The theoretical framework presented in this report provides a systematic understanding of the phenomenology of ethnic mobilization and its potential for violence. The specific utility of the model is to structure the analysis, delineating and explaining the specific rationale for anticipating violence. As the case studies show, the model structures the analyst’s work but does not eliminate the need for her informed but subjective judgments throughout the process.¹

**WHAT DO THE CASE STUDIES SHOW?**

The retrospective case studies show that the model can help analysts predict the likelihood of conflict with a reasonable degree of confidence. The model also helps analysts place seemingly separate events, such as a foreign crisis, a decline in regime reserves, or the arrest of a charismatic figure, into a unified whole. As the prospective case studies show, using the model allows analysts to understand better today how a wide array of possibilities will affect inter-communal relations tomorrow. Through the model, analysts can ask “what-if” questions by varying key factors and, in so doing, determine which events might lead to conflict and which might lead to

¹As an analyst noted recently, assessing threats requires “laborious, methodological, rigorous analytical work . . . [and] with the exception of a few notable pockets of excellence, the [U.S. intelligence] community would appear to need a boost in all three departments.” Mary O. McCarthy, “The Mission to Warn: Disaster Looms,” *Defense Intelligence Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Fall 1998, p. 20. If that assessment is true, then the model presented here may assist with that boost.
intercommunal peace. This understanding, in turn, enables analysts to better determine intelligence requirements that will help them predict the incidence of communitarian strife.

Overall, the case studies show that the model is a good guide, but for it to be an effective tool, the analyst needs to put aside her own analytical preferences and accept the methodology. It takes discipline and rigor to do so. Area experts who used the methodology to produce the case studies displayed different degrees of acceptance. Some felt uncomfortable with the “straitjacket” the model imposed upon them or focused on the shortcomings of the model (described later in this chapter). Others came up with results that went against their intuitive assessments and wanted to “adjust” the model to “make it work.” But the lesson of the experience to analysts who might use the model is this:

Read the theoretical section carefully and address the questions (in the Appendix) faithfully. If the results differ from the expected findings, ask questions about what inputs might have led to the results that were expected. If the results are in rough agreement with the expected findings, use the model and its matrices to see what changes on the group or state side may lead to different results. The questioning process by itself should improve the analytical work.

The model’s data requirements produced different reactions among the various case study authors. Faced with an absence of data, some generalized from their knowledge of the country in question, others brought in data that was not directly pertinent, and still others acknowledged the lack of data and moved on after making certain assumptions for their estimates clear. Again, it took the effort of the editor to limit the inputs to only the data that were relevant as well as to make it clear when the case study author was making an estimate and when the data were available. The lesson of the experience to analysts using the model is this:

The model generates substantial data requirements and forces a confrontation with data needs; it highlights not only what the requirements are but also their importance. Rather than becom-
ing bogged down in the data requirements, the analyst needs to keep in mind the goal, namely, collecting the information essential to make a determination of group and state capacities. The final analytical needs drive and prioritize the data collection; in itself, this should be useful for an analyst.

The need to make assessments produced probably the most difficulty for the case study authors. Faced with a lack of a clear-cut answer in some areas, some case study authors initially refused to make an either/or choice. But this stymies the process and cannot be a solution. In cases of ambiguity, the case study authors were required to outline their reasons pro and con for each assessment; where it was possible, some of the case studies explored alternative outcomes to which the different assessments might have led. That is the intended purpose of the model: to force a closer analysis of what variables might cause potentially different results. The lesson of the experience to analysts using the model is this:

When the choices are neither white nor black but gray, reexamine what might make them a lighter or a darker gray, and if the results are different (on the matrices), pay attention to the factors involved as potentially crucial variables.

BENEFITS OF USING THE MODEL

At a more specific level, the case studies illustrated that working with the model offers to analysts a number of specific benefits. The model can help area specialists structure a research design. It also helps introduce area experts to factors that are universally important in ethnic conflict. In other words, the model can help analysts hear through the noise that is part and parcel of intelligence analysis. Intelligence analysts are often presented with a bewildering array of data, some of which is incomplete and much of which is useless. The model can help them focus on what is important with regard to the potential incidence of ethnic conflict. For analysts who are accustomed to focusing on a particular country that has not suffered from communitarian strife in the past, the model offers guidance on which questions are important to ask. Saudi Arabia, for example, has
not suffered from ethnic conflict, but the model suggests that if mobilization of the Shi’a takes place, violence is the likely outcome. Thus, the model increases the analyst’s awareness of future events that merit close attention.

