

# **The Nuts and Bolts of State Collapse: Common Causes and Different Patterns?**

## **A QCA Analysis of Lebanon, Somalia and the former-Yugoslavia**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is the result of a research project designed to address two questions: ‘*why*’ do states collapse and ‘*how*’ do they collapse? Rather than testing existing theories (largely non existent), this paper suggests a new model. The first issue, the causes of state collapse, has been the focus of in depth research over the recent years. The bulk of the comparative work came through large N studies focussing on long-term structural conditions and often resulting in long shopping lists of indicators. Instead, this research develops a concise set of four core causes (rather than indicators) based on in-depth country research (small n) using ‘*soft*’ qualitative data (quantitative being often unreliable and constraining the research).

The second issue refers to the processes of state collapse and state building. Charles Ragin’s QCA approach proved particularly efficient at processing qualitative data highlighting the dynamics of process. The research has shown that there is no one size fits all process of failure or recovery. Instead, different pathways exist. It also suggests that some variables carry more weight than others at specific moments in the process. As most current work suggests, the economy is an important factor in both the triggering and the recovery from a crisis situation. However, it plays a relative minimal role both at the early stages of the destabilizing process and towards the end of the process when a state crisis collapses. This explains why current early warning frameworks adequately enough predict state weakness, but fail to foresee which weak states will collapse. Two variables (the mobilization of advanced groups and an inconsistent international environment) appear to be crucial to forecast state collapse and to build strong states. There is an urgent need to integrate them in mainstream analysis and generate adequate data.

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By no means a new phenomenon, state failure has only recently started to be studied in its own right<sup>2</sup>. After 9/11 when the terrorist threat became tangible, weak and fragile states became a priority issue for many members of the international community.

According to the recent UN Secretary General's High-level Panel Report on '*Threats, Challenges and Change*', weak states rank among the six most pressing threats the world needs to address<sup>3</sup>. In October 2002, the OECD together with the European Commission, the UNDP and the World Bank established a '*Learning and Advisory Process on Difficult Partnership*' (LAP) to share analysis and best practices to shape a common strategy to engage fragile states. Many bilateral agencies (USAID, the State department, the Dutch, German, and Canadian development agencies to cite but a few) are developing new strategies to cope with weak and failing states. Likewise, the world's principal international financial institutions (the World Bank, the IMF) and the US Treasury are reassessing their previous strategies aimed at the '*most deserving countries*' to also include '*weak and fragile states*'. Finally, Washington's most prominent think tanks (e.g., the Carnegie Commission, the Centre for Global Development) are commissioning research about '*poor*', '*stagnant*', '*on the brink*', '*fragile*', '*failing*', '*conflict and post-conflict*' states.

State failure is still largely a barren field. Research is contingent to the often partial or inexistent data, in itself a signal of state deficiency. Effective action is severely undermined by the weakness of substantive theory. Recent scholarly effort has increased our understanding of long-term structural factors indicating a '*proneness*' to failure, but little is known about the medium-term precipitants. Why do states that have muddled through more or less successfully for decades, collapse<sup>4</sup>?

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<sup>2</sup> Although state failure and state collapse both refer to extreme instances of weak statehood, they each have a specific meaning whereby a collapsed state is a more acute version of failure. A failed state is one where *all core functions* have ceased to be performed (on a continuous base and over the entire territory), but where some institutional structures may still exist. It is a case of *functional failure* without institutional failure. A collapsed state involves both a *functional failure* (inability to perform core functions) and an *institutional failure* (the political superstructure has ceased to exist on a continuous base and as part of an overarching integrative framework). In practice, the state rarely completely disappears. Bits and piece will suddenly reappear (e.g., a government, a parliament, a police force, road infrastructure), but never over the entire territory or for long periods of time leading to what some have called a '*dotted state*'.

<sup>3</sup> High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* (United Nations, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> State Failure Task Force

Large N statistical analysis has successfully nailed down a specific set of variables sustaining state weakness. But these factors fail to explain ‘when’ states collapse<sup>5</sup>. Why did the Congo breakdown in the late nineties rather than a decade earlier at the end of the Cold War? Excellent case studies have provided new insights of how events unfolded in failing states, but these “*explanations of collapse have tended to be ‘ad hoc (...), so that a general understanding remains elusive’*”<sup>6</sup>.

What this research sets about to do is not to verify or sharpen existing theories, but to build a general theoretical framework. In Charles Ragin's terms, “*The primary theoretical objective of case-study research is not theory testing, per se, but concept formulation, and elaboration*”<sup>7</sup>. Two issues will be probed: first, the causes and then, the processes of state collapse. First, I will present a concise model of four core causes ‘necessary’ for states to collapse. The second part focuses on the causal mechanisms of collapse. Is there a unique process, are there multiple pathways or is it random? Are all causal factors equal or do some carry more weight?

## **The Structure of the Research**

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The very notion of state collapse is murky. Sometimes previous research about under-development, conflict, genocide, revolutions or democratic setbacks is hastily refurbished under the catch-all heading of state failure<sup>8</sup>. The first question thus relates to the definition of statehood and state collapse.

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<sup>5</sup> Juan Linz stressed the need for a dynamic approach: “*Analyses have tended to be static, with more emphasis on the social, economic and cultural correlates of stable regimes in a given moment of time than on the dynamic processes of crisis, breakdown*”, cited in Dirk BERG-SCHLOSSER and Gisèle DE MEUR, « *Conditions of Democracy In Interwar Europe. A Boolean Test of Major Hypotheses* », *Comparative Politics*, n°26 (3) 1994, p. 270.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph TAINTER, *The Collapse of Complex Societies* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Charles RAGIN, *Making Comparative Analysis Count: Bridging Case-Oriented and Variable-Oriented Research* (Louvain-La-Neuve, COMPASSS Conference, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Jack GOLDSTONE and alii, *State Failure Task Force Report: Phase III Findings* (September 30, 2000); Jennifer MILLIKEN and Keith KRAUSE, “*State Failure, State Collapse, and State Reconstruction: Concepts, Lessons, and Strategies*”, *Development and Change* 33(5), pp.753-774; Robert ROTBERG, *State Failure and Weakness in a Time of Terror* (Washington DC, Brookings, 2003); William ZARTMAN, *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority* (Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1995)

States collapse not as a result of an Armageddon cause, they collapse due to stress overload<sup>9</sup>. William Zartman argues that collapse is the result of an excessive burden *on governing capacity, a matter of degree but not a difference in nature from the normal difficulties of meeting demands and exercising authority*<sup>10</sup>.

A state fails when it is unable to perform the essential functions of statehood: the ability to extract resources (material and immaterial such as legitimacy), the capacity to manage these resources (at the very least allocate some towards the security apparatus), the provision of political accommodation (including security) and the delivery of basic social services and infrastructure (e.g., water, roads...). A state unable to perform these functions for longer time periods over a substantial portion of its territory is deemed collapsed.

A **collapsed state** is:

- (1) unable to manage conflict and eventually to enforce security
- +
- (2) incapable of delivering essential social services and basic infrastructure
- +
- (3) over a substantial portion of its territory
- +
- (4) for a substantial period of time

Such was the case of Lebanon from 1975-1990, of Somalia from 1991-today and of the former-Yugoslavia in the early nineties in Croatia-Bosnia and again in the late nineties in Kosovo.

To control for the variates, three instances of acute crisis without collapse were selected. These are Lebanon in 1957-58, Somalia in 1968-69 and Yugoslavia in 1962-72.

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<sup>9</sup> He argued “when a system is confronted with a situation in which the input of information conveying demands becomes too great for the responsible members of the system to process (...), the system cannot help but operate under the danger of collapse”. In David EASTON, A System Analysis of Political Life (New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1965), p. 58.

<sup>10</sup> I. William ZARTMAN, Collapsed States. The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority (Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1995), p. 8.

A state in crisis is:

- (1) unable to manage conflict and eventually to enforce security
- +
- (2) incapable of delivering essential social services and basic infrastructure
- +
- (3) over a *pockets* of its territory
- +
- (4) for a *short* period of time

In order to ensure more variation of the dependent variable, the same states (Lebanon, Somalia and the former-Yugoslavia) are measured at a time when they were '*strong*' (comparing to their own history). These correspond to Lebanon in 1959-1967, Somalia in 1970-77 and the former-Yugoslavia in 1974-1980.

A relatively strong state is:

- (1) able to manage conflict and eventually to enforce security
- +
- (2) capable of delivering essential social services and basic infrastructure
- +
- (3) over a *substantial part* of its territory
- +
- (4) for an *enduring* period of time

In stark contrast to the orthodoxy of random selection, the cases were selected on the dependent variable. This is a more effective strategy for rare case events<sup>11</sup>. A random selection of thirty or fifty states will probably contain only one occurrence of state collapse or none at all. A random selection within collapsed states is likely to over-represent Africa, missing our goal at generalizing. This selection method is also admissible to evaluate necessary (rather than sufficient) conditions<sup>12</sup>.

