4. Discussion of working hypotheses

In chapter one a number of working hypotheses have been presented. In this chapter the findings of the study are presented around a discussion of these working hypotheses. First, however, the most important notions used in the working hypotheses are introduced.

4.1 Concepts and definitions

Institutional capacity
The institutional capacity of states is often related to the strength of the state. Instrumentally oriented interpretations relate state-strength to the capacity of the state to implement policies, or to extract taxes. Other interpretations relate it to the ability of the state to absorb, process, and meet demands in such a way that conflict does not develop or escalate (or, when conflict has broken out, to the ability to de-escalate and settle conflict sooner rather than later). In a sense, institutional capacity stands for effective rule. Authoritarian regimes as well as democratic governments can have the means for effective rule, but evidently in a different way. Whereas authoritarian regimes base their institutional capacity largely on fear, force and coercion, the foundation of governments in democratically ruled countries is based on vertical and horizontal legitimacy as discussed by Holsti[1]. Vertical legitimacy refers to authority, consent and loyalty to the idea of the state. Horizontal legitimacy refers to the definition and political role of the community, i.e. the attitudes and practices of individuals and groups within the state toward each other and ultimately to the state that encompasses them.

By relating institutional capacity to legitimacy, the analysis also needs to comprise the issue of power sharing. Furthermore, institutional capacity, and especially the in- or decrease thereof, cannot be separated from the historical process of state-formation in the three regions.

Power Sharing
Power sharing refers to the way in which the groups constituting the community of a state (i.e.: civil society) are represented and able to participate in politics in all its dimensions, including the state allocation of funds and services. A first prerequisite for power sharing is the legitimacy of the state, i.e. acceptance of the idea and concept of the state. All citizens of a state should feel themselves 'common' citizens, represented by the central government. If certain groups find themselves placed outside the political community, the concept of the state may be endangered because such groups may be opting for survival strategies, including movements for autonomy and secession. These constitute a potential threat to the integrity of the state. The second prerequisite for power sharing is an understanding between state and civil society with regard to questions of opportunity, participation and equity with respect to the different groups in society

Power Transition
Power relations within societies can have a social, an economic or a political nature. Changes in these fields may change the distribution of power and lead to changes in the rules of the

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1 Holsti, K.J., *The State, War, and the State of War* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1996.

political game. The distribution of power may change as a result of e.g. the rapid population growth of one group (naturally or as a result of migration), the rise of a specific (new) economic sector (resulting in the rise of a new economic class), et cetera. Such a change in distribution of power is usually coinciding with the erosion of other groups' power. Such a shift in power relations can be dealt with simply by adapting to the new situation and changing the power sharing arrangements. However, such power shifts do not always occur gradually. The situation sometimes alters rather quickly. If such (swift) alterations are not dealt with adequately, the newcomers to power may try to grab leadership positions abruptly. Such periods of transition are therefore 'hotbeds' of conflict.

Poverty
For the purpose of this project poverty is defined as a standard of living below which individuals or collectivities cannot satisfy basic caloric intake or obtain basic services such as health care and access to clean drinking water. We have tried to ascertain whether absolute levels of poverty of specific subgroups in society, as measured by proxies (through income per capita, infant mortality or as the percentage of households having access to clean drinking water), can be related to the outbreak of violent conflict, directly or through intervening variables. Theories such as frustration-aggression theory pre-suppose a direct relationship between poverty and violent conflict through mass mobilization based on material motives. Such a direct relationship remains to be proven as in most cases levels of poverty remain fairly constant over time in most of the states in the South, although the proportion of absolute poor seems to have declined. Although in India, for example, the absolute number of poor has grown, their share in total population has diminished (Abhijit Sen, 1996). Here, as in the case of inequality, perception has been stressed as an important intervening variable. If people perceive their situation as unjust and think they deserve a better livelihood there is supposedly a strong incentive towards change.

With regard to the generation of income and the daily struggle for a livelihood we want to emphasize the importance of legislature and policy with regard to access to natural resources, notably land. As we focus on relationships between the state and other actors or groups within states, the importance of land rights for individuals or communities justifies separate treatment.

