Abstract
Quantitative research on the factors leading to the onset of internal conflict has, *inter alia*, highlighted the role of hybrid regimes. These political systems are said to lack the repressive apparatus of autocratic regimes as well as institutions for a peaceful resolution of disputes common to democracies, resulting in a significantly higher risk of civil war. At the same time, this strand of research has identified a close linear correlation between state fragility and conflict risk — the weaker state institutions are, the more likely the conflict. However, the relationship between these three factors (state fragility, regime type, and conflict risk) seems to be less straightforward than these findings suggest. This paper presents preliminary results from a series of exploratory studies of 15 cases of state collapse, the most extreme form of state fragility. What virtually all of these cases have in common is that, in the years leading up to the breakdown, they were governed by strongly autocratic governments. Regime type played a crucial role in this process, either through a personalization of politics, or by provoking the radicalisation and militarization of political actors. However, if such a link holds up to further inquiry, we would be faced with a puzzle: If state fragility raises conflict risk, why do hybrid regimes increase the likelihood of conflict while autocracies increase the likelihood of state collapse? In the final part, the paper sketches out a research agenda that would be able to resolve this contradiction.
1. **INTRODUCTION**

What are the causal relationships within the triangle of state capacity\(^1\), regime type and violent conflict? There is no conclusive answer to this admittedly complex and multilayered question. Nevertheless, since these three concepts are the subject of large and ever-growing bodies of literature, it would be timely to consider their theoretical and empirical interconnections. Not least, this should be of interest to researchers employing quantitative approaches to the study of civil wars, for example, who treat regime type and state capacity as discrete independent variables. Should a correlation between these two variables emerge, research designs would have to be modified to accommodate this fact.

The aim of this paper is to summarize the state of the art as it relates to the effects of regime type on a) violent conflict and b) state capacity. Since the latter of these relationships is comparatively under-researched, this paper also presents some very preliminary findings from a set of exploratory case studies about the causal structure of state collapse that seem to reinforce the theoretical assumption that autocratic regimes are particularly likely to contribute to the breakdown of the state. This finding, however, would be very hard to reconcile with contrasting accounts from quantitative research into civil wars. To conclude, several possible explanations for this apparent incompatibility are discussed and directions for further research identified.

2. **THE CAUSES OF VIOLENT CONFLICT**

Quantitative research into violent conflict has undergone a rapid expansion over the last two centuries. In this process, its focus has shifted from the explanation of interstate conflict to intrastate ones, not least due to their much higher empirical frequency.\(^2\) Various aspects of the conflict process have been analyzed including its onset, its duration, its severity, its termination, and its outcome. In the next two sections, I will summarize the results of the research on conflict onset, looking at the role of regime type and state capacity as independent variables in particular.

2.1 **Regime Type as an Independent Variable**

Regimes may be thought of as, to use Fishman’s seminal definition, “the formal and informal organization of the center of political power, and of its relations with the broader society. A

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\(^1\) I use the term “state capacity” to refer to the degree to which state institutions are able to carry out their assigned tasks. Employed in this sense, the term is very similar with “empirical statehood” as described by Jackson and Rosberg (1982). I use these two terms as well as “stateness” interchangeably in this paper.

\(^2\) The terms “intrastate conflict”, “civil war”, “internal conflict”, and “violent conflict” will be used interchangeably in this paper.
regime determines who has access to political power, and how those in power deal with those who are not” (1990: 428). Regimes are arrangements for the distribution and exercise of political power and are thus more durable than single governments. In the literature, regimes are usually arrayed along a continuum between democracy and autocracy with a multitude of types in between these two extremes.

The question whether particular regimes types suffer from a higher risk of conflict onset than others are anything but new. However, early assumptions about the internal peacefulness of democracy could not be confirmed. The most importance reference is still Hegre et al. (2001) who found that hybrid regimes, i.e. those regimes exhibiting both autocratic and democratic traits, are particularly susceptible to violent internal conflict. They interpret this finding to mean that democracies are able to resolve conflicts by peaceful means whereas autocracies have the means to suppress dissent. However, “(s)emidemocracies are partly open yet somewhat repressive, a combination that invites protest, rebellion, and other forms of civil violence. Repression leads to grievances that induce groups to take actions, and openness allows for them to organize and engage in activities against the regime” (Hegre et al. 2001: 33).

In their article, Hegre et al. build upon earlier findings that have found correlations in smaller datasets between semidemocratic regimes and a higher risk of conflict onset. They use the well-known POLITY indicator of the Policy IIId dataset (McLaughlin et al. 1998) which is calculated as the subtraction of the variable AUTOC from the variable DEMOC. These variables measure the autocratic and democratic characteristics of a regime, respectively. Since both DEMOC and AUTOC are scored on a scale of 0 to 10, the combined POLITY score has a range of -10 to +10. To test for the specific conflict risk for anocracies, Hegre et al. employ the square of the POLITY score.

However, the POLITY score does not distinguish between “stable” semidemocracies and transitional regimes whose hybridity is the result of political transformation. Prior studies had thus been unable to answer the question whether the higher risk of conflict that semidemocracies exhibited was a result of the particular instability that transformation processes generate or whether the rise in conflict risk was caused by the particular internal logic of these regimes. Hence, Hegre et al. also coded a variable that measured the age of a regime by counting the number of years since the last movement of the POLITY score by at least two points (in either direction). Indeed, the median life expectancy of semidemocracies (which were defined as those cases with a POLITY score of -5 to +5) was 5.8 years and thus significantly lower than the life expectancy of autocracies (7.9 years) and democracies (10.0

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3 Beside “hybrid regime”, I also employ the terms “semi-democracy” and “anocracy” to refer to this type of regime.
Regression analysis also confirmed that the institutional hybridity of anocracies and the fluidity of regimes in transition had a significant and positive impact on the risk of conflict onset.