The model’s tools for assessing closure offer a useful way to compare groups within a country in order to focus intelligence requirements on the most likely trouble spots. Working with the model, analysts can be assured that they are integrating the tools and knowledge of years of comparative work into their assessments. Of course, the model is no substitute for a comprehensive knowledge of the country in question, but it does facilitate attempts to structure thoughts and helps analysts avoid repeating mistakes made by students of other cases of ethnic conflict. In countries that are not newcomers to communitarian strife, the framework also helps to explain the differences in how particular groups engage in political competition and how a regime will react to each of them. For example, in Ethiopia, the Tigray-dominated regime is likely to deal in very different ways with challenges by the Amhara and the Oromo. The model explains why the reaction is likely to be different.

In addition, the model explains the role of identity entrepreneurs and other key individuals, putting their efforts in a larger context. Too often, the role of leadership is ignored and conflict is explained entirely as a result of impersonal factors such as communal hatred, economic deprivation, or political disenfranchisement. Yet such factors, all too common throughout the world, do not always generate conflict. Violence requires individuals who are willing to take the risk and organize and lead groups. *Ethnic attachments or fears do not start violence, people do.* The breakup of Yugoslavia, for example, cannot be understood without appreciating the role of Slobodan Milosevic in harnessing and deepening Serbian ethnic nationalism. Similarly, peace demands that individuals risk unpopularity and make concessions. The presence of such leaders, or their absence, explains a large part of the puzzle of why certain conflicts occur while others do not. Nelson Mandela’s strong leadership and his standing in South Africa was an important reason behind the largely peaceful transfer of power to majority rule.

Working with the model allows the integration of events that are normally viewed as distinct, such as the relationship between group
grievances and communal mobilization. Politics in general is an integrated whole. To understand the impact of any particular event, it must be seen in the broad context of a country’s political space. The change of government in Iran, for example, may decrease Saudi Shi’a resources, thus making Shi’a mobilization and potential conflict less likely. Similarly, the rebuilding of the Somali state may accentuate the Somali challenge to the regime within Ethiopia. The Ethiopian-Eritrean war has dampened—temporarily—the level of interethnic competition in Ethiopia. The model helps analysts bridge the gap between country-specific and regionwide events. It helps analysts identify important factors that might cause ethnic conflict and integrate them into one assessment.

Equally important, the model helps anticipate and explain peaceful as well as conflictual outcomes. Thus, analysts can anticipate smooth communal relations as well as the possibility of future conflict. This is far from a trivial point:

\[
\text{Virtually every state in the world has some substate group differences; when compared to the universe of potential strife, the actual level of communitarian strife is extremely low. Peaceful relations between groups are the norm. Too many models of conflict overpredict the incidence of strife and underpredict the occurrence of cooperation.}^2 \text{ Indeed, the greatest danger for analysts is probably the overprediction of communitarian violence.}
\]

As the Saudi case shows, peace can occur when there are strong disincentives to group mobilization, such as when the regime in question is strong and leaves no doubt as to the price the mobilizing group will pay. Policymakers have a high level of interest in the political stability of some countries; some may find it reassuring that the Saudi Arabian monarchy is in no immediate danger from the Shi’a, even though the Shi’a population is disgruntled and faces a high degree of discrimination.

Another strength of the model is that it allows analysts to vary conditions and data points and understand how these changes might affect the potential for ethnic conflict. As a result, unclear cases, or cases where events might go in different directions, can be better anticipated. Analysts often must make judgments on the basis of scarce data. The model highlights areas where data are scarce and illustrates how these gaps can greatly affect future predictions.

Analysts can use the model to create sets of future indicators for a conflict. Through the use of specific scenarios, even hypothetical situations (centering on different types of group mobilization) can be modeled. For example, in cases where ethnic groups are not mobilized, the analyst can examine the possibility of mobilization along ethnic lines, the potential pathways of mobilization, and their likely consequences. Such an exercise has a specific long-term warning use. Similarly, through the use of scenarios, the unfolding of group mobilization may be modeled even though not all of the elements of mobilization are yet in place. Such modeling can point to potential paths that, if identified early, may lead to warning and preparation. Thus, in the Ethiopia case an analyst can foresee one sort of future for the country if the regime-created parties prove genuine and gain popular support, namely that the potential for violence is less likely. But if the parties receive little support, a different future becomes more likely: conflict arising from ethnic mobilization by one of the major non-Tigrayan groups. Analysts can construct an array of indicators that will help them better determine when a country is moving toward conflict.