Socioeconomic inequality
Socioeconomic inequality has been measured in income per capita for specific regions or groups and compared with each other or with average values. In this way differences in inequality can be measured, while diminishing or deteriorating inequality over the years reveals its dynamics. Furthermore, government spending on social services has been reviewed. Equitable distribution of social services throughout states for all citizens may lead to the improvement of livelihood conditions notably for weak groups in society. Finally, the notion of perceived inequality between different groups in society has been investigated. The concept of relative deprivation has been applied to various conflict cases. The inequality factor can therefore be approached in different ways. This gives enough room for the various interpretations that are given to this factor by the contributing authors, as inequality as such does not have the same significance in different cultural settings.

Economic growth
Economic growth has been measured by using GDP per capita. Most states we have studied

have economies that depend to a large extent on the export of one or few commodities, thus reflecting the overall vulnerability of third world economies. However, most developing countries have experienced a gradual differentiation of their economies, allowing for some degree of complexity. The assessment of economic growth therefore uses the prevailing growth indicators and gives a rough picture of its evolution over time. The performance of individual economies is strongly linked to external parameters such as external debt servicing and loans from the Bretton Woods institutions. Theories on regional differences such as the center-periphery theory still may have some analytical relevance to intrastate differences in many third world states. Relatively small core areas comprising the political capital and some important industrial sites and major seaports, contain the bulk of the so-called formal economy and benefit from resource allocation in such states, whereas a mostly under developed rural hinterland scarcely provided with resources from the center, forms the periphery. Such highly skewed spatial patterns are illustrative of concomitant differentials between these areas regarding any socioeconomic indicator, reinforcing a strong geographic cleavage between rich and poor. Consequently, we have taken these patterns into consideration whenever relevant and data allowed it.

4.2 Institutional capacity

In South Asia the hypothesis on institutional capacity finds strong empirical support. In countries where the state has failed to provide adequate institutional backup or lacks institutions in several regions of the country, the spread of non-state actors who operate independently has generally been facilitated. As the countries in the region differ profoundly with regard to the issue of institutional capacity it is difficult to generalize for the South Asian region as a whole. This necessitates short individual country profiles.

India can be characterized as a relatively strong state. The increasing influence of Hindu nationalism, however, may result in the erosion of the power sharing arrangement with the Muslims, as laid down in the Constitution. The ineffective reply of the Center towards the Babri mosque crisis demonstrated its vulnerability with regard to pressure from religious groups within society. A number of regional (or provincial) autonomy or secessionist movements do not yet seem to endanger the territorial and political unity of the federal state. However, they do indicate that the principle of power sharing between the federal government in the Center and the states is under pressure.

The case of Bangladesh shows a Center with a limited capacity to enforce its sovereignty. Though in the CHT area the military have been able to tackle the insurgency and to subdue the secessionist rebellion, the state seems incapable to keep widespread social violence by criminal and guerrilla groups under control in the various districts in south and southwest Bangladesh. Here 'extortion-lords' control areas and fight each other, without seriously being hindered by the law enforcement agencies.

Pakistan lacks legitimacy over its citizens as the nature of the state is still contested by various groups. The ongoing debate on further Islamization of the state hampers the state building process as non-Sunni groups feel excluded as well as some other sections of society. As of independence the state building process has focused on a strong centralized model. In the process of reaching this aim the Center has alienated several regional as well as ethno-

linguistic communities, whose resistance towards this process of centralization has resulted in widespread communal violence.

In Afghanistan the Center has never been able to develop any substantial institutional capacity. The Center was constantly forced to co-opt the various tribal areas and the local power elites into power alliances. These arrangements undermined the capacity of the Center, and instead enhanced the power of the regional clans. The state's capacity was furthermore based on respecting the traditional bonds between regional and tribal elites and their subjects. Attempts to modernize the state and to change these relations were never successful. Dependency on external powers, as the Soviet invasion has shown, eroded the position of the Center even further. The Taliban again try to centralize the power of the state in the Center, this time through the imposition of an orthodox interpretation of Sunni Islam. The use of violence and coercion, however, has not increased legitimacy of the Center.

At independence, Sri Lanka inherited a centralized state. Although initially state legitimacy was high and the institutional capacity of the state well developed, the system gradually eroded as populist rhetoric started to dominate the political agenda. Affirmative action on behalf of the Sinhalese Buddhist majority and the (threat of) exclusionary policies towards non-Sinhalese led to the political alienation of the Sri Lanka Tamils.