These findings have been replicated in further studies, for example by Fearon and Laitin (2003). They constructed a dummy variable “anocracy” for all those cases where the POLITY score is between -5 and +5. Controlling for the impact of political instability (which they define as a year-on-year change of at least three points in the POLITY score), this variable is significant: “In substantive terms the estimate suggests that these regimes have about 68% greater odds of civil war outbreak in any given years than would a full autocracy” (Fearon/Laitin 2003: 85). However, their interpretation of this finding differs from Hegre et al.’s since Fearon and Laitin do not consider hybrid regimes to be particularly prone to conflict per se. Instead, they argue that these political configurations only come about when a government is unable to install a purely autocratic form of government. Hence an anocratic system is simply an indicator for an ineffectual government: “(W)e suspect that the answer is often that ‘anocracies’ are weak regimes, lacking the resources to be successful autocrats or containing an unstable mix of political forces that makes them unable to move to crush nascent rebel groups” (Fearon/Laitin 2003: 85).

This difference in interpretation between Fearon/Laitin and Hegre et al. is but one example for the questionable concept-indicator validity (Goertz 2001) of many variables employed in quantitative studies of civil war. This alone, however, does not obviate the robustness of the findings since these have been confirmed in several other studies (e.g. Gates et al. 2006). For instance, the ill-named State Failure Task Force concludes that “partial democracies” (as they call it) exhibit a significantly higher risk of large-scale political violence than other regime types (Esty et al. 1998: 83). Henderson and Singer (2000: 289) also find a significant correlation between an anocratic regime and conflict risk. It should be noted, however, that these studies are only partly comparable due to the differences in the definition and operationalization of variables.4

In spite of this general consensus, the robustness of the anocracy-conflict linkage is still being put into question. In their influential World Bank report, Collier et al. say that “the association between partial democracy and civil war may be spurious, becaus partial democracies have other characteristics such as low income that increase the risk of conflict” (2003: 64). Instead, they see a stronger case for a significant effect of political instability (i.e. a change in the POLITY score) on conflict risk. This scepticism is echoed by Lacina: “Thus far, there is only

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4 HendersonSinger (2000) define all cases with a POLITY score between 0 and +5 as anocracies while Esty et al. (1998) define 0 and +7 as their boundaries. Furthermore, Esty et al. employ a dependent variable that is very different from that used by the other authors.
mixed evidence of a role for regime type in conflict onset but some indication of a relationship to conflict severity” (2006: 282).

These criticisms are partially repudiated by Sambanis (2004) who compared the robustness of various findings across different datasets. He found that the results diverged widely according to which dataset was employed, with the operationalization of key variables frequently making the difference between significance and insignificance. In a test of twelve datasets, anocracy was significant at the 0.05 level in just a single one while it came close (p<0.1) in another five. However, when Sambanis restricted his study to those four datasets with the best coverage, he found that anocracy was significant in nine out of ten models. Thus he concludes that while the results “suggest wide-ranging agreement on the robustness of income and population and cast doubt on the robustness of most other variables in civil war models” (Sambanis 2004: 848), anocracy is still one of the variables that held up rather well in comparison to many others. Thus, while its explanatory power is not yet proven beyond a doubt, a majority of studies support the notion that hybrid regimes are particularly likely to experience civil conflict (also see Hegre/Sambanis 2006).

This leaves open the question whether autocracies or democracies are more likely to experience internal conflict. Fearon and Laitin were unable to identify a difference between the effects of either regime type despite using various indicators of democracy (2003: 84-85, but see Henderson/Singer 2000: 289). However, several studies point out the necessity of including additional variables into the equation. In their analysis of a smaller dataset, Benson and Kugler (1998: 206) conclude that democracies with a high capacity for resource extraction (which is a good indicator for state capacity in general) are significantly safer from conflict than autocracies with a similar level of capacity. Collier and Rohner (2008) find that the level of economic development influences the impact of democracy on conflict onset. Above a threshold which they calculate to be at around $2,750 per capita, a democratic regime lessens the risk of internal conflict while risk is increased below that threshold. In contrast, the risk of violence rises in autocracies along with per capita income (also see Colier et al. 2003: 64).5

Other studies take a different approach by disaggregating the key variables, regime type and civil war. For instance, Reynal-Querol (2002) adds several different types of democracy (presidential, parliamentarian-majoritarian and parliamentarian-proportional) to the continuum of regime types. Using this more fine-grained typology, she finds that more inclusive systems exhibit a lower level of conflict risk. Buhaug (2006) differentiates internal war into territorial (i.e. self-determiniation, secessionist) and governmental conflicts (i.e. wars

5 Similarly, when it comes to the impact of the direction of transformation on conflict risk, there are hints but no firm conclusions that democratization might be less dangerous than autocratization (Fearon/Laitin 2003: 85, Fn. 32; but see Hegre et al. 2001: 42).
about the control of government). He finds that the “inverted U” distribution of conflict risk detailed by Hegre et al. only shows up in governmental conflicts whereas territorial conflicts are more likely to occur in democracies (Buhaug 2006: 700). In her study of rebellions in Africa, Carey finds that a democratic façade can be a stabilizing factor for autocratic and anocratic regimes: “Concentration on executive recruitment as one element of political regimes, therefore, does not produce an inverted U-shaped relationship between level of democracy and risk of internal violence, as previous work has suggested” (Carey 2007: 61). The robustness and the general applicability of these findings have yet to be determined. Nevertheless, the contours of a future research agenda can be perceived here.