I used qualitative (instead of quantitative) data as the prime source of information for a variety of reasons<sup>13</sup>. First, the scarcity of the data due to

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<sup>11</sup> Barbara GEDDES, « *How Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get : Selection Bias in Comparative Politics* », Political Analysis 2 (1990), p. 149; Gary KING Gary KING, Robert O. KEOHANE and Sidney VERBA, Designing Social Inquiry. Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research (Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 145 and p. 199; The US Task Force on State Failure also selected its cases based on the dependent variable, since failure is such a rare event; Gary KING and Langche ZENG, "Improving Forecast of State Failure", World Politics, (July 2001), vol. 53, n°4, p. 625.

<sup>12</sup> Douglas DION, « *Evidence and Inference in the Comparative Case Study* », Comparative Political Studies, 1998, p. 127.

<sup>13</sup> The use of qualitative information also has its limits. Although flexible and boosting prospective thinking, it does not provide specific benchmarks.

shrinking state capacity<sup>14</sup>. Even when data exists, it is often of poor quality and does not withstand the most basic reality check<sup>15</sup>. Quantitative data was not discarded, but it was considered only when consistent with qualitative information. Second, quantitative data constrains the analysis because it is often designed to capture long-term *structural* indicators, whereas this paper wants to capture medium term *dynamics*. It also captures only formal information, whereas in weak and failing states informal networks yield considerable power thwarting institutional orthodoxy (e.g., the Lebanese democratic system was in fact an oligarchy). Sometimes, the ‘*correct*’ institutions are absent, but the goal is achieved (e.g., the rule of law in China is enforced not through the courts, but party officials<sup>16</sup>, Lebanon’s shadow economy<sup>17</sup>).

Using qualitative information has some drawbacks too, notably the absence of easy benchmarks. But that does not mean that there is not a lot to tell. We find ourselves in the position of “*the man that realizes the limitations of not having a thermometer and still manages to say a great deal simply by saying hot and cold, warmer and cooler*”<sup>18</sup>.

To process this qualitative information, QCA was particularly relevant for the following reasons. First, QCA standardizes qualitative information. Narratives are replaced by standardized Boolean algebra allowing thought experiments and generalization. Second, QCA uses configurations of variables where each individual variable is insufficient to produce collapse, they need to be combined. Just as dough without milk and eggs does not

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<sup>14</sup> Roger Owen in his excellent article on the Lebanese economy faced the same problems: “*To begin with, there is the question of the almost complete lack of reliable statistics*” in “*The Economic History of Lebanon 1943-1974: Its Salient Features*”, in Halim BARAKAT, Toward a Viable Lebanon (Washington DC, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1988), p. 38

<sup>15</sup> In Beirut, the CERMOC demographers meekly pointed out to us that the country's last census (1932) pre-dated independence (1943). The government's last attempt at counting the population (commonly estimated at 6 to 6.5 million people), we were told ended up with an amazing surplus (nearly 2 million people) as a result of multiple instances of double counting. In CERMOC, interview May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2000, Beirut. In Somalia, the available population data shows a steady growth rate throughout Siad Barre's rule although a hard fought Somali-Ethiopian war in the mid-seventies is bound to have had demographic consequences.

<sup>16</sup> Danni RODRIK, In Search of Prosperity. Analytical Narratives on Economic Growth (Princeton University Press, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> One of Lebanon's most prominent economic scholars admits, “*under such conditions the assessment of the economy cannot be based so much on quantitative determined past performance as on a judgment deriving from an intimate knowledge and appreciation of the total situation*”. In Albert BADRE, “*The Economic Development of Lebanon*”, in Charles COOPER and Sidney ALEXANDER, Economic Development and Population Growth in the Middle East (New York, American Elsevier, 1972), p. 162.

<sup>18</sup> Giovanni SARTORI, « *Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics* », Comparative Political Science Review, vol 64 (1970), p. 1033.

produce a small pancake, all the ingredients need to be incorporated to achieve the result. Three, particularly interesting is the use of equivalent configurations (equifinality) whereby different causal combinations produce a similar outcome. As inebriate driving, rain or mechanical failures all cause car accidents.

This study combines two different strategies: most similar and most different designs<sup>19</sup>. The first captures the existence of a common *causal* pattern for a similar outcome: collapse<sup>20</sup>. Comparing countries as diverse as Lebanon, Somalia and the former-Yugoslavia is not a stretch, they were selected precisely because they belong to different settings: geographically (Middle East, Africa and Europe), politically (a democracy, a nepotistic regime and a dictatorship) and in economic terms (capitalist, neo-patrimonial and socialist system)<sup>21</sup>. As Adam Przeworski and Henry Teune argue, the response to the classical objection of comparing apples and oranges is simple: they are fruits<sup>22</sup>.

The most different strategy is used not to identify common *causes*, but to study the *processes*. The same countries were observed over time when relatively strong, in crisis and collapsed. The comparing of these situations enables us to highlight the particular role of some variables. It also contributes to expand threefold our total number of cases<sup>23</sup>:

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<sup>19</sup> Adam PRZERWORSKI and Henry TEUNE, The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry (New York, Wiley-Interscience, 1970)

<sup>20</sup> Gary KING and Langche ZENG, "Improving Forecast of State Failure", World Politics, (July 2001), vol. 53, n°4, p. 625.

<sup>21</sup> A century ago, when a similar question was asked to Ronald Ross, he answered that he saw "no reason to suppose that the Roman and the Megatherium were not struck down by similar causes Ronald ROSS, "Introduction" in W. H. S. JONES, Malaria: A Neglected Factor in the History of Greece and Rome (Cambridge, Macmillan and Bowes, 1907). Cited by Joseph TAINTER, The Collapse of Complex Societies (Cambridge university Press, 1988), p. 39.

<sup>22</sup> Adam PRZERWORSKI and Henry TEUNE, The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry (New York, Wiley-Interscience, 1970), p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> According to Charles Ragin, "time-series are particularly attractive when linked to specific historical process (say, a major transformation). This possibility makes comparisons of time-series across several cases an attractive alternative to enlarge the number of relevant cases". In Charles RAGIN, Making Comparative Analysis Count: Bridging Case-Oriented and Variable-Oriented Research (Louvain-La-Neuve, COMPASSS Conference, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2003). A large body of literature supports comparisons in time: Christopher CHASE, Aaron PALLAS and Jeffrey KENTOR, "Old and New Research Designs for Studying World-system/ A Research Note", Comparative Political Studies (1982) 15, pp. 341-356; J. GOLDTHORPE, "Current Issues in Comparative Macrosociology", Comparative Social Research, (1996) Vol. 16; Jerald HAGE, "Theoretical decision rules for selecting research designs: The study of nation-states or societies", Sociological Methods and Research (1975), 4 (2), pp. 131-165; G. KING, R. O. KEOHANE and S. VERBA, Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research (Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 24, 117, 201 and 219; Arend

- state collapse: *Lebanon 1975-1990, Somalia 1991-ongoing, Yugoslavia 1991-95*
- state crisis: *Lebanon 1959-64, Somalia 1970-77, Yugoslavia 1974-80*
- state strength: *Lebanon 1956-58, Somalia 1968-69, Yugoslavia 1962-72*

### **Four Core Causes of State Collapse**

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An in-depth study of the cases together with a substantial literature review narrowed down four core causes. The goal was not to produce a shopping list of all possible factors conducive to state collapse, but to determine what causes are *necessary* for states to collapse<sup>24</sup>. Since relatively little theoretical work exists on state collapse, we cast the net wide to include related theories of state instability (e.g., war, revolutions, social mobilization, secession). This deductive process was then tested in each of our cases through in depth case study analysis. The result is a concise causal model based on four core variables. None of these variables is sufficient to produce collapse; it takes their combination to reach that outcome.

#### *An Inconsistent External Environment*

Charles Tilly argues that it is not the type of external environment (interventionist or not) that is destabilizing, but the back and forth shifting from an interventionist to a non-interventionist environment because it changes the political opportunity structure. “*The relationship between external influence and political instability is curvilinear, with instability highest at changing levels of external control*”<sup>25</sup>. The decolonization, the ‘*détente*’ and the end of the Cold War were important transition each

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LIJPHART, « *Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method* », *American Political Science Review*, vol 65, 1971, p. 682-693; Charles RAGIN, *The Comparative Method. Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1987), p. 73; James N. ROSENAU, « *Private Preferences and Political Responsibilities : The Relative Potency of Individual and Role Variables in the Behavior of US Senators* », *Quantitative International Politics*, pp. 19; Theda SKOCPOL, *Etats et révolutions sociales. La révolution en France, en Russie et en Chine* (Paris, Fayard, 1985), p. 64.

<sup>24</sup> In Theda SKOCPOL’s words: “*we can never be sure that all relevant variables have been tested*”, *Etats et révolutions sociales. La révolution en France, en Russie et en Chine* (Paris, Fayard, 1985), p. 66 ; Theda SKOCPOL, *Analysing Causal Configurations in History: A Rejoinder to Nichols*, in *Comparative Social Research*, n°9 (1986), p. 190.