In West Africa, generally speaking, institutional capacity of the state is weak. In vast areas there is not even a semblance of government presence, which is mainly concentrated in regional capitals. Legitimacy of the state has barely developed during the short span of independence. Overall, the state building process has focused on maintaining territorial integrity (which is mainly threatened by internal forces) and the survival of the central state bureaucracies. In this struggle for survival of governments and leaders, security forces have become by far the most advanced and organized expression of state performance in the public domain. Because of the multiethnic social fabric of the West African societies, the national armies have developed into a pivotal political actor and the issue of state survival has often been reduced to a simplistic dichotomy between anarchy or order. In many countries this has resulted in a stranglehold of the military on society. Senegal has been an exception, and the army has always been subordinate to civilian control. The protracted civil war in the Casamance, however, has drawn heavily on the capacity of the state to control the army and to direct their actions. The dynamics of this conflict demonstrate the ability of the army to intervene as an independent actor and to impact upon the political agenda of the other actors involved.

State bureaucracies in West Africa have a limited capacity to extract funds from their national economies by taxation. States rely on high import taxation for luxury goods and loans from foreign donors. If states are well endowed with mineral resources they can monopolize this source of income to fund their own bureaucracies, and hence secure their political survival. Successive military governments in Nigeria were able to withstand popular protest and international political pressure as oil revenues have so far assured their economic survival. Niger and Senegal have become extremely aid dependent. Niger is probably the most extreme example of such dependency, with an estimated 40% of the state budget funded by foreign donors.

In Central America states have a much longer history as independent political units. Ever since independence in the 19th century, state legitimacy has developed in large sectors of

society. Most of the countries on the Isthmus share basic characteristics with regard to the way in which they are structured: highly centralized with the majority of state institutions located in the capital and with a tradition of a strong executive branch. The concept of the division of political powers among constituent branches of politics has not been well developed, resulting in a political culture of strongmen (*caudillos*) and widespread patronage linkages between the political elite and segments of society. As such, states have a well-developed institutional capacity in certain parts of the country. Moreover, a spatial pattern has emerged in which the central regions and the pacific plains were integrated into the state structure, while the Atlantic coastal zones have only been partially integrated and suffer from political marginalization. The populations of these zones differ racially and socially from the *ladino* majorities. Notably Nicaragua and Honduras are confronted with this problem. The problem of political marginalization can also be seen in Guatemala where the areas inhabited by indigenous populations are less well endowed with governmental infrastructure. In addition to marginalization, repression has given the state, at best, only limited legitimacy amongst these population groups, who frequently perceive the state as an alien intruder and oppressor. Finally, peripheral zones located in the border areas between the countries in the region have only marginally been integrated into their respective states. In Nicaragua such zones of "institutional absence" are characterized by a political vacuum and often uncontrolled violence. For the Central American region a picture emerges of fragmented states that have developed institutional capacity in core areas but not throughout the whole territory and among the totality of their population.

Overall, the hypothesis on institutional capacity finds empirical support in all the cases we have studied. However, the definition of what precisely must be understood when talking about institutional capacity has two distinct components. On the one hand, a limited interpretation focuses on the institutional presence and strength to control populations and territories, and implement policies. On the other hand, the issue of legitimacy involves the evaluation of the state in terms of its performance and acceptance among various population groups and areas under its political control. Concluding it has become obvious that political control and institutional presence can hardly be discussed without taking state legitimacy into account. The formal presence of states does not imply they are capable to dominate politically, nor does it automatically imply that they function well or that they are perceived as legitimate by the constituent groups. Nonetheless, institutional capacity can be realized instrumentally without popular backing. This, however, involves the use of coercion and violence by the state to achieve its aims. In other cases the state appears to be nothing but a parallel power system, next to already existing indigenous and traditional institutions. In both of these cases the chances for state failure are real. From the Senegal case we can infer that institutional penetration may be successful when local institutions are co-opted in the power system. The Afghanistan case, however, demonstrates that co-optation is not sufficient. The state needs to have a strong position by itself, and should not be totally dependent on cooperation with these groups If, in addition, population groups have a political culture in which decision-making differs from that of the dominant political state elite, the outbreak of violent opposition may easily materialize.