2.2 State Capacity as the Independent Variable

Besides regime type, the political capacity of state institutions is also considered to have a significant impact on the risk of internal conflict. The underlying argument is that the inability of the state to defend its monopoly of force opens up spaces for the use of private violence. Accordingly, many of the major quantitative studies on the causes of civil war attempt to include state capacity into their explanatory models. A good example is Fearon and Laitin’s hypothesis “that financially, organizationally, and politically weak central governments render insurgency more feasible and attractive due to weak local policing or inept and corrupt counterinsurgency practices” (2003: 75-76). Others add that counterinsurgency operations are a difficult task the success of which depends on the cooperation of the local population which is often absent in weak and fragile state (Herbst 2004, Collier et al. 2003: 42). In addition, state capacity is also seen as an explanatory variable in research about the severity (Lacina 2006), the duration and the termination of internal conflict (both deRouen/Sobek 2004).

However, in virtually all of these studies the operationalization of state capacity is deficient. Due to a lack of convenient data, most authors either use far-fetched proxy indicators or restrict their analysis to a small number of cases. The first strategy suffers from a lack of validity, i.e. the congruence between the meaning of a concept and its measurement. For instance, state capacity is frequently proxied with per capita income (Lacina 2006: 285). Fearon and Laitin (2003: 80) justify this operationalization with reference to the superior financial, administrative and military capacities of wealthier states as well as their greater penetration of their hinterlands. Hence, after finding a negative impact of higher GDP per capita on conflict risk (which is replicated by Sambanis 2004), Fearon and Laitin claim that the higher the state capacity, the lower the risk of civil war.

Obviously, per capita income is a multidimensional concept that is not necessarily tied to state capacity. For instance, Collier and Hoeffler use per capita income as an indicator for the state
of the economy to proxy opportunity costs for prospective rebels. Yet they warn that “so many characteristics are correlated with per capita income that, depending upon what other variables are included, the proxy is open to other interpretations” (Collier/Hoeffler 2001: 4-5, also Caprioli 2005: 170). Hegre and Sambanis do not even try to attach any conceptual meaning to this indicator any more: “We include income per capita as a measure of the economic opportunity cost of the war, or of some aspect of state capacity, and other economic factors influencing the decision to rebel” (2006: 514).

In a different article, Fearon (2005: 487) employs the share of oil exports of the total volume of exports as a proxy for state capacity since states with a high share of rent income have less incentive to develop administrative capacity and territorial control.⁶ Buhaug (2006: 696) takes a different approach and simply equates anocracies with low state capacity which he measures with a dummy variable derived from the POLITY score. In contrast, Lacina (2006) uses a combination of per capita income and the capital intensity of the military (military expenditure per military personnel). Finally, deRouen and Sobek (2004) construct a variable made up of three indicators: the POLITY score, the size of the military per 1,000 citizens and a measure of bureaucratic effectiveness compiled by Political Risk Services, a for-profit consulting business.

Beyond these less than satisfying proxy variables several researchers have coded their own data for a small number of cases. One example is Benson and Kugler’s measure of “Relative Political Extraction” (RPE) that captures the relation between the actual and the expected resource extraction by the state. The authors find that the higher the RPE, the lower the intensity of violence (Benson/Kugler 1998: 204). However, since their analysis is confined to just 26 countries between 1985 and 1989, the dataset does not solve the general problem expressed by Fearon: “Unfortunately, good direct measures of a state’s administrative capability and integrity are lacking” (2005: 502).

The development of new datasets that track state capacity for a large number of countries across several years has only just begun. By now, the first editions of the Failed States Index (FSI) have been published (Fund for Peace 2005, 2006, 2007). The FSI is geared towards early warning and its composition is methodologically less than satisfying but it might become a very important indicator for quantitative researchers. In addition to the FSI, several other indexes such as the State Fragility Index (Marshall/Goldstone 2007) have recently been introduced that might – given sufficient coverage – also fulfill that role. While these measures have only been employed descriptively, the index developed by the Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP) project has already been used in an empirical analysis (Carment et al. 2006). However, its results do not satisfy basic methodological norms: First, the authors only

⁶ On the impact of oil rents on state capacity see Humphreys 2005 and Snyder/Bhavnani 2005.
provide correlation coefficients without noting. Second, only bivariate correlations were run without any control variables. And third, the composition of the index was not published so that endogeneity problems cannot be ruled out.

Given the serious methodological problems of measuring state capacity, the popular hypothesis that state fragility contributes to the risk of internal conflict remains unproven. On the other hand, it cannot be dismissed either since there is compelling, if anecdotal evidence in support of it. For example, of the 16 countries that score 18 or more in Marshall’s and Goldstone’s (2007) State Fragility Index, eight are currently embroiled in conflict, four have seen the end of a civil war within the last five years whereas the remaining four have experienced at least one instance of war since 1982. Similar descriptive tableaus can be constructed from the CIFP data and the FSI. Though these are by no means proof of the hypothesized effect, they give reason to believe that the odds are in favor of the hypothesis eventually being borne out provided that all endogeneity problems (see 3.) and measurement issues can be overcome.