<sup>25</sup> Charles TILLY, *Coercion, Capital and European States AD 990-1990* (Cambridge, Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 208; Doug McADAM, John D. McCARTHY, and Mayer N. ZALD, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements. Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge University Press, 1966).



followed by a wave of collapse<sup>26</sup>. The last round of collapse came right after the end of the Cold War in the early nineties: Somalia, Yugoslavia, Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, Sudan, Zaire, and Afghanistan.

### *An Economic Crisis or Swift Growth*

The *qualitative* or '*revised modernization*' thesis holds that when the economy undergoes a sector-based change, say from an essentially primary to a secondary based economy, disparate groups are increasingly brought into contact and competition with one another fuelling nationalist or separatist movements<sup>27</sup>.

The *quantitative* explanation believes that a substantial variation in a country's growth rate might precipitate a severe social and political crisis<sup>28</sup>. This appears to be fairly obvious in the case of an economic downturn<sup>29</sup>, but as Alexis de Tocqueville recognized, swift economic take-off may be also the source of considerable unrest. "*Evils which are patiently endured when they seem inevitable become intolerable once the idea of escape from them is suggested*"<sup>30</sup>. Equally destabilizing is the relative deprivation "*when a*

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<sup>26</sup> I. William ZARTMAN, Collapsed States. The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority (Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1995), pp. 2-4.

<sup>27</sup> Walker CONNOR, "*Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying?*", World Politics, vol.24 (1972), pp. 319-355; Kisangani EMIZET and Vicki HESLI, "*The Disposition to Secede*", Comparative Political Studies, vol. 64 (January 1995), n° 4, pp. 493-536; Ernest GELLNER, Nations and Nationalism (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1983); Harold GOULD, "*Religion and Politics in a U.P. Constituency*", in Donald E. SMITH, South Asian Politics and Religion (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1966), pp. 51-73; Ted Robert GURR, "*Peoples Against States: Ethnopolitical Conflict and the Changing World System: 1994 Presidential Address*", International Quarterly, vol. 38 (1994) n°3, p. 350; Samuel HUNTINGTON, "*Political Development and Political Decay*", World Politics, vol. XVII (1965) n°3, p. 405; Arend LIJPHART, "*Political Theories and the Explanation of Ethnic Conflict in the Western World*", in Milton J. ESMAN, Ethnic Conflict in the Western World (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 46-64; Michael WATSON, Contemporary Minority Nationalism (New York, Routledge, 1990), pp. 196-199.

<sup>28</sup> Paul Collier highlights three variables which increase the risk of civil war: a social dimension (low income), an economic aspect (economic decline) and a structural dimension (the dependency on primary commodities). Whereas the two former variables are purely quantitative, the latter is of a qualitative nature. Paul COLLIER and alii, Breaking the Conflict Trap. Civil War and Development Policy (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 101.

<sup>29</sup> Paul COLLIER and alii, Breaking the Conflict Trap. Civil War and Development Policy (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 108.

<sup>30</sup> Alexis DE TOQUEVILLE, The Old Regime and the French Revolution (New York, Harper and BROS., 1856), p. 214. But also Fernand BRAUDEL, The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II (New York, Harper and Row, 1973); Crane BRINTON, Anatomy of Revolution (Vintage Books, 1957), pp. 264-275I; James DAVIES, "*Towards a Theory of Revolution*", American Sociological Review, Vol 27, n° 1 (February 1962), pp. 5-19; David EASTON speaks about "*the revolution in rising expectations*". In A

*prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal*<sup>31</sup>”

### *The Mobilization of Advanced Groups*

Pre-existing identities based on age, gender, class, religion, skin color and language of become a strong driver of political mobilization when they systematically affect their incumbents' welfare. Although the most deprived groups have a strong interest to rebel<sup>32</sup>, “*when faced with solid opposition of people of wealth, status, and power, (they) will be smashed in their rebellion*”<sup>33</sup>. On the other hand, the better-off have the most to lose and have thus both the motivation and the means to protect their position<sup>34</sup>. Loosing

System Analysis of Political Life (New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1965), pp. 110-113; Nikolai KONDRATEFF, «*Die Langen Wellen der Konjunktur*», Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik, 56 (December 1926), pp. 947-965; Samuel HUNTINGTON, “*Political Development and Political Decay*”, World Politics, vol. XVII (1965) n°3, p. 406; Samuel P. HUNTINGTON, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968); Mancur OLSON, Jr, “*Rapid Economic Growth as a Destabilizing Force*”, Journal of Economic History, XXVII (December 1963), pp. 529-552; In Bruce RUSSETT, «*Prosperity and Peace. Presidential Address*», International Studies Quarterly, 27 (1983), pp. 381-387; W.R. THOMPSON and L.G. ZUK, «*War, Inflation, and the Kondratieff Long Wave*» (Journal of Conflict Resolution, 26 (December 1982), pp. 621-644; William ZARTMAN, «*Toward a Theory of Elite Circulation*», in I. William ZARTMAN (ed.), Elites in the Middle East (New York, Praeger, 1980), p. 103.

<sup>31</sup> James DAVIES, “*Towards a Theory of Revolution*”, American Sociological Review, Vol 27, n° 1 (February 1962), pp. 5-19; David EASTON speaks about “*the revolution in rising expectations*”. In A System Analysis of Political Life (New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1965), pp. 110-113; Bruce RUSSETT, Trends in World Politics (New York, MacMillan, 1965), p. 137.

<sup>32</sup> HIRSCFLEIR

<sup>33</sup> James DAVIES, «*Towards a Theory of Revolution*», American Sociological Review, Vol 27, n° 1 (February 1962), pp. 6-7.

<sup>34</sup> Robert H. BATES, «*Ethnic Competition and Modernization in Contemporary Africa*», Comparative Political Studies, 6 (1974), pp. 475-484; Kisangani N. EMIZET and Vicki L. HESLI, «*The Disposition to Secede. An Analysis of the Soviet Case*», Comparative Political Studies 27 (January 1995) n°4, p. 523-524; Timothy M. FRYE, «*Ethnicity, Sovereignty and transitions from Non-Democratic Rule*», Journal of international Affairs, 45 (1992), pp. 599-623; Ted Robert GURR, Minorities at Risk : A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts (Washington DC, US Institute of Peace Press, 1993), p. 82; Henry HALE, «*The Parade of Sovereignities : Testing Theories of Secession in the Soviet Setting*», British Journal of Political Science, 30 (2000), pp. 31-56; Donald L. HOROWITZ, «*Patterns of Ethnic Separatism*», Comparative Studies in Society and History, vol 23 (April 1981) n°2, p. 173; Philip G. ROEDER, «*Soviet Federalism and Ethnic Mobilization*», World Politics 43 (January 1991), p. 197; Ronald ROGOWSKI, «*Causes and Varieties of Nationalism: A Rationalist Account*», in Edward TIRYAKIAN and Ronald ROGOWSKI, New Nationalisms of the Developed West : Towards Explanation (Boston MA, Allen and Unwin, 1985), pp. 87-108; Immanuel WALLERSTEIN, Africa : the Politics of Independence (New York, Vintage Books, 1961), p. 88; Henry HALE, «*The Parade of Sovereignities : Testing Theories of Secession in the Soviet Setting*», British Journal of Political Science, 30 (2000), pp. 31-56.

the support of the skilled and wealthy is a hard blow for the state as resources formerly belonging to the Treasury are not only lost, but used against the state. While the support of all members is not necessary for the persistence of a political system, the support of “*potent*” segments of society is essential to its survival. In Yugoslavia, these were the Croats and Slovenians (industrial power), as well as the Serbs (military). In Somaliland, the Isaacs (hide export-trade) and Hawyie (military and economic). In Lebanon, the Maronites and Sunnis (banking and services).

### *Poor Reciprocal Assimilation of the Elite*

Political violence is moderated by mechanisms of conflict management. In an ideal political system, stability is maintained by a mechanism of ‘*reciprocal assimilation*’ whereby the freshly co-opted integrate the values of the incumbent elite while the latter absorb some of the demands and values of the newcomers<sup>35</sup>. By being offered meaningful and substantial careers in the central government, nationalistic leaders become stakeholders in the central regime, while the regime will increase its outreach within society<sup>36</sup>.

In an imperfect world, instability often occurs as a result of failed assimilation when a political regime refuses cooptation or during democratic transitions when the old guard is washed away. Regimes may buy themselves time by incorporating the demands of their contenders without granting the demand bearers access to the state's institutions or through window dressing when co-opting only minor representatives of the opposition<sup>37</sup>.