4.3 Power sharing

Power sharing refers to the way in which groups constituting the community of a state are

represented and able to participate in politics in all its dimensions, including access to state allocated funds and services. A discussion on power sharing requires insight into the presence or absence of political marginalization and exclusion, and their effects. Yet, even when the will to share power of a regime is limited, policies towards internal opposition can still vary widely, from simple denial of the right to participate in the political process, to large-scale violent repression. Power sharing can further be linked to the process of decentralization from the Center to regional authorities. The issue of power sharing, however, needs to be distinguished from issues like granting autonomy or other forms of power transfer.

In South Asia regimes have rarely been inclined to grant special political rights to groups within the state. This can be inferred from the continuing opposition of central governments towards the claims of minority groups. Governments fear that granting such rights will encourage centrifugal forces detrimental to the territorial unity of the state. In the South Asian region this may be, in fact, the single most important political issue, since all countries have experienced violent conflict as a result of demands from ethnic, linguistic or religious groups. Examples are the Tamils in Sri Lanka; the Baluchs, the Pashtuns and the Sindhi in Pakistan; the Chittagong Hill tribes in Bangladesh; the Punjabi, the Assamese, the inhabitants of Bodoland, Nagaland and Gorkaland in India and; the Tadjik, the Uzbek and the Pashtuns in Afghanistan. In all cases the state was accused of not having sufficient and adequate power sharing policies. However, though intransigence on the part of central governments towards minority demands might lead to conflict, the reversal cannot be substantiated in the South Asian region. Over time, nationalistic movements seem to acquire a momentum of their own and appear to become insensitive for moves towards power sharing. These radicalized movements often no longer are interested in compromises. Instead they aim for a larger degree of autonomy or even secession. On the community level these movements often derive political and economic gains from a hard line stance. In addition, the profits from a shadow economy such as arms trafficking and narcotics, as well as fund raising among expatriate communities have become powerful incentives to continue the conflict. In such a polarized and sometimes lucrative context, power sharing on the national level becomes a less attractive alternative. This phenomenon can be observed in Sri Lanka (LTTE in Jaffna) and India (National Socialist Council of Nagaland) A positive example, showing that power sharing has its merits, is the way the Indian Tamil community in Sri Lanka has successfully advocated its interest and has acquired access to the political process.

In West Africa one might conclude that power sharing is still not a well-developed concept. After independence political leaders of many newly independent states have tried to deal with the problem of multiethnic societies through eradication of tribal and ethnic identity politics. Senghor in Senegal, Sekou Touré in Guinea Conakry and Nkrumah in Ghana are cases in point. Unitary political parties were created to generate national identities and to prevent ethnic interest articulation and political mobilization. Not all of these attempts, however, were successful. Nigeria, for example, experienced a power struggle between its constituent regions, each dominated by an ethnic group. In Ghana the power bid of the dominant ethnic group was successfully thwarted, as the Ashanti rebellion was crushed. Only the Sawaba uprising in Niger was not based on identity politics as it had strong ideological (socialist) overtones.

Prior to the end of the Cold War no serious attempts at power sharing could be observed in the entire region, as most political elite groups feared even modest participation from dissident

political actors. On the contrary, repression, either direct through military rule or indirect through provisions in the constitution, such as the prohibition of political parties based on language, race or religion, hampered the political participation of the population at large. Hence, democratization experiments in the region were curtailed from the beginning. In Nigeria the military intervened constantly. In Senegal the Parti Socialiste, in power since independence, continues to dominate the political scene at the cost of opposition groups. In this country the power nexus, heavily dependent on patronage links with the Islamic brotherhoods, has allegedly engaged in malpractice during elections. In Ghana strongman Jerry Rawlings has legitimized his hold on power by manipulating elections to become elected as a civilian president. In Niger, finally, the first civilian and democratically elected government has abused its mandate by embezzlement and corruption, which in turn led to a military coup. widely supported by the civilian population. These examples clearly demonstrate the far-reaching powers of the commanding political elites. Being in power is still perceived as possessing the state and all its instruments. Power positions are being used to enrich the elite. Democratization has only made a timid appearance and real power sharing still has to materialize since it implies fundamentally changing the perception on the state.