2.3 Causal Hypotheses

To sum up the above arguments, there are two causal assumptions that can be derived from the research on internal conflict (see Fig. 1):

A1) A hybrid regime increases the risk of conflict.

A2) Low state capacity increases the risk of conflict.

\[ \text{Regime Type: Hybrid Regime} \rightarrow \text{Civil War} \]

\[ \text{H1} \rightarrow \text{State Fragility} \]

\[ \text{A1} \rightarrow \text{Civil War} \]

\[ \text{A2} \rightarrow \text{State Fragility} \]

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\[ \text{Source: Own Compilation} \]

The robustness of these two statements is still in question, albeit to different degrees. While A1 is fairly well-supported, large question marks remain with regard to A2. Assuming that A1 and A2 are correct, there is still the question how regime type and state capacity interact in
this stylized triangle. For now, it can only be hypothesized that, since hybrid regimes and fragile statehood both increase conflict risk, these factors correlate as well:

H1) Hybrid regimes lessen state capacity.  

3. The Causes of State Collapse

Interestingly, research on failed and fragile states offers a different account of the effects of regime type on stateness. In this section, the relevant literature is discussed and two theoretically derived causal models will be presented. After that, the results of some exploratory case studies will be briefly reported.

3.1 Review of the Literature

In recent years, there have been numerous contributions to the study of state capacity (state fragility, state failure etc.). However, the majority of these has focused on either the security implications of state failure, in particular as this pertains to (transnational) terrorism (Piazza 2007, Simons/Tucker 2007, Rotberg 2002), or on how the international community ought to deal with failed states (Krasner 2004, Crocker 2003, Mallaby 2002). As a result, the research program on the causes of state failure is “sparse and underdeveloped”, as Englehart (2007: 133) rightly notes.

To talk of state capacity, state failure, state fragility and state collapse presupposes a concept of the state. In the context of this paper, a state is considered to be a political order to which the persons residing inside a delimited territory ascribe the authority to set and enforce binding rules among them. To this end, the state possesses monopolies on the use of physical violence and on taxation. The enforcement and reproduction of these monopolies is taken over by those political and administrative organs that the state creates for itself. This definition represents an ideal-type referent which real states can be measured against. Thus it is possible to construct a continuum of stateness, one end of which is occupied by the “ideal” state. States who have little to no capacity when it comes to the exercise of their three monopolies (violence, taxation, rule-making) can be considered fragile, failing, failed, or collapsed (Rotberg 2004).

7 We can also derive a hypothesis with the opposite causal claim, that weak statehood contributes to the emergence of hybrid regimes. Since this paper is concerned with the effects of regime type on state capacity, this hypothesis will not be investigated.

8 This definition leaves out the issue of recognition under international law even though this is a de facto (if not de jure) prerequisite before a polity is accepted as a “state” both in international relations and in political science. However, since the juridical aspects of statehood (Jackson/Rosberg 1982) do not have the same ideal-type character as the sociological content of the definition they are given separately. For a critique of an ideal-type referent see Migdal/Schlchte (2005).
In this paper, I will focus on the causes of state collapse, the most severe form of state fragility. There are several reasons for this decision: First, state collapse is easier to delineate and operationalize than mere fragility. Second, a tighter definition will lead to a smaller number of cases and thus to a smaller degree of inter-case variation. Put differently, such a strategy is more interested in the commonalities of a small population rather than the differences among a larger one which seems appropriate given the early stage of the research program. Third, there is a priori no reason to assume that state collapse differs in quality from the less dramatic cases of institutional collapse; it rather seems a matter of degree. Thus, insights about the causes of state collapse should be applicable to cases of state failure and state fragility, within limits.

The concept of state collapse goes back to Zartman’s (1995) seminal contribution. Generally, the term is reserved for those cases who occupy the “negative” pole of the continuum of stateness. Referring to the ideal-type of the state, a collapsed state can be defined – again in an ideal-type manner – as a political order that has juridical statehood (i.e. international recognition) yet has no capacities in the areas of violence, taxation and rule-making. It should be noted that this definition describes a condition, not a process even though the term collapse suggests it semantically. It follows that this definition does not imply that a state – at whatever level of functioning – has existed within the same territory prior to collapse.

The situation described by state collapse has several obvious parallels to a condition of civil war – the collapse of the state’s monopoly of force always leads to a privatization of the means of violence and frequently to their large-scale use. Empirically, this overlap becomes even clearer: Almost every instance of state collapse, be it Somalia, Afghanistan, Zaire or Lebanon, has been accompanied by atrocious violence that has claimed millions and millions of lives. Yet state collapse is more than an en vogue label for something already known. The major difference between state collapse and civil war is situated in the respective foci of these two approaches: while civil war is concerned with the actors, state collapse looks at political institutions. In the end, state collapse is a subset of the class of state fragility which is distinct from the class of wars, yet still has some areas of overlap. Fig. 2 shows that fragile statehood in general occasionally, though by no means every time, correlates with violent conflict. However, almost all cases of fragility which lead to state collapse are beset by massive violence even though the overlap is not perfect since a state can have collapsed even before the outbreak of civil war. One example of this would be Zaire where the state had pretty much disappeared by 1991/92 – almost five years before the civil war started that eventually drove Mobutu out of office (Young 1994, Weiss 1995, McNulty 1999).

