

GPS4008

**Understanding Conflict and Violence: Basic
Theories**

Unit: II

Understanding Conflict: Theoretical Perspectives

(Greed Perspective: Paul Collier)

By

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Outline of the Lecture

- What is Greed Perspective?
- How this perspective see the conflict?
- Who are the major proponents of this perspective?
- Major Arguments: by Paul Collier
- Critiques

What is Greed Perspective?

- 'Greed' can be interpreted as concentrating on the importance of the private gains aspect.
- Greed Perspective is a way to understand the conflict, developed by Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler and David Keen.
- The term "**greed perspective**" refers to those baseline arguments, which put forward by scholars of Conflict Studies, that the causes of conflict lies in the greed of insurgents rather than in the grievances of local masses.

How this perspective see the conflict?

- "Greed perspective" tells, 'argument that involvement of insurgents in armed conflicts are motivated by the desire to make better their situation' is a bit wrong; people are join the conflict by an informal calculation of Cost-benefit analysis – 'if the rewards of joining a conflict are greater than not join'.
- A research (World Bank Funded) done by Paul Collier (A British Economist) argues that after the Cold War economic reasons rather than political motivations have been the cause of conflicts in order 'to grab power and resources'.
- This implies that 'conflict is a methods of accumulation' of 'wealth of the nation'.

How this perspective see the conflict?

- Proponents of the greed perspective posit that armed conflicts are caused by a insurgent's desire for self-enrichment. These motivations are manifested in multiple ways, including economic gain through control of goods and resources or by increased power within a given state. Conflicts started through greed are often seen in states with negative economic growth and/or systemic poverty, as this implies limited state capacity to provide opposition groups with economic concessions as well as the likelihood of the absence of an effective military or police apparatus to contend with those seeking power or resources.

How this perspective see the conflict?

- The greed perspective links conflict with 'resource wars' and consider that when poor countries have mineral/oil (natural resources) wealth it becomes a 'resource curse'.
- The greed perspective considers, a dispersed population and a difficult terrain also contribute in occurrence of a conflict; and such situations make it hard for a fragile government to control the conflict.

Major Proponents of Greed Perspective

- Paul Collier
- Anke Hoefler
- David Keen

Major Proponents of Greed Perspective

Paul Collier is British Development Economist who serves as the Professor of Economics and Public Policy in the Blavatnik School of Government and the director of the International Growth Centre. He currently is a Professeur invité at Sciences Po and a Professorial Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford .



Major Proponents of Greed Perspective

Anke Hoeffler is a Professor of Development Research at the Department of Politics & Public Administration at the University of Konstanz. In June 2018 she was offered an Alexander von Humboldt Professorship, Germany's most valuable international research award. At the University of Konstanz she is in the process of setting up research group on 'Conflict and Development Research', providing a forum for researchers from across the disciplines to collaborate on violence related topics.



Anke Hoeffler's Argument

- 'Greed' can be interpreted as concentrating on the importance of the private gains aspect.
- Private gains and costs of participating in a rebellion are dependent on the likelihood of the rebellion succeeding, but the success of a rebellion in turn depends on how many individuals decide to participate. Typically, one would expect rebellions to start with a small group of rebels and then to swell to large, self-sustaining organisations.
- Further, she accepts that a well-defined theory of rebellion has to consider both (Greed & Grievance) aspects because they are interrelated.

Major Proponents of Greed Perspective



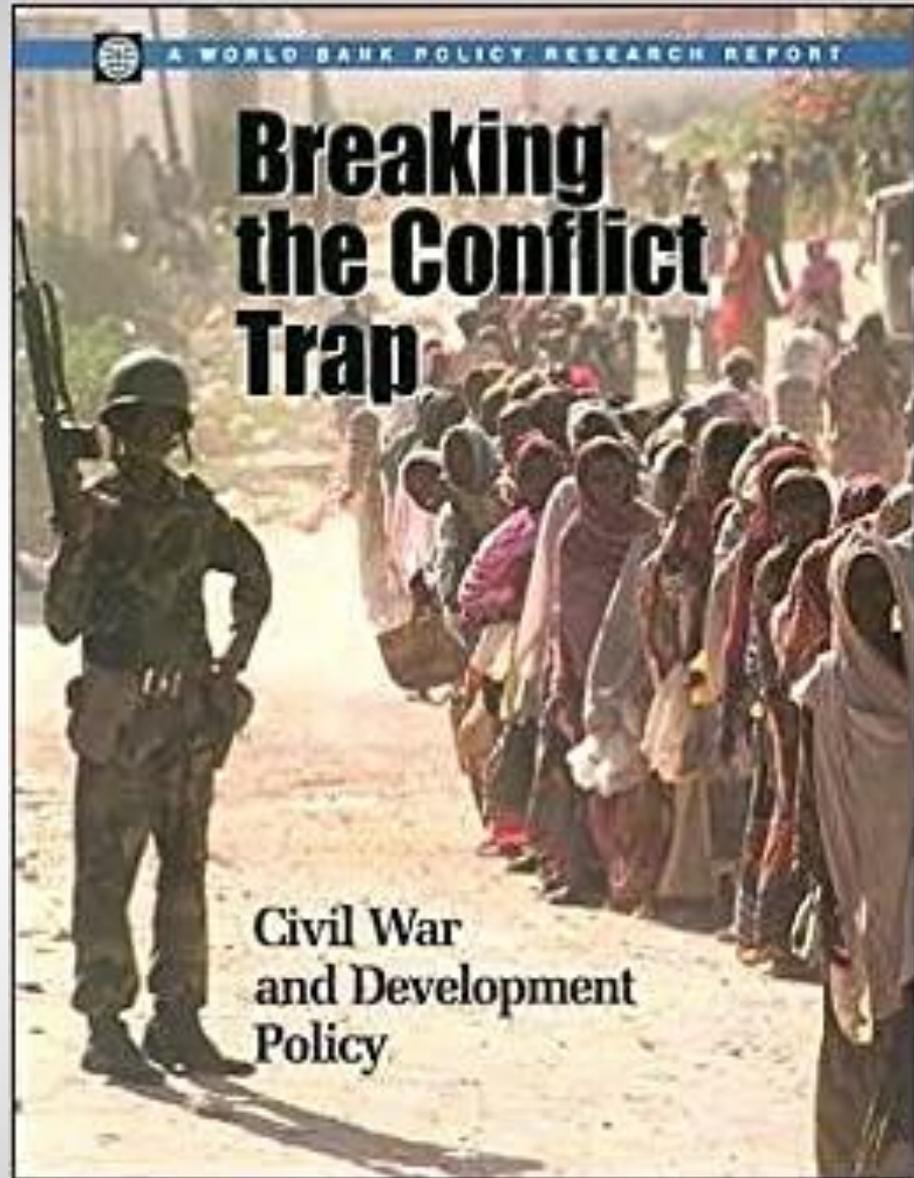
- **David Keen** is Professor of Conflict Studies, London School of Economics. He has worked extensively on understanding war, including its causes and functions. His publications include *The Benefits of Famine: A Political Economy of Famine and Relief in Southwest Sudan, 1983-89* (Princeton University Press, 1994; James Currey, 2008), *The Economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars* (Oxford University Press/IISS, 1998), *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone* (James Currey, 2005), *Endless War: Hidden Functions of the War on Terror* (Pluto, 2006), *Complex Emergencies* (Polity, 2008) and *Useful Enemies: When Waging Wars is More Important than Winning Them* (Yale University Press, 2012).

