variables have average values, compared to a situation where the extent of horizontal inequality of assets among ethnic groups is at the 95th percentile. In the case of inter-regional HIs, the probability of conflict increases 2.5 times as HIs rise from the mean value to the 95th percentile value (Østby 2003). Moreover, the effect is higher if an interactive term is included between regional inequalities and a measure of political exclusion.

In a more comprehensive study, Wimmer *et al.* (2009) used global data for 1946–2005 to show that countries with high degrees of political exclusion are more likely to experience violent upheaval. Cederman *et al.* (2011) – again using cross-country global data – show first that socio-economic HIs are related to the likelihood of violence and second, that the likelihood increases where there are political exclusions and socio-economic HIs simultaneously.

Case studies also support the view that conflict is more likely *where there are high HIs in both political and socio-economic dimensions and they run in the same direction. Where they run in different directions, conflict is less likely.* Langer (2005) argues that the simultaneous presence of severe political and socio-economic inequalities is likely to form an extremely explosive socio-political situation because in these situations the excluded political elites not only have strong incentives to mobilise their supporters for violent conflict along 'cultural' group lines, but are also likely to gain support among group members relatively easily. For example, Bolivia, which has been

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broadly inclusive politically, has not suffered systematic political violence, whereas both Guatemala and Peru, which were exclusionary both politically and economically have experienced major civil wars (Caumartin *et al.* 2008). The history of Côte d'Ivoire provides another example. Under Houphouët-Boigny, who was politically inclusive, there was peace despite severe socio-economic HIs, but following his regime, there was strong political exclusion with Ouattara denied the right to be a presidential candidate and many Northerners denied the right to vote: serious conflict ensued (Langer 2005).

Perceptions of horizontal inequalities affect the likelihood of conflict

People take action because of *perceived* injustices rather than on the basis of measured statistical inequalities of which they might not be aware. Hence it is important to investigate perceptions and their determinants as well as more objective inequalities, since leaders, the media and educational institutions can influence perceptions of inequality, even when the underlying reality remains unchanged.

The importance of the role played by perceptions in provoking action means that those who influence perceptions, including leaders and institutions, can affect the likelihood of political mobilisation. As noted earlier, in Côte d'Ivoire, for example, post-Houphouët-Boigny there was an active campaign by political leaders to accentuate differences identities (Akindès 2007). In Ghana, Nkrumah himself, the first postcolonial leader, put a huge emphasis on national unity, in contrast to leaders in Nigeria who adopted much more regional perspectives, and this seems to have had a lasting effect (Hagan 1992).

Investigations by Langer and Smedts (2013) and Langer and Mikami (2013) show that perceptions of inequalities do not always reflect 'objective' realities. In a study of five African countries, Langer and Mikami (2013) show that there is quite a large difference between perceptions of socio-economic inequalities and measured HIs among ethnic groups, but that people seem to have a more accurate perception of political inequalities; moreover, their perceptions of socio-economic inequalities appear to be influenced by perceived political inequalities.

Perceptions can be influenced by a variety of actions (including symbolic ones). For example, both Nkrumah and Houphouët-Boigny initiated programmes of investment in the deprived Northern regions of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire respectively with the intention of reducing inequalities (Den Tuinder 1978). Although they were insufficient to close the gaps, these measures led people to believe that that there was an attempt to produce a fairer distribution of resources (Hagan 1992; Langer and Ukiwo 2008). The post-conflict support for indigenous development programmes in Guatemala, while also too small to make a major difference to the extent of inequality, appear to have changed perceptions of inequality, with more people thinking the society is inclusive (Caumartin 2005).

Broadly, then, an increasing amount of evidence supports the view that HIs raise the risk of violent conflict in all three types of conflict reviewed here. The likelihood is more when socio-economic inequalities combine with political inequalities, and when perceptions of such inequalities broadly correspond to the situation on the ground.

Addressing horizontal inequalities

The finding that HIs increase the risk of violent conflict, especially where they are consistent along socio-economic political and cultural status dimensions, implies that the correction of such inequalities is important for conflict prevention, in multi-ethnic, multiracial or multireligious societies where HIs are severe. Moreover, this is desirable from the perspective of well-being,

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justice and efficiency as well as for reducing conflict risk. Such policies are not only needed in countries that have suffered from conflict, but, we argue, these policies should also be a part of development policies more generally, both as a conflict preventative measure and because they will contribute to more just and inclusive societies.

In general, little attention has been paid to HIs by the international policy community. The prime concerns of international donors are poverty reduction and the promotion of economic growth – neither agenda includes considerations of HIs. Although vertical inequality is beginning to be recognised as a problem, there is still very little attention paid to horizontal inequality. The growth-supporting policies advocated internationally consist mainly of macro-policies designed to secure economic stability and openness, and meso-policies intended to support economic infrastructure and enhance the role of the market. Poverty reduction policies are directed towards 'the poor' without any group differentiation.

More attention has been devoted to HIs in analyses of conflict-prone situations (for example, DFID 2005; World Bank 2005). Nonetheless, HIs do not form a systematic part of reporting, and rarely influence policy, outside the regional dimension (Stewart 2012). An important exception is post-conflict Nepal where the post-conflict aid programme included 'affirmative action programmes and strengthening organisations that represent excluded groups' (DFID 2005).

Moreover, in relation to political systems, Western governments tend to give priority to promoting multiparty democracy but neglect the implications for political HIs. While the need for power-sharing is more often acknowledged in post-conflict societies – as in Bosnia Herzegovina, Lebanon and Iraq – wider acknowledgement of the need to rethink the design of democratic systems in multi-ethnic settings is rare.

