

The third element was seen in the many civil wars that erupted in West Africa following the severe medicine of structural adjustment changes that was prescribed to their governments. The legitimacy of the state was undermined and contributed to the civil conflict that erupted in various parts of the continent.

Ultimately, however, it is difficult to find a simple and direct connection between increases in poverty and the latter is often complemented by other factors. Policies that attempt to lessen income disparities, trying to limit uncertainty and ensuring that the state or another legitimate entity can continue to provide public goods, can help to limit conflict

THE AWARENESS OF POVERTY

The perception of growing inequality might stimulate growing unrest and lead to warfare. This is the essence of the **relative deprivation thesis** which **proposes that men and women rebel not because they are poor but because they see others around them getting richer and doing so quickly**. Advances in information technology and social media make this more likely than in the past. Relative deprivation is the experience of being deprived of something one thinks they are entitled to. This theory has some merit and important propositions have emerged from it about the relationship between modernization and progress and social violence. It proposes that **'backwardness' itself does not generate violence but the process of modernization and rapid economic and social change that produces social instability**.

Increased absolute income and not relative income leads to people becoming rich in a short time span, the disruption of traditional social groupings in society (class and family, for instance), increases in exposure to media through increased literacy and education which might in turn, increase frustration. Rapid social change may also exacerbate ethnic tensions in society with regard to the distribution of resources.

The main difficulty in adjusting to these changes is **the lack of a political infrastructure** that can mitigate the effects of rapid change. There is increased emphasis on the strength of institutions nowadays as opposed to the attention which, until recently, been focused on the state.

Has the relative deprivation thesis been given a new lease of life with the emergence of social media and, more loosely, globalization? The distinguished economist Robert Wade spoke of **global inequality** in 2001. His opinion is that

Income divergence helps to explain another kind of polarization taking place in the world system, between a zone of peace and a zone of turmoil. On the one hand, the regions of the wealthy pole show a strengthening republican order of economic growth and liberal tolerance (except toward immigrants), with technological innovation able to substitute for depleting natural capital. On the other hand, the regions of the lower- and middle-income poles contain many states whose capacity to govern is stagnant or eroding, mainly in Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, the former Soviet Union, and parts of East Asia. Here, a rising proportion of the people find their access to basic necessities restricted at the same time as they see others driving Mercedes.