### *Four Core Causes*

When the observations were in the property space our hypothesis was confirmed: the accumulation of contingencies is at the core of state failure. Indeed, relatively strong states aptly deal with a single factor; but when two or three destabilizing variables are present, a crisis will occur. However, it takes the interplay of all four variables for a state to collapse: the

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<sup>35</sup> Jean-François BAYART, *L'Etat en Afrique. La Politique du Ventre* (Paris, Fayard, 1989)

<sup>36</sup> Adeed DAWISHA and I. William ZARTMAN, *Beyond Coercion. The Durability of the Arab State* (London, Croom Helm, 1988), p. 13; David D. LAITIN, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1998); Michael HECHTER, *Containing Nationalism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 141; Samuel HUNTINGTON, “*Political Development and Political Decay*”, *World Politics*, vol. XVII (1965) n°3, p. 402-403; Philip SELZNICK, *TVA and the Grass Roots. A Study of Politics and Organization* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984), p. 259.

<sup>37</sup> Philip SELZNICK, *TVA and the Grass Roots. A Study of Politics and Organization* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984), p. 14.

international environment has to be inconsistent, there has to be a sharp economic decline or substantial growth, advanced groups need to mobilize and an improper cooptation of the political elite.

**Table 1: Observed Property Space**

Situations	Cases	Conditions				Outcomes		
		International (I)	Economic (E)	Advanced (A)	Renewal (R)	State Collapse (CL)	State Crisis (CR)	State Strength (ST)
State Strength (ST)	Leb 1959-67	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Som 1970-77	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Yug 1974-80	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
State Crisis (CR)	Leb 1957-58	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
	Som 1968-69	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
	Yug 1962-72	0	1	1	0	0	1	0
State Collapse (CL)	Leb 1975	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
	Som 1990-91	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
	Yug 1990-91	1	1	1	1	1	0	0

Where the variable was present, it was given a value of 1. When absent it was coded as 0.

## **Processes of Instability, Prevention and Reconstruction?**

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The QCA method is seldom used to its full potential. First, most researchers make a poor use of one of QCA most important features: the '*smart*' use of simplifying assumptions based on thoughts experiments and prior theoretical knowledge. Second, scholars dwarf the QCA method by their static understanding of the method. Whereas the results can also be considered in a dynamic perspective. The following section is organized in two parts corresponding to the processes of instability and re-stabilizing. For each of these processes, the data is first processed in a static way to obtain minimal configurations. These configurations are then considered in a dynamic perspective to grasp the processes of instability and stability.

### **How States Collapse**

#### *Step 1: Minimizing the configurations*

The three observed situations (state collapse, state crisis, and state strength) are subsets of each other<sup>38</sup>. Non state strength ( $\sim ST$ ) is the first step on the destabilizing process. The next stage of state crisis (CR) constitutes a more acute subset of instability. Finally, state collapse (CL) is the worst possible outcome for states in crisis. The three situations of non-state-strength, state crisis and state collapse should thus be visualized as follows:

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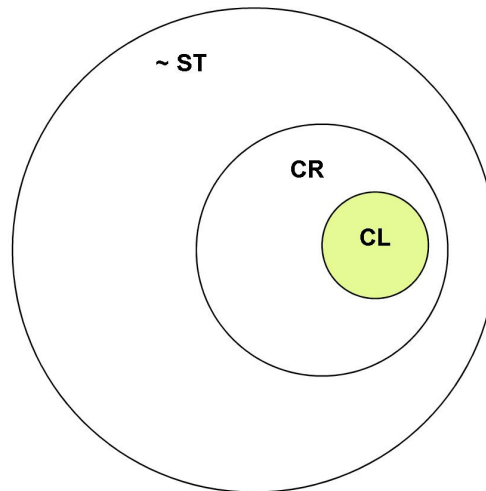
<sup>38</sup> I am indebted to Charles Ragin for suggesting this to me.

### The Process of State Collapse

**~ ST : Non State Strength**

**CR : State Crisis**

**CL : State Collapse**



Let us determine the configurations for non-state-strength, state crisis, and state collapse.

#### *Non-state-strength*

Non-state-strength was achieved by reversing the state strength configuration. The analysis of the negative instances of state strength informs us about the early stages of the destabilization process<sup>39</sup>.

$$ST = \quad i.a.e + i.a.r \quad \text{or} \quad \underline{i.a.}(e+r)$$

The state strength configuration involves only the *absence* of destabilizing variables, while the non-state-strength configuration will involve the *occurrence* of at least one or more of these factors. The logical opposite of the state strength configuration, called a '*complement*', refers to all instances

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<sup>39</sup> The occurrence of a variable is represented by the use of an upper case letter (when present) and a lower case letter (when absent). Accordingly any observation where an '*International Shift*' occurs receives a 'I', while the absence of an '*International Shift*' is represented by a 'i'. Necessity and sufficiency are represented by the use of a period '.' (logical '*and*'), and a plus sign '+' (logical '*or*'). If two variables are linked by '.', each single variable is necessary for the issue to occur, but only the whole configuration is sufficient. When two variables are linked by '+', each single variable is sufficient for the outcome, in this case state strength, to occur, while neither individual variable is necessary.

where the state is not strong. The complement of state strength comes out as follows:

$$\sim ST = I + A + ER$$

There are thus three types of situations equally threatening the strength of the state. The results suggest that strong states are likely to be affected by the sole occurrence of a shift in the international environment or of advanced group mobilization, but will be unaffected by the occurrence of an economic shift *or* of a disruptive renewal alone. The sole occurrence of a shift in the international environment or the mobilization of advanced contending groups is sufficient to destabilize a strong state. These two variables are precisely those that most current early warning frameworks fail to integrate. Indeed, most of them consider state collapse as a largely domestic process where sanctions, aid, military intervention, political meddling, etc are not captured. Advanced group mobilization is usually not considered for lack of infra-state data. The third element ( $E \cdot R$ ) combines two factors: an economic shift and poor elite renewal. A contrario, the mere occurrence of any of these two variables alone will be insufficient to destabilize a strong state or to prevent the building of a strong state.

## State Crisis

**Table 2: State Crisis**

Situations	Cases	Conditions				Outcome
		International (I)	Economic (E)	Advanced (A)	Renewal (R)	State Crisis (CR)
State Strength (ST)	Leb 1959-67	0	0	0	0	0
	Som 1970-77	0	1	0	0	0
	Yug 1974-80	0	0	0	1	0
State Crisis (CR)	Leb 1957-58	1	1	0	1	1
	Som 1968-69	1	1	0	1	1
	Yug 1962-72	0	1	1	0	1
State Collapse (CL)	Leb 1975	1	1	1	1	1
	Som 1990-91	1	1	1	1	1
	Yug 1990-91	1	1	1	1	1

Remember how we considered state collapse to be a subset of state crisis? Accordingly, outcomes of both state crisis and of state collapse received a positive outcome value (1), while situations of state strength were given a 0 outcome value since they do not constitute instances of crisis.

After the property space was recoded with regards to its outcome, the empirical data produced the following results:

$$CR = I.E.R + i.E.A.r \quad \text{or} \quad E.(I.R + i.A.r)$$

Two causal configurations ( $I.E.R$  or  $i.E.A.r$ ) are equally able to induce state crisis ('*equifinality*')<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Equifinality or '*multiple conjunctural causation*' refers to alternate routes or pathways capable of producing similar outcomes. Either one of the two causal configurations is sufficient to produce crisis, but the first combination ( $I.E.R$ ) corresponds to the configuration, which prevailed in two of our three collapse situations (Lebanon and Somalia), while the second configuration ( $i.E.A.r$ ) only corresponds to a single case (Yugoslavia).



An economic shift appears to be the sole necessary cause for the development of a crisis situation. It is thus a useful warning signal of an impending political crisis. Yet, it is insufficient to threaten the survival of a strong state or induce a crisis; it affects the state only when taken in conjunction with other variables.

To further minimize the crisis configuration, Charles Ragin suggests using 'logical' ( $\perp$ ) configurations (non observed combinations). The four independent variables can produce  $2^4$  (=16) logical configurations. Of those 16 combinations, only six were empirically observed leaving 10 'remainders' (logically possible, but unobserved configurations)<sup>41</sup>. To determine the value of those configurations, the researcher can develop 'simplifying assumptions' based on pre-existing theoretical knowledge or on thought experiments. Imagine a study of income inequality, where researchers found that women and colored people tended to earn less than their male or white colleagues. Although not observed, it can be assumed that colored women will earn the least<sup>42</sup>.

Consider the two configurations able to induce state crisis:

$$CR = I.E.R + i.E.A.r$$

In this instance, we do in fact have 'directional expectations' with regards to those configurations. With regards to  $i.E.A.r \rightarrow CR$ , a substantial body of literature suggests that a shift in the international environment is destabilizing. The 'thought experiment' consists of imagining whether Yugoslavia in 1962-1972 would still have been a crisis *with* instead of *without* a shift in the international environment ( $\perp$ ). Most likely it would, the following assumption is made:  $I.E.A.r \rightarrow CR$ . When bringing together the empirical evidence and the directional expectation, the following logical simplification can be made:

$$\text{If } CR = i.E.A.r + I.E.A.r, \quad \text{then } CR = E.A.r.(i+I) \quad \text{or} \quad CR = E.A.r$$

---

It would be well worth for future research dealing with other cases to see whether the first combination appears more frequently and has more 'coverage'. A causal combination, which is observed more frequently, has more substantive relevance for political decision-making.