There is a much higher consciousness of the importance of HIs in national policies in many heterogeneous countries, and a considerable array of policy approaches have been adopted. Nonetheless, by no means do all culturally diverse countries acknowledge the importance of HIs, or take policy action towards them, some because, like the policies of international donors which they often adopt, they are blind to these issues, while others are deliberately exclusionary. Three distinct approaches to the management of HIs can be distinguished (Table 9.1).

- First, *direct* approaches which involve targeting groups directly (for instance using quotas for the allocation of jobs, educational access, or assets). The direct approach can be quite effective, even in the short term, but risks increasing the salience of identity difference and antagonising those who do not benefit from the policy. The implementation of direct approaches also presupposes that beneficiary groups are easy to identify and target.
- Second, *indirect* approaches which involve general policies which have the effect of reducing group disparities. These include, for example, progressive taxation, anti-discrimination policies, regional expenditure policies or decentralisation of power. These policies eschew narrow targeting and are much less likely to increase the salience of identity, but they may be less effective in reducing HIs.
- Finally a third type of approach we label as *integrationist*. In this case, the aim of policies is not to tackle HIs as such, but to seek to reduce the salience of group boundaries. An integrationist approach involves, for example, promoting national identity, and shared economic or political activities across groups (Stewart *et al.* 2008). These policies are attractive in reducing the salience of group boundaries, but they can conceal inequalities rather than reducing them. Integrationist policies are important complements to the other approaches, especially to direct approaches which can enhance a sense of group difference.

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Table 9.1 Approaches to reducing horizontal inequalities

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

Source: Stewart *et al.* 2008.

Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has elucidated the meaning of HIs and pointed to the multidimensionality of the concept. We have shown that severe HIs can be an important source of conflict, especially where they are consistent across dimensions. While socio-economic HIs generate generally fertile ground for conflict to emerge and cultural status inequalities act to bind groups together, political HIs provide incentives for leaders to mobilise people for rebellion. Severe HIs, abrupt changes in political HIs, or when important cultural or religious symbols are attacked, often constitute powerful triggers to conflict.

Evidence in this chapter has supported three propositions:

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

Other factors are, of course, also important in determining whether a conflict emerges. One is the nature of the state and its reactions (Fearon and Laitin 2000), another is the role of local

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institutions in pacifying or dynamising conflict once it has started (Diprose 2011), a third factor is the presence of natural resources, often working through the impact this has on HIs (Humphreys 2005; Thorp *et al.* 2012). However, for the most part, especially among the international community, too little attention is paid to the issue of horizontal inequalities and the policies that are implemented in practice often accentuate them. This is true both of economic policies – such as structural adjustment – and policies towards governance and the political system. Research into post-conflict situations has shown that peacebuilding actors rarely consider the impact of socio-economic policies on HIs, although at the political level, power-sharing agreements are more common (Langer *et al.* 2011).

Future research priorities in this area include:

1. Research into the long-term drivers of horizontal inequalities, including the role of historic discrimination and inequalities in human, social and cultural capital across groups that result from this. This research would involve micro studies of inequalities facing different groups and intergenerational transmission of these inequalities. The research would help identify more effective policies to counter these persistent inequalities.
2. Research is also needed on the relationship between objective and subjective or perceived horizontal inequalities. So far, very little research has been conducted on the determinants of people's perceptions of the prevailing inequalities. Crucial questions in this respect are the extent to which objective inequalities are correctly perceived by individuals from different groups and to what extent perceptions of political horizontal inequalities affect people's views of the prevailing economic horizontal inequalities, and vice versa (Langer and Smedts 2013).
3. Further work in the policy arena, in particular:
   a. More systematic research on policies to counter political horizontal inequalities; with an appraisal of both short-term and long-term advantages and disadvantages of alternative approaches. This research would draw on the abundant contemporary and historical experience with alternative political mechanisms for securing inclusive economic and political systems.
   b. Research into how to manage natural resources in such a way that they contribute to reducing HIs, rather than increasing them, while recognising the complex political economy of such policies. This work would involve in-depth research in countries with a history of 'good' and 'poor' management.
   c. Research into the impact of policies designed to correct HIs, particularly the impact on identities and on relations between communities, with a view to identifying policy most likely to be non-conflictual. The research would draw on the experience of countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, Northern Ireland and Malaysia, which have considerable experience with affirmative action policies.
   d. Research into the design of effective 'integrationist' policies. This is an area where countries, including those that have succeeded in reducing HIs substantially, often fail – including for example, Malaysia and Northern Ireland.
4. Research into when and how *particular* identities become the identity around which people mobilise for conflict. Today religion and ethnicity form two dominant alternative identities often used for political mobilisation. Such research would investigate why one is chosen rather than another, and whether there are any material consequences of the choice in terms of the incidence and severity of conflict. The research would help identify signs of impending mobilisation across different identities, and would indicate whether different policies towards conflict prevention would be appropriate according to the nature of the identity adopted.

5 A final area concerns data. Data on horizontal inequalities are available only very unsystematically and hardly at all with respect to political and cultural dimensions. Given the importance of HIs along each dimension, more systematic data collection is highly desirable, and this is a priority area for additional work.

Notes

1 HIs are broadly the same as what Tilly (1998) terms 'categorical' inequality and some sociologists refer to them as 'social inequalities'.
2 For more details on the concept of cultural status inequalities, see Langer and Brown (2008).
3 Summed up in advice given in 1858 by a Jew in Prussia, to his son: 'Always remember that you are a proud citizen of Prussia, entitled to equal rights. And never forget that you are a Jew. If you do, there will always be others to remind you of your origins' (Frister 2002: 58).
4 For a more detailed discussion of different measures of HI and their characteristics, see Mancini *et al.* (2008).
5 This follows Posner's (2004) recommendation of considering only politically relevant groups.

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