In Central America the issues of power sharing and democratization have a different connotation and content. The problems mainly concern the ideological dichotomy between right wing (conservatives and liberals) and left-wing politicians (among others communists). Power sharing between these groups was never perceived as an option, and the mutual distrust and refusal to cooperate has resulted in various conflicts in almost all countries of the Isthmus. The policies of the economic and military elite were directed towards repressing communism. The only two political groups allowed in the political arena were the Conservatives and Liberals. Their 'dichotomy', however, does not represent real interest articulation for the population at large. Government policies focused on preventing structural change and maintaining the prevailing economic system, as well as the power-oligarchy of the landed elite and the military. In Central America, therefore, power sharing only took place among a limited number of political actors, notably the economic elite and the military. The church exercised a dual role, the conservative clergymen supporting the oligarchy and the progressive clergymen supporting the poor segments of society (liberation theology, development of Christian solidarity communities).

Under these circumstances of exclusion and repression, the political opposition was forced to operate covertly. The inability to change the political system through democratic instruments increased incentives for violent opposition. With the notable exception of Costa Rica this can be presented as the general image for the entire region. Only in rather exceptional cases (in Guatemala (1944-54) and Nicaragua (Sandinist regime)) new political elites were able to take power. However, also these new regimes did not introduce power-sharing arrangements, e.g. including the opposition forces. Only the Costa Rican case provides a different picture. Although after the civil war the communist were denied access to the political process many of their policies were accepted and incorporated by the dominant political party (National Party of Figueres). In a way, this approach of compromising and fusing both tendencies in a democratic environment can be seen as one of the most important explanations for Costa Rica not lapsing into civil war, despite the fact that it shares many structural characteristics with neighboring countries. Yet the prohibition of the Communist Party can be interpreted as a stain on its democratic system.

In general this hypothesis needs fine-tuning in order to capture political developments in the contemporary setting. If effective power sharing is accompanied by resource distribution, and if the actors involved accept the concept of the state as legitimate and representative, the likelihood of violent conflict will diminish.

4.4 Power transition

The South Asian region provides a number of examples of rapid power transitions between groups, the most obvious being the new leadership of the newly independent states. This happened in all countries investigated, with the exception of Afghanistan. The partition of the British Raj led to widespread communal rioting and massive killings. A further case in point is the independence of Bangladesh that was accompanied by widespread violent conflict. Afghanistan had its own problems with regard to power transition, and the Soviet invasion of the country sparked off a protracted civil war. The current situation in Afghanistan demonstrates the resilience of the erstwhile ruling ethnic group to regain political dominance to the detriment of minority groups within the state.

In Pakistan the so-called *mohajir* community is an interesting case with regard to power transition. The *mohajirs* succeeded in dominating the government of independent Pakistan soon after the partition. They successfully introduced Urdu as the national language and promoted the principle of One Nationhood. Being a heterogeneous refugee community from various regions in India they settled mainly in Karachi in the province of Sindh, and were able to displace the Sindhis as the dominant power elite at the provincial level. Later, the power position of the *mohajirs* themselves was eroded, both at the national level, through growing Punjabi domination, and locally, as a result of massive immigration from Pathans from the NWFP and Afghanistan. This in turn has sparked off a radical type of *mohajir* nationalism and violent resistance amongst segments of the *mohajir* community. The MQM movement has been engaged in a type of city guerrilla against the state's security forces.

In India as well power transitions within constituent units can be identified, such as between Hindus and Sikhs in Punjab. Another case is the marginalization of the Pahadee community in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region of Bangladesh. In Sri Lanka the radical Tamil youth movement tried to -literally as well as metaphorically- annihilate moderate Tamil political forces. This movement succeeded in taking over the leadership of the Tamil community and started a struggle for independence. In the Sinhalese community of Sri Lanka, the JVP movement attempted to overthrow the Sinhalese state violently. Finally, however, it failed to do so.