<sup>41</sup> Although there are nine empirical observations or cases, these correspond to only six different configurations. The three causal combinations for state collapse are all identical ( $I.E.A.R$ ), and so are two of state crisis configurations (Lebanon 1957-58 and Somalia 1968-69:  $I.E.R$ ).

<sup>42</sup> This was recommended by Charles RAGIN in "Recent Advances in Fuzzy-set Methods and their Application to Policy Questions" (Leuven, COMPASSS Conference, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003), but few authors used it. Many researchers prefer resorting to easier alternatives of either integrating as many simplifying assumptions as possible with dubious results or to reject them altogether.

Considering that theoretical knowledge also suggests that a lack of elite assimilation is a destabilizing factor, another simplifying assumption may be drawn:

If  $CR = E.A.r + E.A.R$ , then  $CR = E.A.(r+R)$  or  $CR = E.A$

The same procedure may be applied to negative outcomes, in this instance state strength (a negative outcome for state crisis), except that the reasoning should in this case be reverse. Instead of imagining the same case *with* an additional condition, it should be studied *without* that causal factor. Once the '*acceptable simplifying assumptions*' are recoded 'don't care' (-) the property space came out as follows:

**Table 3: Simplifying Assumptions**

Situations	Cases	Conditions				Outcome
		International (I)	Economic (E)	Advanced (A)	Renewal (R)	State Crisis (CR)
State Strength (ST)	Leb 1959-67	0	0	0	0	0
	Som 1970-77	0	-	0	0	0
	Yug 1974-80	0	0	0	-	0
State Crisis (CR)	Leb 1957-58	1	1	-	1	1
	Som 1968-69	1	1	-	1	1
	Yug 1962-72	-	1	1	-	1
State Collapse (CL)	Leb 1975	1	1	1	1	1
	Som 1990-91	1	1	1	1	1
	Yug 1990-91	1	1	1	1	1

When such '*acceptable simplifying assumptions*' are included, the final solution is more parsimonious as the observed configurations were '*cleaned*' of irrelevant information.

$CR = E.(i.A.r + I.R)$  becomes  $CR + L = E.(A + I.R)$

According to both configurations a crisis will erupt only when an economic shift occurs, yet, this variable although '*necessary*' is '*insufficient*' to destabilize the state. An economic shift will affect the state only when brought in conjunction with either the mobilization of advanced groups or a shifting international environment together with a poor renewal of the political elite.

### *State Collapse*

To study state collapse, a subset of state crisis, the property space was re-coded so that only instances of state collapse received a positive outcome value:

Situations	Cases	Conditions				Outcome
		International (I)	Economic (E)	Advanced (A)	Renewal (R)	State Collapse (CL)
State Strength (ST)	Leb 1959-67	0	0	0	0	0
	Som 1970-77	0	1	0	0	0
	Yug 1974-80	0	0	0	1	0
State Crisis (CR)	Leb 1957-58	1	1	0	1	0
	Som 1968-69	1	1	0	1	0
	Yug 1962-72	0	1	1	0	0
State Collapse (CL)	Leb 1975	1	1	1	1	1
	Som 1990-91	1	1	1	1	1
	Yug 1990-91	1	1	1	1	1

The minimized state collapse configuration is:

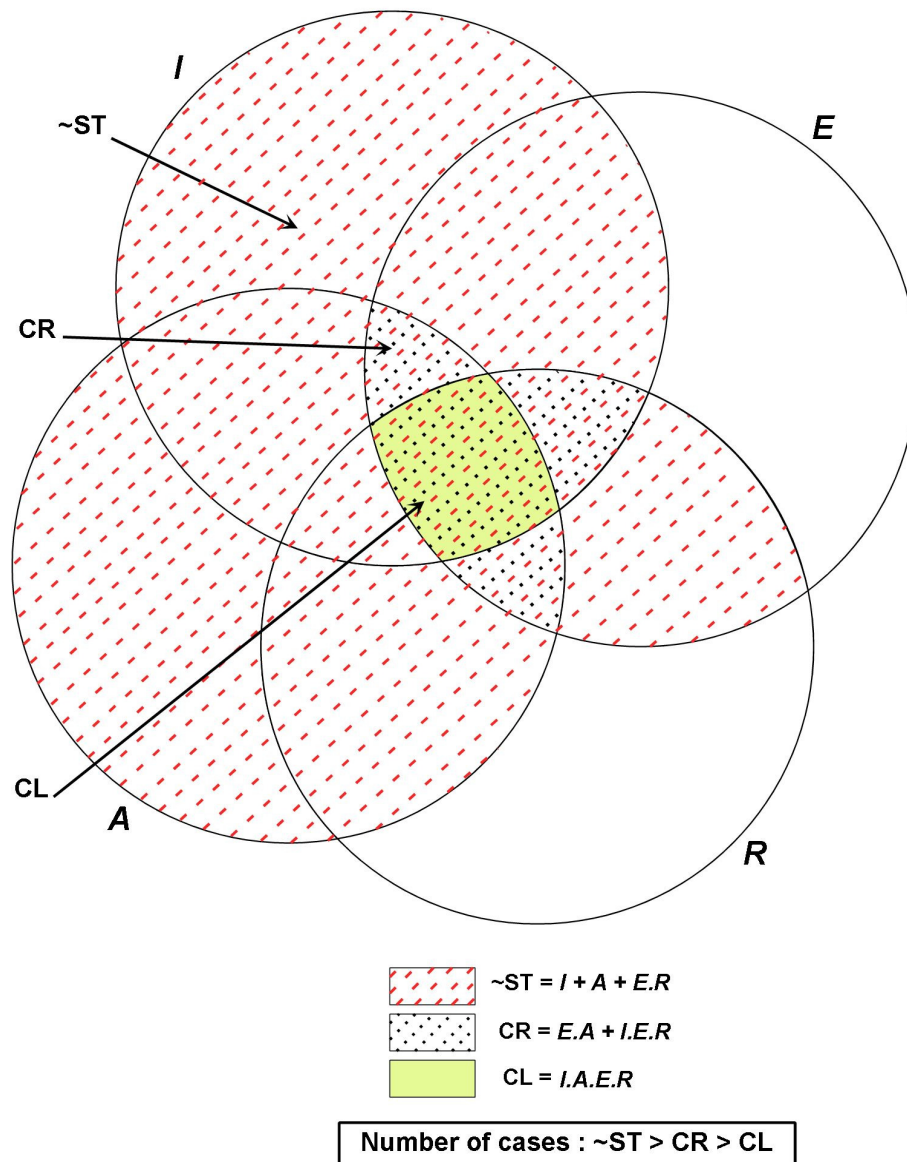
$$CL = I.E.A.R$$

It takes a combination of four causes (international shift, economic shift, contending advanced group mobilization and poor elite renewal process) to bring down a state. While each of the four variables is '*necessary*' to produce collapse, only when acting together are they able or '*sufficient*' to cause collapse. The entire four-variable-configuration constitutes a '*necessary and sufficient*' condition of state collapse<sup>43</sup>. The configuration can be visualized as follows:

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<sup>43</sup> For a discussion about sufficiency and necessity see Charles RAGIN, Fuzzy-Set Social Science (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000).

### State collapse as a subset of state-crisis and non-state-strength



The results confirm our ‘*stress input overload*’ hypothesis. Scholars often wage long lasting theoretical battles over which variable cause collapse (*‘sufficient’*). Or they integrate long lists of causes failing to distinguish between what is absolutely *‘necessary’* and what is accessory, so that no policy implication can be derived.