9 The condition of juridical statehood has been added to the definition to delineate collapsed states from other polities that do not strive for recognition under international law which are variously called Para-States (von Trotha 2000), de facto States (Pegg 1998) or “States-within-States” (Kingston/Spears 2004).
To a degree, the overlap between state collapse and civil war is endogenous to the definition of a state as a monopolist of the means of physical violence. This Weberian concept of the states makes an empirical inquiry into the effects of state fragility on conflict risk, or vice versa, very tricky. This endogeneity problem has so far not been acknowledged by quantitative researchers (see 2.2). One possible way to overcome this problem is to operationalize stateness with concepts that leave out the monopoly of violence such as Benson and Kugler’s (1998) RPE or measures of bureaucratic quality (Evans/Rauch 1999, deRouen/Sobek 2004).

Given these knotty methodological problems and the lack of data coverage (see 2.2), it is hardly a surprise that most of the research on state collapse is conducted with qualitative methods that have contributed little to the systematic development of the research program. Most works represent single-case or small-N designs whose results are only rarely built upon in further research. In spite of this there is a more or less explicit consensus in the literature that particular aspects of autocratic rule are especially harmful for state institutions. And apparently with good reason, as Kraxberger notes: “Of the 15 African states with low Failed States Index rankings, none warranted the Freedom House designation ‘free’. The seven lowest of the 15 – Sudan, Congo-Kinshasa, Côte d’Ivoire, Zimbabwe, Chad, Somalia and Guinea – were all designated ‘not free’” (2007: 1059).10

10 Similar results are obtained when POLITY scores or various scores from the World Bank Governance Indicators dataset are substituted for the Freedom House measures. This also holds for non-African cases.
Bad governance is frequently identified as a major reason for the collapse of state institutions although two different accounts emerge from the literature as to the exact causal mechanism. Rotberg (2004) is the best-known proponent of the first explanation which sees the inability of fragile governments to provide public goods to their citizens as the deciding factor. Rotberg enumerates several of these goods that he considers to be the most important such as public security, rule of law, participation, or health and education services. When the state cannot supply these goods, the government and soon the state will be delegitimized.

A similar argument is made by Holsti (1996: 116-117) who sees state collapse as the unintended side effect of attempts at state-building. According to him, weak states in a process of state formation arrive at a point where they find themselves unable to extend their territorial control and societal penetration any further due to the resistance of local authorities in a fragmented society (also see Migdal 1988) and due to its own relative incapacity. In this situation, the state is faced with a dilemma: On the one hand, it must now demonstrate its capacity to integrate and mobilize the society at a national level, to provide public goods and to raise the necessary resources on its own, yet on the other hand, it lacks the capability to fulfill these expectations. Therefore, many governments employ predatory and despotic practices that undermine their legitimacy and exacerbate social tensions: “Everything it [the state, D.L.] does to become a strong state actually perpetuates its weakness. [...] We can call this situation the state-strength dilemma” (Holsti 1996: 117, emphasis in the original).

While Rotberg and Holsti thus portray collapse as the unintended result of otherwise well-meant policies that were frustrated by governmental incompetence and/or societal resistance, other authors provide a more critical account. Zartman (1995) lists a range of practices from the embezzlement of public funds to the repression of social protest that isolate a regime from society and slowly delegitimize its rule. With a shrinking power base, the regime delays controversial decisions and adopts a short-term perspective in order to stay in power. Similar behavior is identified by Schneckener (2006) in his comparison of twelve so-called “states at risk”. In addition to various structural factors, he considers four political strategies to be particularly harmful to the stability of the state: the politicization of collective identities, state repression of societal actors, the political instrumentalization of social discontent, and corruption and clientelism.

Whatever the specific reasons of collapse, the literature seems to agree on one hypothesis:

H2) Autocratic regimes lessen state capacity.

This hypothesis encompasses two major causal models of how autocratic governance contributes to state collapse: 1) the weakening of state institutions from the inside due to governmental self-interest (e.g. staying in power, getting rich), and 2) exacerbating or creating
conflict, either between the state and social groups or between these groups. These practices lead to a delegitimization of the state which invites an armed insurrection at some point.

The next two sections will take a closer look at these causal models that are derived not just from theory, but have also found support in a series of explorative case studies (see 3.4). Since the models have not been subjected to out-of-sample tests, they represent little more than untested hypotheses and will be subjected to a more rigorous analysis at a later stage. The same goes for the question how these two models interact theoretically and logically.

3.2 The Privatization Model

The first of the two models is the better-researched of the two, most recently by Englehart (2007) in a very compelling account. This model centers around an autocratic government anxious to defend its power against challengers within the state (real or perceived). If the government does not have a sufficiently large and stable power base, it will attempt to either control or – where this is not possible – to destroy alternative sources of power like the army, the police or the bureaucracy in order to deny these resources to any pretender to the throne. Hence, some governments will have perverse incentives to dismantle their own states, as Englehart describes: “Governments often have incentives to weaken states, to give themselves greater freedom of action, to generate resources for supporters, or to weaken potential centers of resistance” (2007: 148, also Migdal 1988). He then details two particular strategies: the destruction of the legal-rational infrastructure of the bureaucracy and the erosion of the state monopoly of violence.

