

Political integration and internal violent conflict management

Klaus Krajewski

Völkerkundliches Institut, Universität Tübingen, Schloß, D-7400 Tübingen, Deutschland

Abstract. The paper is concerned with hypotheses relating political structure and modes of conflict resolution. An analysis of existing studies related to this topic leads to the argument that in order to test formulated hypotheses correctly the problems of operationalization of theoretical variables and of definition of the appropriate unit of analysis must be solved. An optimized model for retesting specifically hypotheses explaining modes of internal conflict management in centralized societies is offered.

Introduction

In my paper I discuss the often postulated relationship between elements of political structure, mechanisms of political processes and modes of conflict management. Starting point of my discussion are studies testing these relationships cross-culturally¹. In these studies we find a confusing variety of hypotheses and variables. A closer look reveals the fact, that, even though differing in many ways, the explanation of intrasocietal conflicts is based on the same theoretical considerations.

Summarizing existing concepts and discussion

Two basic concepts are offered relating intrasocietal conflict to elements of the political structure. On the one hand, it is argued that the lack of overarching institutions with the ability to resolve conflicts explains violent conflict management. The other approach focusses on the power monopoly of political authorities, allowing them to suppress violent forms of conflict management, which threaten existing power constellations. This is only possible, when the concentration of political power reaches a certain level. The common idea underlying these arguments is the notion, that overarching authorities are able to integrate opposing intrasocietal fractions, thus reducing the probability of violent conflict management.

To summarize previous results and as a starting point for the development of an optimized model I reconstruct two hypotheses reflecting the above outlined common theoretical basis.

¹ For an overview of cross-cultural studies concerned with conflict and conflict resolution see White and Burton 1987.