More gradual power transitions can also be observed in South Asia. Traditional elite groups, such as hereditary rulers from the princely states and land owning elite groups (*Zamindars*), lost much of their political power to the Westernized and English educated nationalists which became to dominate the newly independent states. This Westernized political vanguard gradually lost ground to the increasing political power of vernacular speaking middle class groups. Presently, the political hegemony of these groups is again strongly contested by lower middle class groups. Additionally, also caste-based competition has increased, as these groups are realizing their electoral power, among others by using their so-called 'block' votes. This power shift between socioeconomic groups is a long-term and gradual process. Nevertheless,

the dynamics of such power transitions have a profound impact on the dominant state ideologies. India's secular nature has been an axiom that has been upheld as a guiding principle for the entire nation. Recently, however, Hindu Nationalists have questioned this principle. The development of possible 'new' guiding principles, e.g. on the basis of religion, could undermine the results of the state and nation building process reached so far, and even threaten the concept of state itself.

Consequently, more or less evolutionary developments as well might lead to violent conflicts, as they fan tensions between distinct groups in society. Yet, this finally depends on the way in which these groups will be included in the process of policy-making in the Center. If such gradual and emancipating power transitions are based on exclusionary ideologies, and if power sharing fails, minorities within states will become threatened and may as a result aim for autonomy, violent resistance or secession. In other cases, elites that feel threatened may resort to repression or violent action to defend their position or to react against the relative deprivation they are undergoing.

The analysis has demonstrated that different factors may underlie the various modes of power transition, and that they may be rapid and sudden, or rather gradual developments. Nevertheless, the hypothesis on power transition seems validated in the case of the South Asian region, with the observation that long-term power transitions seem to be more amenable to engineering and management.

In the West African context power transitions between socioeconomic groups have been quite rare. In Nigeria, however, the Igbo-led military takeover in 1966 could be interpreted as an attempt by the Igbo to replace the dominant Fulani-Haussa. The Haussa elite was quick to respond by ousting the Igbo regime only half a year later. The ensuing struggle over the federal power led to the civil war in which the Igbo attempted to secede. In Senegal the power nexus between the Wolof and Serer was never threatened. In Ghana the erstwhile dominant ethnic group, the Ashanti, never recovered from its defeat by the British and later by the Nkrumah led power block (CPP). The 1966 overthrow of Nkrumah, however, implied a partial return of the Ashanti as well as the economic elite to their former positions. Furthermore, a representative of the Ewe minority came to dominate Ghanaian domestic politics (Jerry Rawlings). This however, does not imply that a specific ethnic group dominates the Ghanaian state. Moreover, both the Ghanaian and the Senegalese constitution prohibit political organization on the bases of ethnic, religious, racial or regional affiliation. In Niger, the political democratization process resulted in the first ever power transition through the ballot. The elected Haussa-dominated government, however, abused its power and the military coup of 1997 restored the power balance in favor of the Zarma-Songhai group, which dominated politics since independence.

Although no successful power transition was achieved, ethnic identity has been a strong mobilizing force in West Africa, fuelling several intrastate conflicts around issues of power sharing and devolution. In the Casamance region the MFDC rebellion claims that the region has been taken over by foreigners and hence that in fact an undesired power transition has materialized. The Tamajaq rebellions of Mali and Niger stem from political marginalization and deprivation of an ethnic community that used to rule vast territories in the region. Hence, the quest among the Tamajaq for autonomy can be seen as attempts at power transition at the regional level.

The Jacobean principle of a centralized state system has left an explosive political legacy to some of the successor states in the West African region. Notably, political elite groups have perceived issues of devolution as a short cut to state disintegration. Even modest requests for devolution of power have almost inevitably led to political conflict. The process of administrative devolution in Nigeria, by creating new states within the federation to acknowledge group rights of distinct ethnic communities, has sometimes been forwarded as exemplary. Yet, this limited version of devolution has not been accompanied by the allocation of sufficient financial means. The administrative changes in Nigeria are taking place within a highly centralized and repressive power system and the main underlying problems remain unresolved.

Concluding, the hypothesis on rapid power transitions is supported in the case of the Biafran civil war. Power transitions (Center vs. Region) do also account for violent opposition from the Diola's in the Casamance region in Senegal and the Tamajaq in Mali and Niger.

With regard to Central America, conflict sensitive power transitions could be avoided only . when power-sharing structures are in place, such as in Costa Rica. Here, steps were taken towards reform, cooperation and co-optation of most groups in Costa Rican society, with the exception of the communist movement that was prohibited after the civil war. In the economic realm a gradual power transition materialized, whereby a newly emerging industrial elite overpowered the traditional agro-exporting elite. This new elite was absorbed in the political system.