The bureaucracy, for instance, can be critically weakened by cutting or delaying the wage payments to civil servants which forces them to adopt corrupt practices. This, in turn, weakens the bureaucracy’s standing among the population and prevents it from becoming a counterweight to the regime. This is not intended to destroy the administration completely and it usually does not go this far: “While such a strategy leads to official corruption and undermines the quality of the bureaucracy, it does not necessarily lead to collapse. Indeed, governments may learn to benefit from such a situation and see it as functional. Such policies may be highly stable, if suboptimal” (Englehart 2007: 145).

There are several different ways for a government to undermine the state control of violence. One of the more obvious strategies is the politicization, cooptation or corruption of the security forces to bring them under the sway of the regime. Furthermore, autocrats frequently build up paramilitary forces outside the formal state apparatus in order to create additional forces over which they have personal authority (Frisch 2002). In a pinch, these regimes will
even handing out arms to civilians or criminals to provoke a climate of fear or to encourage violence among supporters of the opposition.

I call this the “privatization model” of state collapse since its central claim is that the private interests of the regime outweigh its public obligations. Additionally, the most destructive strategies that regimes can adopt according to this model are all connected to the privatization of the offices, the authority and the resources of the state. With this model, Englehart – maybe inadvertently since there are no references to him – echoes Reno’s (1998, 2000) concept of the “shadow state”. Reno uses this concept to describe a political formation structured like a patron-client pyramid that exists parallel to the formal state. The shadow state integrates state functionaries and non-state authorities into a quasi-feudal cartel of power in order to produce political loyalty and stability. Patrons buy the allegiance of clients with protection and the dispensation of favors, i.e. by providing political, economic or social advantages. To keep this network running, state resources, usually in the form of rents, need to be transferred to the shadow state. In the end, a fully-formed shadow state hides behind the emaciated husk of the formal state that lives on as façade disguising the real power structure. Juridical statehood is maintained to allow access to international rents from development or military aid and to gain access to global markets.

Similar to Englehart, Reno argues that the distinctive logic of the shadow state serves as an incentive for rulers to transfer the exercise of power from the formal institutions to the shadow state. By making public goods scarce, citizens are willing to pay more for access to security and welfare: “A shadow state ruler may thus seek to make life less secure and more materially impoverished for subjects” (Reno 2002: 108). Citizens react to this commodification of formerly public goods by turning to the representatives of the shadow states and trying to obtain the suddenly scarce good from them. This leads to a rapid delegitimization of the formal state and furthers processes of societal exit (Hirschman 1978) and disengagement (Azarya 1988). Both Reno and Englehart have demonstrated that under certain circumstances the intentional destruction of formal state institutions can indeed be in the interests of those in power. This is a powerful confirmation of Rotberg’s assertion that state failure “is largely man made, not accidental” (2004: 25).

The plausibility of this model has been supported by a range of case studies that these two authors have undertaken. Englehart finds support from his investigation of state collapse in Afghanistan and Somalia (Englehart 2007), while Reno has done fieldwork in several West African countries, notably Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria (Reno 1998). Taken together, this is sufficient evidence to formulate the hypothesis that the various practices detailed by Englehart and Reno – raising paramilitary troops, eviscerating the bureaucracy, embezzling
public resources, personalizing power, and destroying alternative sources of power – lead to the collapse of the state.

3.3 The Fragmentation Model

The second model explains collapse by looking at the effects of power struggles, i.e. conflicts between political actors about the distribution of, or access to state power, either in the context of an existing regime or in the attempt to replace said regime with a different one. These power struggles exhibit a particular dynamic that prevents any single party or stable coalition of parties from gaining control over the state. While power struggles are an everyday reality in many countries, it is this balance of power that distinguishes collapsed from non-collapsed states. Due to the centripetal forces unleashed in these power struggles, this model will be called the “fragmentation model”.

In order for a power struggle to lead to state collapse, four conditions must be present: 1. a severe polarization of the political landscape, 2. the militarization of the most important political actors, 3. a balance of power between those actors, and 4. the perception among them that they would be able to prevail in open conflict. The sequence of these conditions is immaterial, although some sequences seem to be more likely than others.

The first condition is the polarization of the political landscape. The means that conflict parties adopt more radical stances, that communication between parties breaks down, that the middle ground between them disappears along with spaces for compromise. Given these conditions, conflicts that might have been resolved through political dialogue under other circumstances will escalate. Usually such a polarization takes place in societies where political actors are closely connected to particular identities (whether these are ethnic, religious, regionalist etc.) and where these identities are an important tool for political mobilization.

The militarization of political actors is essential to give them the option to employ violence in their struggle. Unless these groups already have long-standing access to the means of violence, militarization processes usually proceed along the escalating dynamic of an arms race or an “ethnic security dilemma” (Posen 1993) where each group reacts to an arms build-up among their enemies by speeding up their own militarization.

The third condition is a balance of power between those actors, i.e. a fairly even distribution of power resources. If a single conflict party (or stable coalition of parties) is able to quickly and decisively win a militarized dispute, it will inherit a fairly intact state apparatus. However, where no side is able to achieve this goal, the conflict will persist, gradually wearing away the state’s institutions (Zartman 1995: 8). A balance of power will not necessarily be perceived as
such by the actors involved in the conflict. Instead, some parties might feel that they will be able to defeat their enemies in a war and will thus be tempted to escalate the conflict.