CAUTIONARY NOTES ON USING THE MODEL

Because of its simplicity and emphasis on parsimony, the model has some limitations. The model shows indirectly the limits of the relative deprivation theory. The degree of closure is important in discerning the intensity of grievances, but it is also clear that the most deprived groups are not necessarily the ones that will mount a challenge to the regime. The Serbs in Yugoslavia did not face great discrimination. Their grievances stemmed primarily from their dominant myths of being a “martyr nation” and having a natural “right to rule” the country. The Ethiopian case showed that the Amhara believe that political power is theirs by right and are reluctant to
share it with other groups. In short, already powerful groups often seek a greater degree of closure and are willing to engage in violence to bring it about. Dominant groups are particularly likely to engage in violence when their dominance is threatened. The structure of closure is important in determining social stratification in a country, but the imagined grievances that stem from nationalist myths and self-perceptions and are exploitable by talented identity entrepreneurs can be just as powerful a catalyst for mobilization as real material grievances. The important issue is the leadership’s skillful mobilization and portrayal of grievances. Thus, attention to the views and myths of dominant groups seems especially warranted. Analysts need a nuanced view of the structure of closure and should keep in mind that the most disadvantaged are not necessarily the most dangerous or the most likely to rebel.

The model’s simple strategy choices contained in the matrices also need to be more refined. For example, clever regimes often use several tactics simultaneously: Carrots and sticks are not alternative strategies, where one is tried when the other fails. Rather, the two are used together as part of a greater whole. The “exploit” choice tries to capture this strategy, and it spans the range of “tough negotiating” to “implicit and/or selective repressive measures.” But a better understanding of conflict potential requires a more nuanced view of the range of choices in strategies of both the regime and the group.

Another aspect that the model may need to stress more is the role of uncertainty and fear in fomenting conflict. The disintegration of Yugoslavia, for example, occurred in part due to the uncertainty that resulted from the power vacuum after Tito’s death. All of the Yugoslav groups became more concerned about their future security. Uncertainty can arise from the end of a particular regime type, a new social group arising, or other alterations that threaten to leave one or more groups subject to a greater degree of closure. Under certain circumstances, all groups can fear an increase in closure even though this, of course, is impossible in reality. When formulating intelligence requirements, analysts need to focus on the beliefs of groups and how secure they are in their social, economic, and political position. The uncertainty and fear between groups are taken into account indirectly in the model (through the focus on drivers of mobilization), but they may need more explicit treatment.
Related to this problem is the nebulous but important question of the strength of ethnic identity. That aspect is captured partially in the potential of the group to mobilize. However, a more explicit focus on the intensity and strength of ethnic identity, as well as the presence of cross-cutting ties between communal groups (e.g., membership in the same labor union or allegiance to a shared political principle) as a way of offsetting communal differences and reducing perceptions of closure, may be warranted. For example, the relatively weak sense of Oromo identity in Ethiopia (at least in contrast to the Amhara) limits their potential for mobilization. Conversely, an active state policy of reducing differences between groups may turn out to be crucial. Thus, despite the extensive differences and rivalry between black organizations or groups in South Africa, a strong supragroup feeling of common ties among the black population of South Africa emerged, no doubt due to the specific state policy of treating all blacks as belonging to the same social class (thus decreasing communal differences).

This touches on the larger point that the role of communal groups as political actors is often more potential than real. Some “groups” may have little corporate existence until an “identity entrepreneur” mobilizes them (“conscientizes” them) or another event occurs that leads to greater group awareness. In the first stage of the model, the analyst should take an imaginative look at the identification of closure, in that she should think about the potential emergence of group identities based on patterns of, sometimes implicit, discrimination or privilege. The tendency is to focus on already existing groups. But the analyst should keep in mind that identity is fluid and apt to change, and that new “groups” can arise as a result of skilled mobilizational appeals. The rise of “Yugoslav” identity, which the consociational governing structure in Yugoslavia seemingly and paradoxically found so threatening, is a case in point. And regional differentiation can bring together rapidly into one “group” what may be a collection of diverse peoples.

Many, if not most, regimes pursue policies of “nation-building,” usually understood as an attempt to homogenize the population of the state. There is nothing new about this policy, and contemporary “homogeneous” states like France (which pioneered this approach), Germany, or Italy became homogeneous only as a result of a century or more of often brutal centralization and state-sponsored “nation-
building.” The policy has been imitated in many developing countries after decolonization. Nation-building on one hand is inclusive, as it offers individuals access to power, status, and wealth. On the other hand, nation-building is exclusive, as it denies the value of cultural diversity and deprives traditional elites of their leading positions in society. Nation-building is a strategy that can change the very dynamic of the model by affecting group identification itself. Attention to its processes, its rate of success or failure and its consequences, should be a component of any analysis of potential for communitarian strife. The model takes this into account, but the point needs special attention in long-range forecasts.