## Step 2: Understanding the Dynamics of the Process

By comparing the results obtained for the three type of situations (strength, crisis and collapse), it is possible to grasp the process of state weakening. The minimized configurations considered as static snapshots look as follow:

### The Process of Collapse

Situations	Configurations
<b>~ST</b>	$I + A + E.R$
<b>CR</b>	$E.A + I.E.R$
<b>CL</b>	$I.E.A.R$

Let us compare each situation in sequential order:

- *From non-state-strength to state crisis*

Comparing the two configurations gives us some indications as to how the state evolves from one type of situation to the other.

$$\sim ST = I + A + E.R$$

$$CR = E.A + I.E.R$$

The comparison of the two equations suggests that the movement from non-state-strength to crisis follows either of two pathways:

$I$  is combined with  $ER$  (or  $ER$  is combined with  $I$ )

or

$A$  is combined with  $E$  (or  $ER$  is combined with  $A$ , since  $E$  alone entails both  $Er$  and  $ER$ )

- *From state crisis to state collapse*

What does it take for a state in crisis to collapse? Let us consider the two equations of state crisis and state collapse:

$$CR = E.A + I.E.R$$

$$CL = I.E.A.R$$

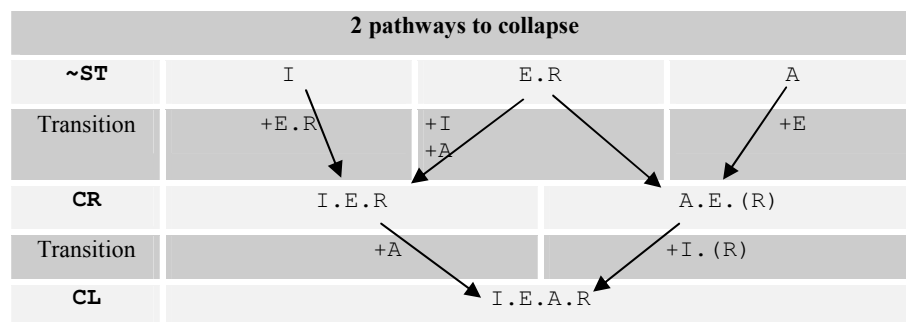
To go from the crisis to collapse:

$$E.A \text{ is combined with } I.R$$

or

$I.E.R$  is combined with  $A$

From the above results, it is possible to develop two pathways leading to state collapse. The main interest of these results is that once a state is in crisis, only two variables ( $A$  or  $I$ ) need to be monitored in order to predict collapse or secured to prevent it.



### Path 1: The I.E.R and A combination

$$\sim ST = \begin{array}{l} I \\ E.R \end{array} \begin{array}{l} + E.R \\ + I \end{array} \rightarrow CR = \underline{I.E.R} + A \rightarrow CL = I.E.A.R$$

Two alternatives for this path exist. The first is that of a relatively healthy state, whose strength is weakened as a result of a shift in the international system. But for a crisis to occur, at least two more variables are needed: an economic shift (downturn or stalled growth) and a problematic renewal of the political elite (either nonexistent or sudden without reciprocal assimilation). These results demonstrate the remarkable resilience of the state. Considering the presence of so many destabilizing variables ( $I.E.R$ ), it is remarkable that the state survives at all.

The second alternative is a rejoinder to the previous one although it starts differently. It is the result of the combined action of two variables, both an economic shift and a poorly led renewal of the political elite. This dual stress is insufficient to produce a crisis. For crisis to develop, an additional variable, a shift in its external environment, is needed.

Once in crisis as a result of either of these processes, it only takes the presence of one more variable (the mobilization of advanced groups) for it to collapse.

### Path 2: The A.E.R and I combination

$$\sim ST = \begin{array}{|l} E.R \quad + A \\ A \quad + E(.R) \end{array} \rightarrow CR = \underline{A.E.R} + I \rightarrow CL = I.E.A.R$$

Again two alternatives exist. In the first option, a state may find itself weakened as a result of the joint action of an economic shift together with a poor renewal of the elite. But to enter a crisis, advanced groups need to mobilize. The second alternative starts the other way around. In this case, the advanced groups start mobilizing at an early stage, while the economic shift and a poor renewal of the elite only occur later to produce a crisis.<sup>44</sup>

For a state in crisis to collapse, at least one more condition will be necessary, a shift in the international system. This is typically the kind of state which, although in a poor internal situation, still muddles through as a result of a supportive international environment (e.g., a rentier-state), on the contrary, it may survive precisely because the global world takes no interest in an '*insignificant*' state (e.g., Somaliland).

### How to Jump Start State-Building?<sup>45</sup>

#### *Step 1: Minimizing the configurations*

Most states are not collapse; many are not in crisis, while few are truly strong. State strength is thus a subset of non-state-crisis, itself a smaller subset of non-state-collapse.

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<sup>44</sup> The latter variable may occur at the crisis stage or only further down the slope between crisis and collapse. Indeed, methodologically, the advanced group mobilization plus economic shift equation ( $A.E$ ) entails the joint occurrence of these variables either with or without poor elite renewal ( $R$ ).  $A.E$  is a larger set of cases including instances of  $A.E.r$  as well as those of  $A.E.R$ . Thus in effect,  $A.E$  comprehends  $R$  as a '*don't care*' value (-).

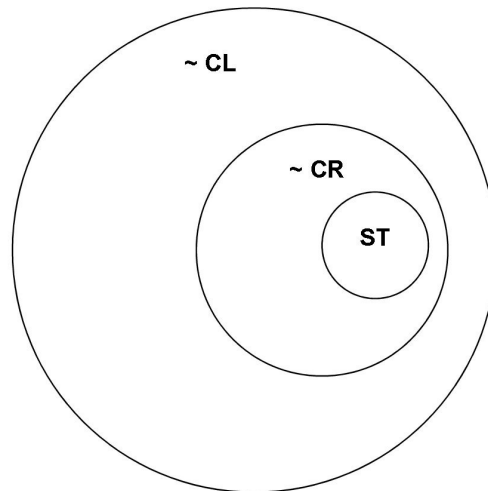
<sup>45</sup> As previously stated, this is a process we tend to be more cautious about, as we are well aware that this research was designed to study collapse. It is possible that this directional focus of the original design may affect the results, eventually giving them a bias. Yet, it is equally possible that there are some interesting lessons to be learned from these results, and since we have them at hand, we might as well take them into consideration.

### State Stabilization

**~ CL : Non State Collapse**

**~ CR : Non State Crisis**

**ST : State Strength**



#### *Non-state-collapse*

In order to study all types of situations or causal configurations that did **not** lead to state collapse, we took the logical opposite (complement) of the state collapse configuration:

If  $CL = I.E.A.R$ , then  $\sim CR = i + e + a + r$

This means that the absence of *any* of the four conditions is *sufficient* to prevent state collapse. Could the mere absence of any of the four causal conditions jump-start state-building or does collapse produce a qualitative shift?

#### *Non-state-crisis*

Once again, the complement is considered:

If  $CR = I.E.R + E.A$ , then  $\sim CR = e + i.a + a.r$  or  $e + a.(i + r)$

To avoid a crisis results show that avoiding an economic shift is '*sufficient*'. If during the seventies and eighties states scoring poorly on most factors managed to avoid crisis, it is because they maintained a stable economy. This solution was no longer an option when the petrodollar loans dried out in the mid eighties.

Two other alternatives exist, each involve peaceful advanced groups. If advanced groups do not mobilize *and* the external environment remains consistent, crisis shall be avoided. The linkage between the external environment and the advanced group mobilization suggest that diasporas



play an important role.<sup>46</sup> The last alternative more obviously links the absence of advanced group mobilization to the proper elite renewal.

### *State strength*

The result of state strength stresses the importance of two variables: the consistency of the external environment and peaceful advanced groups. This is particularly interesting given that these two variables are also capable of avoiding state crisis.

$$ST = i.a.e + i.a.r \quad \text{or} \quad i.a.(e + r)$$

What these result suggest is that a consistent external environment is 'necessary' to preserve state strength. Although ignored in most operational frameworks, many scholars from Ted Gurr to Bertrand Badie, have long stressed the destabilizing impact of a shift in the international environment<sup>47</sup>. But this variable is particularly important in both weak and strong states.