Under these conditions, conflict will ensue that has a dramatic effect on the state’s ability to function (to the degree that such an ability had existed prior to the start of conflict). Most importantly, the state’s territory will be fractured into statelets under the control of militias and warlords. The reach of the state will be confined to the capital (or only a few quarters of it) and small parts of the hinterland. Security forces will fragment along conflict cleavages. This erosion of state authority will result in a massive disruption of tax collection efforts and formal law will no longer be implemented and policed. The longer such a process goes on, the more state institutions will deteriorate due to the death or emigration of civil servants, the destruction of infrastructure and the erosion of the “idea of the state” (Buzan 1991) among citizens.

In theory, the fragmentation model of collapse can come about without an active involvement of the regime, although empirically one will usually find governments actively engaged in escalating (or at least not de-escalating) the conflict. In these cases, rulers will assist in the militarization of political actors, exacerbate social cleavages through identity politics, or foster a “winner-takes-all” culture that contributes to the polarization of the political spectrum.

3.4 Preliminary Evidence and the Future Research Agenda

The two accounts of the reasons of state collapse presented above, while compelling in theory, have not been systematically tested against competing hypotheses. Since the overall research programme about the causes of collapse is rather young, I undertook a series of exploratory case studies of state collapse (Lambach 2008: 59-104). The results of these case studies broadly confirmed the explanatory value of the causal mechanisms of both the privatization and the fragmentation model and were used for the refinement of both of these models.

All in all, 15 case studies were conducted (see Table 1). The selection of cases was atheoretical and focused on those cases that were easy to identify as instances of state collapse. However, it was attempted to ensure a high degree of geographical and temporal diversity among cases. State collapse is a rare phenomenon; usually this extreme kind of state failure can be avoided. Thus, the 15 cases selected probably represent a substantial slice of the total population of cases in the post-1960 period.

Within these cases, three broad groups could be discerned. The first group is characterized by a long period of decline among state institutions. This process is finalized by a military
challenge that not only topples the government, but also exposes the weakness of the state. However, the victorious opposition is unable to constitute a new regime even on a *de facto* if not *de jure* level thus prolonging the anarchy. Somalia is a typical illustration of this group. The second group is similar to the first but the main difference is that conflict becomes self-perpetuating while the regime is still in place, albeit weakened. There is no conclusion to the conflict as state institutions dwindle. The state’s authority is virtually nonexistent outside the capital and some resource-rich areas. This group is best illustrated by cases like Liberia and Sierra Leone. Finally, there is a third group where a newly independent state collapses immediately after its proclamation of sovereignty. In this case conflict breaks out over the distribution of power or questions of self-determination but no party is able to achieve a decisive victory. Similar to the second type, the government’s writ is not obeyed in large parts of the state’s territory. This group is exemplified by cases like Angola and Bosnia & Herzegovina.

Table 1: Selected Cases of State Collapse, 1960-2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>End</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia &amp; Herzegovina</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>1983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kongo-Kinshasa</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaire</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Own compilation.*

These cases give us a first indication as to the plausibility of the theoretically derived hypothesis that autocratic regimes are more likely to collapse (H2) by looking at the POLITY scores of the above cases in the years prior to collapse (see Table 2). While the POLITY score
is not a perfect indicator of the quality of a regime, its geographical and temporal scope and its broad acceptance in the literature make it the most suitable choice. In any case, the only other candidates with sufficient coverage, the Political Rights and Civil Liberties scores from Freedom House, show a very similar picture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>t0</th>
<th>P (t0)</th>
<th>P (t-1)</th>
<th>P (t-2)</th>
<th>P (t-3)</th>
<th>P (t-4)</th>
<th>P (t-5)</th>
<th>P (t-10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia &amp; H.</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>(n.a.)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>(-7)</td>
<td>(-7)</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>(-7)</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo-Kinshasa</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>(-9)</td>
<td>(-9)</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>(+5)</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>+5</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>(-6)</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>(-7)</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>(-7)</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaire</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>-9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own compilation, scores from Marshall/Jaggers (2003).

Using the thresholds of Fearon and Laitin (2003) and Hegre et al. (2001) who define countries with a POLITY score of -6 to -10 as autocracies, score of +6 to +10 as democracies and everything in between as hybrid regimes, we find that in the year coded as the beginning of collapse (t0), 12 of the 15 cases were autocracies, one was an anocracy (Lebanon in 1975) while two were missing data due to their only having become independent in that same year. What is striking is that all of the regimes for which data is present have been highly stable in the years before collapse: of the eleven cases where a POLITY score is given ten years prior to their respective collapse, ten were autocracies at that point as well as in all years leading up to collapse. (Again, only Lebanon represented a deviant case.) Obviously, this observation does not have any analytical weight but it certainly makes H2 seem very plausible. At the

11 “n.a.” indicates that the country had not yet achieved independence in that year. Numbers in parentheses are given for years coded -66 (interruption), -77 (interregnum) or -88 (transition) in the dataset and simply continue the last non-missing score prior to that year.
same time, Table 2 also shows that autocracy is not a necessary condition, otherwise Lebanon would not have collapsed.