The role of other states also may need to be brought into the model in a more direct fashion. The model explores how a foreign government can boost a mobilizing group’s resource and organization base, and the case studies suggest that events abroad can have an even broader impact on mobilization through their example. For example, Saudi Shi’a ties to foreign groups have in the past inspired them to resist their government even when foreign governments have not provided any concrete aid. The success of violence in Lebanon, Iran, and elsewhere became a model for Shi’a throughout the world to emulate. Foreign aid can strengthen a state’s fiscal and economic position, but it can also have a variety of effects on group mobilization. A group may fear being overwhelmed by a strengthened government, or it may fear a change in its social ranking. Conversely, foreign aid to the group may only strengthen the dominant group’s perception of the challenging group as a “fifth column” and “traitors.” Also, events across a border can affect a group’s perception of closure and its propensity to mobilization (as a tipping event), particularly when it involves co-ethnics abroad. The model allows for the integration into the analysis of nonmaterial influences and assistance from abroad, but analysts need to make certain that such factors are considered adequately.

**ADDITIONAL USES OF THE MODEL**

Besides guiding intelligence analysis, the model has uses as a tool for policy guidance. For example, it can be used to explore the effects of external armed intervention on intergroup relations. Support, even implicit, for some groups or factions by the intervening forces may
cause a power shift among all the groups, causing some to be hostile and others to be supportive. The model provides a tool to assess the consequences of intervention.

This point touches on the usefulness of the model in directing policy. By using the model to test future outcomes, it can highlight the advantages and disadvantages of various policy alternatives. For example, if the model suggested that the creation of a more pluralistic system would improve a regime’s accommodative capacity and lower the potential for violence in the face of incipient group mobilization, this could become an objective of U.S. foreign policy. Similarly, the United States might be able to reduce foreign meddling or otherwise prevent the mobilization of an ethnic group.

Particularly useful for policymakers would be the use of the model to determine which conflicts, if any, are especially difficult to resolve and when an external diplomatic intervention may be in order to stabilize the situation. When regimes are weak and exclusive, when closure is high, and when mobilizing events are common, neither the regime nor the communal group is likely to favor a peaceful solution. Indeed, both sides may consider any peace as a breathing space to rearm and mobilize in preparation for the next round of conflict. Knowledge of such a situation, and the ability to show in a causal fashion the reasons for coming to such a conclusion, would inform policy choices.

FUTURE RESEARCH AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODEL

As should be abundantly clear by now, this effort represents a first cut at the development of a model that pursues a different path from vulnerability analyses and which can be used by intelligence analysts for intensive assessments of a specific country’s likelihood for communitarian strife. This effort is not the final word, and the authors recognize substantial areas for further development and refinement of the model.

One, the model focused on understanding one particular kind of ethnic action: the rise of an ethnic group challenging the state. It did not examine directly other kinds of ethnic competition, such as those that ensue when several ethnic groups compete with one another
Final Observations

(with the state acting either as umpire, abettor, or participant). The model took such competition into account to a limited extent, but its focus is on the group-versus-state conflict. Dealing with pathways to conflict in multigroup situations may require other models based, to some degree or another, on the one offered here. Alternatively, it may be possible to “model” these alternative paths to strife as variant cases of the base model offered in this book. Indeed, as the case studies showed, it is possible to apply the model to situations that are more complex than the simple dyadic interaction. One way of proceeding is to group the potential challengers to the state into one “supergroup.” If tensions among groups making up such a supergroup are likely, then the coding of leadership and popular support aspects of the group will be affected. For heuristic purposes, the use of the model in such a manner may suffice, but it is not a perfect tool by any means to deal with the more complex situations. In any event, modeling multigroup situations requires additional research.

Two, perhaps most important, the model can be developed beyond the simple strategy choices in the matrices. Just as the strategy choices stem from the assessment of the resources of the group and state against each other, it is feasible to develop more detailed pathways of action within these choices. For example, the “intimidate” strategy could be developed to span the range of the intensity and type of actions that a group could undertake. Based on a more detailed knowledge of the resource and support base of the group, it is theoretically possible to anticipate the type of violent action the group would be likely to embrace. These choices could number up to a dozen different categories and range from an armed uprising and a guerrilla war in the countryside to a select terrorist-style bombing campaign.3 The same expansion of choices could be undertaken with the other strategy choices. This path of additional research also would throw light on the probable aims of the mobilized group.

---

3At this stage, the model, or at least its matrices, would need to borrow from game theory and perhaps veer off into formal modeling. In terms of substantiation of the link between the choice of type of violence by groups as well as the state, depending on the resource structure and the type of opponent they are facing, there is a substantial literature on the topic. For some examples, see Stathis N. Kalyvas, “Wanton and Senseless? The Logic of Massacres in Algeria,” Rationality and Society, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 243–285; and Leonard Wantchekon and Andrew Healy, “The ‘Game’ of Torture,” Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 43, No. 5, October 1999, pp. 596–609.
across the range of strategy choices. Because the set of potential choices would increase exponentially, the additional matrices would be complex and mathematically unwieldy and thus well-suited to development as a software program.

Finally, this research effort did not focus on disproving the theoretical claims offered here in the context of other alternatives that may exist in the literature. Such work too requires further consideration and effort.