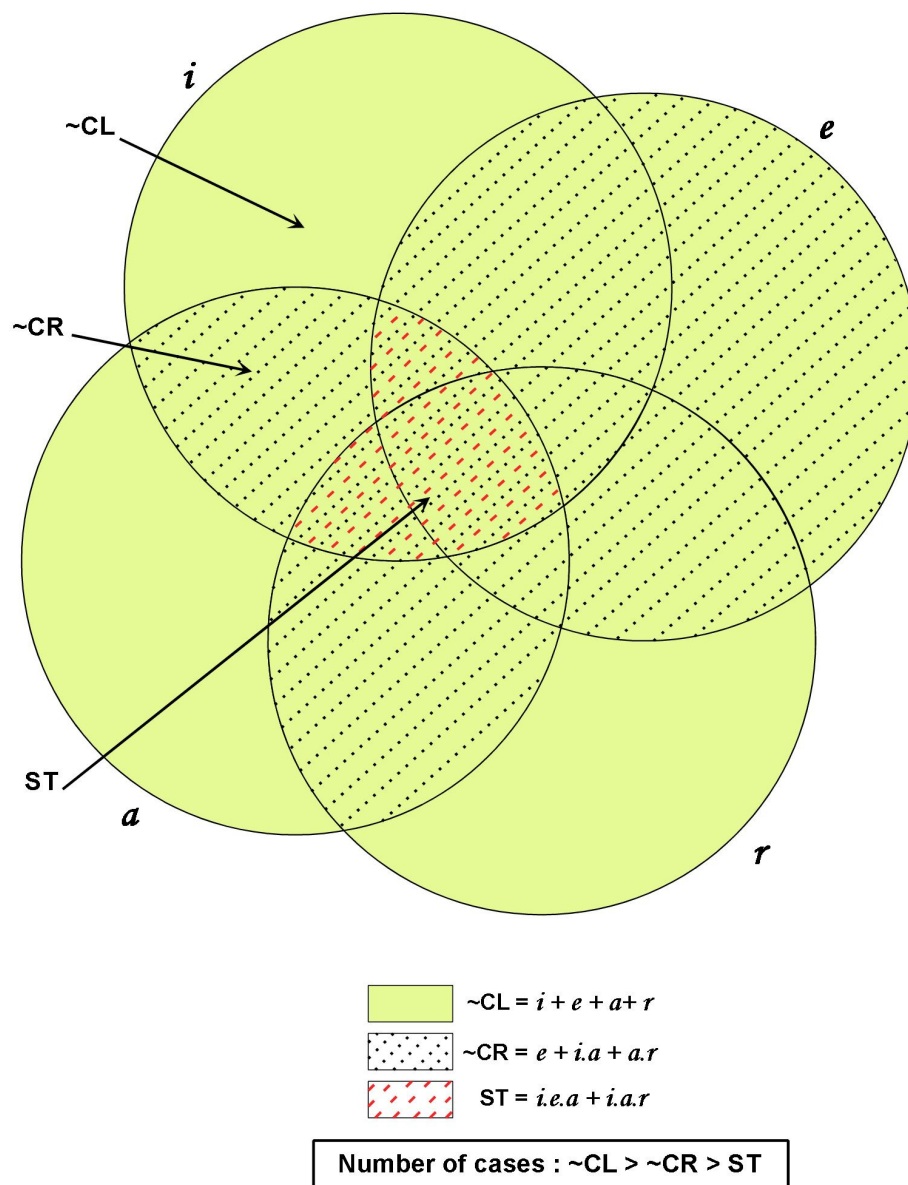
Again, the various configurations are perhaps best understood visually:

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<sup>46</sup> Paul COLLIER argues that they produce a six-fold increase in the likelihood of rebellions. In Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and their Implications for Policy (Washington DC, World Bank Development Research Group, 2000), p. 14.

<sup>47</sup> Bertrand BADIE, Un monde sans souveraineté (Paris, Fayard, 1999) ; Bertrand BADIE, La fin des territoires (Paris, Fayard, 1995) ; Ted Robert GURR, Minorities at Risk (Washington DC, United States Institute of Peace Press, 1993); Robert JACKSON, Quasi-States (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995); Leonardo VILLALON and Phillip HUXTABLE, The African State at a Critical Juncture (Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1998).

State strength as a subset of non-state-crisis and non-state-collapse



*Step 2: Understanding the Dynamics of the Process*

The Stabilizing Process	
Situations	Configurations
<b>~CL</b>	$i + e + a + r$
<b>~CR</b>	$e + i.a + a.r$ or $e + a.(i + r)$
<b>ST</b>	$i.e.a + i.a.r$ or $i.a.(e + r)$

*From non-state-collapse to non-state-crisis*

The first equation explains how states avoid collapse, progressing from a non-collapse to a non-crisis situation.

$$\sim\text{CL} = i + e + a + r$$

$$\sim\text{CR} = e + i.a + a.r \quad \text{or} \quad e + a.(i + r)$$

The move from one situation to the other may be the result of any of the following combinations:

e remains by itself

or

i combines with a (or a combines with i)

or

a combines with r (or r combines with a)

*From non-state-crisis to state strength*

$$\sim\text{CR} = e + i.a + a.r \quad \text{or} \quad e + a.(i + r)$$

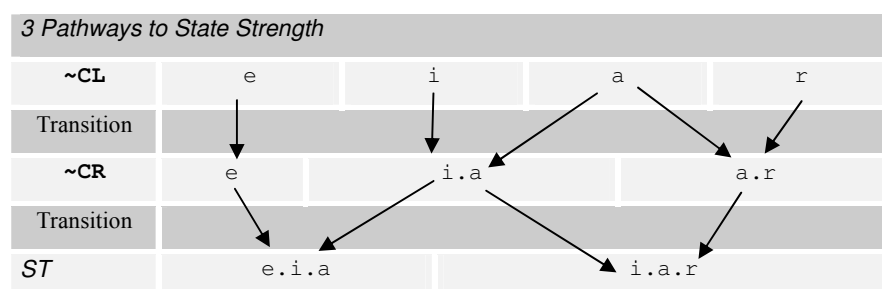
$$\text{ST} = i.e.a + i.a.r \quad \text{or} \quad i.a.(e + r)$$

The building of a strong state involves either of the following combinations:

i.a combines with e (or e combines with i.a)

i.a combines with a.r (or a.r combines with i.a)

From the combinations developed above, it is quite clear that at least three alternative to state strength co-exist.



Notice how the process to achieve state strength is not the logical opposite of the destabilizing process. Stabilization operates differently from collapse in at least two ways. First, strength can be achieved not merely through one, but at least two causal configurations (e.i.a or i.a.r), meaning that competing theories of state stability may all be right. Second, these two configurations are also simpler (logically) than the configuration of collapse. Instead of collapse's *four* causal conditions, the state strength configurations '*only*' requires the absence of *three* destabilizing factors.

### Path 1: The e and i.a combination

In this case, the starting point can be threefold: states escape collapse as a result of a sound economy, a stable external environment *or* satisfied advanced group. That international financial institutions', such as the World Bank, focus on a sound economy as the silver bullet is understandable as it kills two birds with one stone: both collapse and crisis. However, the second alternative to avoid a crisis (a stable external realm *and* peaceful advanced groups) is equally interesting as it '*only*' needs to secure a stable economic environment to build a strong state, whereas the economic pathway requires two more causal conditions to achieve the same goal. There is a trade off. When collapsed, the urgency is to escape that situation even at the expense of lingering in a twilight zone before full state strength is achieved. When in crisis, the other option (stable

international system plus peaceful advanced groups) will offer more flexibility to build a strong state.

### Path 2: The i.a +a.r combination

This second path offers a promising perspective whereby state strength is achieved despite a problematic economic environment. First, collapse is avoided by the mere absence of any of the three other causal conditions: a stable external environment, participatory advanced groups or a smooth renewal of the elite. Second, to circumvent crisis, two of the previous three causal conditions need to combine: the combination of either a stable external realm *and* the absence of contending advanced groups *or* a peaceful advanced groups and a smooth elite assimilation. Third, the building of a strong state. The configuration of a stable external system and participatory advanced groups is the most flexible of all three pathways, as it may combine with any causal condition to build state strength.

### Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to produce a dynamic theory of state collapse and QCA proved particularly adequate to tackle the chemistry among the variables and the process of collapse, prevention and reconstruction. Variable-oriented research is often additive and not chemical as QCA does<sup>48</sup>. Inversely, most of the case-oriented research often takes into account combinations, but lack precision while inconsistencies go unnoticed<sup>49</sup>.

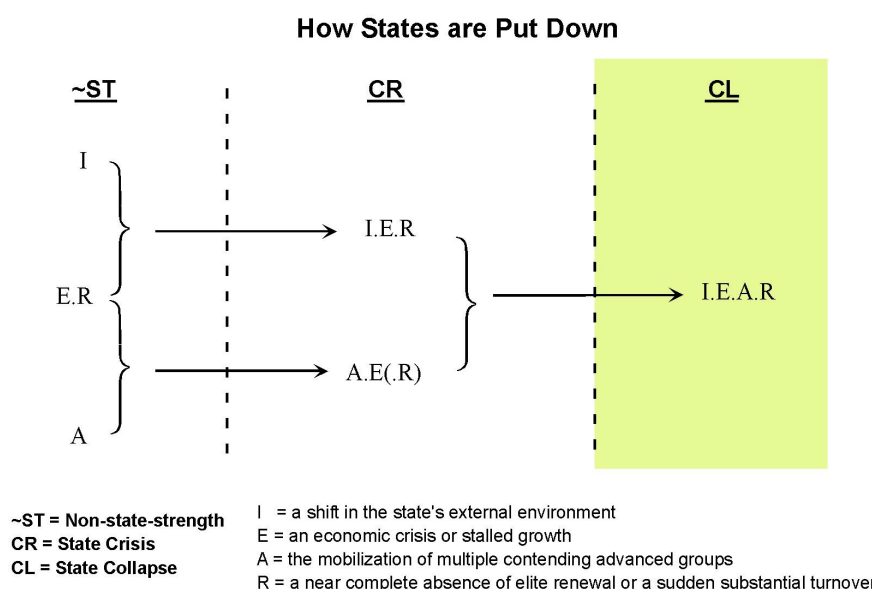
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<sup>48</sup> Charles Ragin suggests that "*instead of asking: What is the net effect of variable x on the outcome across all cases? the researcher may want to ask: In what context and in what kind of cases is x linked to the outcome in question?*". In Charles RAGIN, Making Comparative Analysis Count: Bridging Case-Oriented and Variable-Oriented Research (Louvain-La-Neuve, COMPASSS Conference, September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2003).