Beyond the general assertion that autocracy leads to state collapse, how did the two models of collapse fare? Generally, every case could be explained by reference to either of the models. Table 3 gives the results with a 0 denoting that the model did not apply in this case, a 1 denoting that the model applied partially and a 2 that the model was applicable to this case.

**Table 3: Causal Paths of State Collapse**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Privatization</th>
<th>Fragmentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan 1992-1995</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola 1975-2002</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnien-Herzegovina 1992-1995</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi 1993-1994</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad 1978-1983</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo-Kinshasa 1960-1965</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti 1989-1994</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon 1975-1989</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia 1990-2003</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda 1993-1994</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone 1991-2002</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia 1990-ongoing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan 1992-1997</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda 1979-1985</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaire 1991-2003</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own compilation.

Table 3 also offers some insight into how these two models interact. It seems plausible to assume that neither of the two models is a necessary condition for collapse to occur. In addition, while each model is able to explain state collapse on its own, the two models are not mutually exclusive.

4. **Conclusion**

This paper has sought to shed some light on the question which effect regime type has on the risks of civil war and state collapse, respectively, within a framework that looks at the
interconnections of these three concepts. Research on the roots of civil war has shown that hybrid regimes and fragile states both seem to raise the risks of conflict even though some methodological doubts remain, particularly with respect to the latter claim. The literature on state collapse is considerably less advanced and remains in the phase of generating hypotheses.

The hypothesis that emerges from the theoretical literature on state collapse is that autocracies are more likely to suffer this fate. This paper has presented some evidence supporting the plausibility of this claim: Judging from the results of 15 explorative case studies, autocracies seem to be over-represented among cases of state collapse. Moreover, there is reason to believe that this might not just be true for the extreme cases of state collapse but that it might also apply to cases of state fragility more generally since the practices that contribute to state collapse can just as easily lead to less severe forms of state fragility: corruption, clientelism and nepotism lower the effectiveness of institutions, disrupt the rule of law and undermine public confidence in the state. Neopatrimonial structures can devolve into rampant rent-seeking by elites including the establishment of a shadow state.

Thus we have two competing hypotheses:

H1) Hybrid regimes lessen state capacity.

H2) Autocratic regimes lessen state capacity.

If H2 would turn out to be true, a puzzle would emerge (see Fig. 3): If state fragility contributes to war (A2), why would hybrid regimes raise the risk of conflict (A1) while autocratic regimes raise the risk of state fragility (H2)?

Fig. 3: Revised Causal Relations

Source: Own compilation
Obviously, further research is necessary before this puzzle can even legitimately be posed. Nevertheless, I will sketch some potential answers to this question and the research perspectives that emerge therefrom. The first and most obvious counterargument is that H2 might not be true at all. This is a testable question and should be tackled first. If H1 is confirmed, then there is no puzzle. However, if H2 is confirmed, then one of the other assumptions could be wrong. On the one hand, the claim that fragile statehood raises conflict risks (A2) might be untenable. As outlined above, there is an endogeneity problem as well as serious issues about data validity bedeviling current approaches, so this does not seem too far-fetched. However, if these two problems can be addressed then this question can also be resolved. On the other hand, the generally accepted claim that hybrid regimes contribute to the incidence of civil might turn out to be wrong after all. There are some indications in support of this notion: Reynal-Querol (2002) has found a linear relationship between the degree of inclusivity of a political system and the likelihood of conflict. Vreeland (2008) has raised doubts about the POLITY score as a suitable independent variable due to concerns about endogeneity. It is not inconceivable that further research might eventually overturn A1. In this respect, qualitative approaches might offer additional insights about the causal linkage between anocracy and conflict. Collier and Sambanis (2005) have conducted case studies as a useful part of a multi-method research strategy. Such an approach would also better be able to accommodate equifinality (George/Bennett 2005) in processes of state collapse, as Englehart suggests there is: “States are complex sets of institutions that can fail in multiple ways” (2007: 144).

If neither A1 nor A2 is disconfirmed, then it might be the case that there is no continuum of stateness at all. All the preliminary conclusions above hinge on the assumption that results from the study of state collapse can be applied more or less directly to weak and fragile states. And while differing causal structures of state collapse and state fragility would be somewhat surprising, at least from the present point of view, they cannot be ruled out. It might be the case that regime type has differing effects depending on the level of stateness, similar to Collier’s and Rohner’s (2008) observation that democracy lessens the likelihood of conflict above a certain threshold of per capita income but raises it below this level. Additional variables might also produce interaction effects that are as yet unknown.

Finally, the design of quantitative studies might be too limited to allow for generalizations about the roots and causes of civil war, let alone state collapse. Most studies (see 2.) structure their datasets as a collection of “land-years” or “land-date of event” (like e.g. Hegre et al. 2001). Independent variables are usually structural in nature (like ethnolinguistic fractionalization) or represent “snapshots” (e.g. income per capita). Truly dynamic factors like e.g. “regime change” (as employed by Fearon/Laitin 2003) are rare and usually quite blunt.
However, the theoretical accounts of state collapse (see 3.1) identify a range of dynamic variables, mostly from the realm of regime behavior, as highly significant. This means that quantitative scholars should attempt to collect more data in order to truly integrate these factors into their models. It would also be worthwhile to develop multi-method research strategies that integrate the hunt for statistical regularities with a qualitative assessment of causal processes. Such a research design would also be able to include analyses of path dependency which seems particular appropriate to processes with deep historical roots like civil war or state collapse.
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