In other countries on the Isthmus, attempts at power transitions ended up in violent conflicts. In El Salvador and Honduras no real power transition took place during the period under study, although attempts at radical political change were undertaken. The insurgents and political opposition groups, who were engaged in violent conflict with the state, did not succeed in overthrowing the dominant political elite groups. In El Salvador, for example, the military stalemate in the late 1980s forced the Salvadoran resistance into a negotiation process. The cyclical changes between reform oriented and hard line groups within the Salvadoran army could be interpreted as power transitions. However, these merely provided a safety valve for the internal power struggles between the various Tanda groups (officers from the same year of graduation). In Honduras the army came to play a pivotal role in the political process, and this can be seen as a gradual power transition in the oligarchy ruling the country. However, the army did not affect the economic power position of the traditional agro-exporting elite, nor did it damage the interests of the foreign owned agricultural estates.

In Guatemala and Nicaragua several power transitions can be observed. In Guatemala the Arbenz government was an example of a consensus and development-oriented approach in which some social policies were adopted. After the overthrow of this regime in 1954 the influence of the army gradually expanded to finally dominate the political process. The military not only succeeded in a power transition on the political plane, but also in the economic sector. During their rule the military moved into business sectors of the economy, and have become one of the most influential economic actors. It could be concluded that this enabled them to hand over power in 1996 without having to fear the loss of control over important sectors of society. The introduction of democratic principles and procedures may lead to another power transition, e.g in favor of the Maya majority group in Guatemala. In

Guatemala the Mayas constitute a majority. This group has thus far been repressed and neglected. The transition to a democratic polity provides them with the opportunity to become a major player on the political plane.

In Nicaragua two rapid power transitions can be identified, the Sandist military overthrow of the Somoza regime in 1979 and the 1990 power transition in which the political opposition democratically ousted the Sandinists from political power. The first power transition was accompanied by large-scale violent conflict, whereas the second transition was peaceful. With hindsight, the Nicaraguan case could be perceived as a long and gradual power transition in favor of the newly emerged middle-class, i.e. the economic elite that came forth during the economic expansion of the 1950s and 1960s. During the Somoza period, this group was co-opted by the Center through pacts and alliances. However, as soon as the Somoza-clan encroached upon the economic activities of these new elite groups, and excluded them from their already limited access to decision-making and certain allocations, they joined the insurrectionist opposition. The necessity of incorporating this political actor was recognized by the Sandinist movement. However, their incorporation remained only partially and temporary. As soon as the Somoza-dynasty was overthrown, the Sandinists started to grab for power, again excluding this economically important group from access to decision-making. Once more, the newly emerged economic elite joined the opposition forces, this time the ones that succeeded in overthrowing the Sandinists. Though the Sandinists obtained political power in 1979, they failed to achieve economic dominance, which proved to be fatal to their survival. The Contra war resulted in a virtual collapse of the economy for which the majority of the Nicaraguan electorate held the Sandinists accountable once a political settlement had been reached. Nevertheless, the Sandinists maintained a firm grip on the army and hence on military power.

The results in Central America clearly demonstrate the interdependence of the political and the economic domains of the polity involved in the dynamics of power transition.

4.5 Poverty

In general the long-term trends on poverty reveal different patterns for the regions under scrutiny. South Asia witnesses a long-term trend of at least marginally declining poverty. In West Africa, however, poverty tends to increase for the majority of the people. In this region pre-independence incomes were higher than incomes at present. In Central America the overall trend reveals a dynamic pattern of growth towards the 1970s and a sharp increase in levels of poverty in the 1980s followed by stagnation now.

The South Asian country studies do not demonstrate a clear and persistent relationship between poverty and conflict. Poverty per se cannot be labeled as a factor causing violent conflict in itself. (Violence within India, for example, occurs in both poverty-stricken areas (Bihar and the northeastern tribal belt) and economically advanced areas (Punjab)). Poverty, however, does function as a strong mobilizing factor, especially when poverty coincides with ethnic, linguistic, religious, regional or other characteristics of specific groups in society. Poverty may play an aggravating role with regard to the outbreak of violent political conflicts in a situation where people think they have nothing to lose. In many cases it is the combination of poverty with other factors that make the situation explosive. Examples of