Keen's Argument

- David Keen argues that conflict occurs because of the profit motive and not because of the breakdown of development.
- Thus, for Keen, a conflict is profit oriented phenomenon rather than grievance-addressing activity. He assumes insurgents as loot-seekers and the rebellion as loot-seeking.

Major Writings on Greed Perspective

- **Paul Collier & et.al.** (2003), *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy*, Oxford University Press
- **Paul Collier & Anke Hoeffler** (2004), *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*, *Oxford Economic Papers* (56), 563-595
- **Anke Hoeffler** (2011) 'Greed' versus 'Grievance': A Useful Conceptual Distinction in the Study of Civil War?, *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*



Major Arguments: by Paul Collier

- Opportunity as an explanation of conflict risk is consistent with the economic interpretation of rebellion as greed-motivated. However, it is also consistent with grievance motivation as long as perceived grievances are sufficiently widespread to be common across societies and time. Opportunity can account for the existence of either for-profit, or not-for-profit, rebel organizations. Our evidence does not therefore imply that rebels are necessarily criminals. But the grievances that motivate rebels may be substantially disconnected from the large social concerns of inequality, political rights, and ethnic or religious identity.

Major Arguments: by Paul Collier

- Collier equates most conflicts as primarily greed-based, with the motivation of looting assets.
- Insurgents use the language of protest/grievance to recruit cadre and justify their own actions.
- Rebellion leadership talks of oppression, it is they in fact who are responsible for increasing grievances while the motive all along remains looting.

Collier divides 4 proxies for greed and grievance

- **4 objective measures for Greed**

1. Extortion of natural resources
2. Poor governance and isolation from market
3. Donations from Diasporas
4. Subventions from hostile governments

- **4 objective measures for Grievance**

1. Ethnic and religious hatred
2. Political repression
3. Political exclusion
4. Economic inequality

Collier's Conclusions

- Ethnic and religious hatred (ERH) widely perceived as a cause of conflict but cannot be quantified.
- ERH evidently occurs only in multi-ethnic & multi-religious societies. So as the objective measure of grievance behind the conflict will depend on the composition of the society.
- Political repression increases conflict risk but except when it is severe. So democracy is significant.

Collier's Conclusions

- Even in democracies a small group may fear permanent political exclusion, if political allegiance is based on ethnicity and one ethnic group has majority.
- Collier terms this 'ethnic dominance' and it occurs if the largest ethnic population in country constitute 45% to 90% of population.
- Thus, it does not appear important: it is common in peace episode as in conflict episode.

Collier's Conclusions

- The relation between inequality and conflict is indeed close one.
- Poor may rebel to induce redistribution, and rich regions mount secessionist rebellions to pre-empt redistribution.

Collier's Conclusions

- Resource extortion to fund the conflict.
- Collier believe that rebellions might be financed through rebel extortion of natural resources.
- Collier proposes that because rebels are paid and their cost may be related to the income foregone by enlisting as rebels, conflict might occur when foregone income is unusually low.
- He adds secondary factors like dispersed population and a difficult terrain also provide shelter to insurgents.

Collier's Conclusions

- In occurring of a conflict, Collier believes that the poor governance and isolation from market generates the risk of conflict.
- Focus on good governance, advocate minority rights, arms control policies and respect for human right and democracy may reduce the recur of conflict.
- Donations from Diasporas, for Collier, might be main reason for conflict recur in region where there is a history of conflicts.
- Collier argues that diasporas and their long-distance nationalism assist in fuelling armed conflict in home territories.

Collier's Conclusions

- Subventions from hostile governments also an opportunity to insurgents, for Collier.
- Collier regards financial support to rebels from foreign governments as a possible opportunity variable.

Critiques

- All reasons for conflict and insecurity cannot be measured in opportunity terms. Motive also plays significant role.
- Difficult Geographical terrain does not necessarily lead to conflict.
- Greed perspective does not take into account historical grievances and the construction of 'other'.
- Collier's argument that religious diversity can offset conflict is partially true.

Thank you