<sup>49</sup> The inconsistencies forced us to reconsider first our cases and then each individual variable in interaction with the others. This allowed us not only to aggregate or cluster variables together, but also to refine them. The advanced group variable for instance originally started as group mobilization, then we highlighted the coincidence of ascriptive identities and advanced groups. Once the property space was filled in, we realized that this variable yet had to be further developed in order to distinguish collapse from a mere crisis. Whereas a *single* mobilizing advanced group would lead to secession or regime change at best, *multiple contending* advanced groups were essential to produce collapse. Reconsidering this variable is common in variable-oriented

The overall conclusion of this research is that states are remarkably resilient: they adapt to numerous problems, they bend, and lean, but seldom break. To the state's credit it is able to cope relatively well with many destabilizing factors. However, when submitted to too much stress, states too reach a breaking point. Collapse is an extreme instance of instability where the simultaneous occurrence of four factors is 'necessary'. These causes are an inconsistent external environment, an economic shift, the mobilization of 'advanced' groups and a poor renewal of the political elite. This study compares three type of situations (strength, crisis, and collapse) increasing our understanding not only of 'why' states collapse, but also of 'how' this occurs.

### *The Process of State Collapse*



**In the early stages of the destabilizing process**, two variables bear more weight: an inconsistent external environment and the mobilization of advanced groups are each sufficient to weaken a strong state. This is particularly interesting because these are precisely the two aspects which are absent in many operational 'early warning' indicators used by development agencies. State

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research, when raising thresholds. Using multiple contending advanced groups as opposed to simply advanced group mobilization corresponds to a higher benchmark within the advanced group variable.

failure is still seen as an essentially domestic process underplaying the crucial role of regional and international actors<sup>50</sup>. It is sometimes assumed that the external environment is important only later in the process when states are already internally weak, but these results prove quite the opposite. The '*advanced groups*' variable is not integrated for lack of adequate indicators, although country specialists could readily identify it. The two current development darlings (economy and democracy) bear less weight in the early stages of the process, because they are unable to destabilize a strong state unless in combination.

**To drive a state into crisis**, it takes the joint action of two or three causes. In all configurations, the economic variable plays a central role. Whatever the combination, an economic shift will always be necessary to drive the state into crisis. The second configuration represents the quasi-state where all internal dimensions of statehood are long since gone and the state owes its survival to the life-line granted by the external system.

**A state collapses** only under the joint action of all four variables. Two causal variables bear particular weight: the mobilization of advanced groups, and a shift in the state's external environment. Interestingly, these two variables were already important at the beginning of the process. Given that these variables are also absent in most early warning frameworks, it is fair to assume that these toolkits may be very efficient at predicting crisis, but inadequate to forecast collapse.

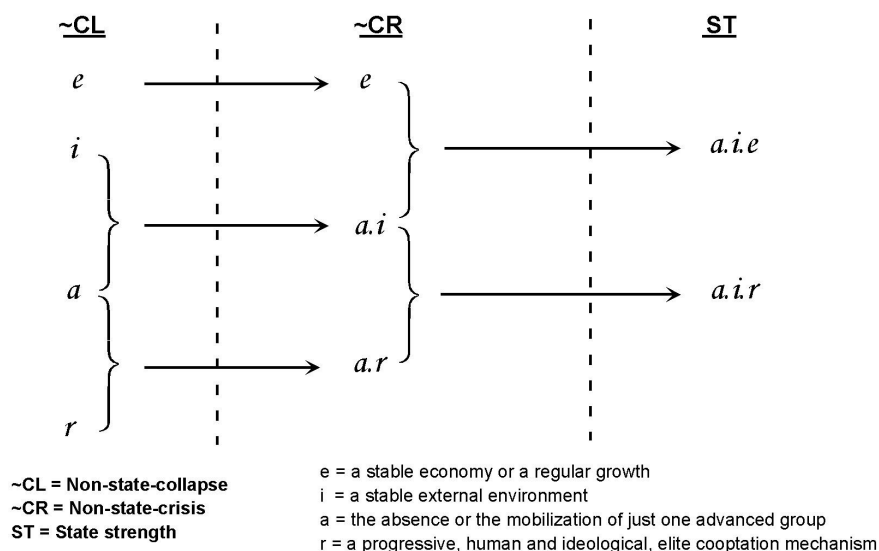
Knowing how states collapse, the next question is: what should we do about it? There is no reason why, considered in a reversed order, the three types of situations (strength, crisis and collapse) should not offer some insights on state building<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> The '*external*' variables taken into consideration in the most sophisticated frameworks are an open economic system, neighbours at war and seldom membership of an international organization. Aid, military intervention, sanctions and political support are simply not taken into account.

<sup>51</sup> There is little doubt that these configurations of variables may be used for preventive purposes. However, we are less confident about curative purposes. Since this research was originally designed to assess the causality of state collapse, all observations were taken prior to collapse, and it may well be that once a state has collapsed a qualitative shift occurs whereby setting the state back up becomes a much more arduous undertaking than the mere prevention of that occurrence. It would thus be well worth setting these results to trial in order to see whether they are equally valid as a cure.

### How to Avoid State Collapse



All it takes to **prevent state collapse** is to be able to prevent the occurrence of any of the four causal variables. That includes the consistency of the external environment; the international community and the neighbors should thus be able to prevent state collapse. This does not mean that one should continue supporting states in crisis and puppet regimes forever. Instead of shifting between support and disengagement, the international community could change the nature of its intervention<sup>52</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> If one type or source of support is ineffective in restoring some state strength or if it is supporting a regime whose practices are unacceptable for the patron or the donors, then the type of intervention must be thought over, but certainly not abandoned. One (perhaps politically incorrect, but efficient) solution might, for instance, be to lend substantial support to one of the already mobilized advanced groups in order to produce a regime change. This would effectively solve two problematic issues: the international shift would be avoided, while robust support to one group would give it a decisive advantage against all others to the extent that it becomes the only one to still qualify as an advanced group. If a shift in the state's external environment is avoided ( $i$ ) and only one advanced group remains instead of multiple contending proponents ( $a$ ), then not only will state collapse be avoided, but so will state crisis be. For a first attempt to assess the efficiency of the World Bank tools see Lisa CHAUVET and Paul COLLIER, Development Effectiveness in Fragile States: Spillovers and Turnarounds (Oxford University, paper at the Department of Economics, January 2005).



Three of variables carry a particular weight in the stabilization process: the economy, the interaction between advanced groups and a consistent external environment. **When collapsed, focusing on the economic realm is the silver bullet ensuring a swift recovery from both state collapse and state crisis, killing two birds with one stone.** The drawback of the economic approach is that although it ensures a swift recovery once a state has collapsed, it offers less flexibility and will need more additional variables to build a strong state. **When in crisis, strengthening the participation of advanced groups and a stable international environment both prevents collapse and offers more flexibility to build a strong state.**

In a nutshell, what lessons can be drawn from this research?

- **States are remarkably resilient.** They efficiently deal with any problem, but have a harder time when various contentious issues occur at the same time. States collapse because they are overburdened, not due to some Armageddon cause.
- **There is no need for long shopping lists of causes** used by many frameworks, the monitoring of the four core causes (external consistency, advanced group mobilization, sound economy and adequate elite cooptation) is sufficient.
- Many development agencies **focus on a stable economy.** Most early warning indicators make substantial room for the economic dimensions of failure, which makes them very effective to predict the occurrence of crisis. A sound economy is also a very effective for curative purposes ensuring a swift improvement from collapse and crisis.
- However, many of these toolkits **fail to integrate the external environment and the mobilization of advanced groups.** These two variables appeared to be particularly relevant for preventive purposes early in the destabilization process or towards the end when crisis leads to collapse. Most early warning frameworks are unable to predict when crisis will unravel into collapse because they do not consider these two variables. These two variables are also relevant for state building as their combination offers much flexibility to build a strong state and makes room for external action.
- In the light of current events stressing freedom, liberty and a free electoral process, it is interesting to stress the **modest salience of the international community's darling: the renewal of the political elite.** Will the elections save Afghanistan or is the support of the international environment the determining factor?

Recommendation for further research to be done based on these findings include:

- To **expand the case studies** and particularly to consider instance of successful turnaround countries.
- The urgent need to develop indicators integrating **the external environment (in all its variation) and the advanced groups**.

In his most recent book, Paul Collier discussed the fate of what the World Bank has labeled Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) and his conclusion was that in such countries: *"the capacity and appetite for reform are limited, and thus attempting reform across a broad front is not sensible. In the normal LICUS environment, the agenda for reform has to be highly prioritized"*<sup>53</sup>. If this research was able to however modestly improve our understanding of what exactly these priorities might be, then it has served its purpose well.

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<sup>53</sup> Paul COLLIER and alii, Breaking the Conflict Trap. Civil War and Development Policy (Washington DC, World Bank Development Research Group, 2003), p. 154.