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*SILVIA DI GASPARE, Demografia dei conflitti armati. I casi del Ruanda e della Bosnia, Aracne Editrice, Canterano, 2018*

Population changes have transformed international security issues and national politics worldwide, and have also been the triggers of important political effects. The complex relationship between demographic patterns and political behavior might work even backwards, being political factors those affecting population change. The last could be the case of a public policy changing population dynamics, like China's one-child policy to control the rapid rise of population through fertility, or political forces stimulating mass movements of people, like the recent exodus of walking emigrants (called *caminantes*) during the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. Within the broader context of subjects building the bridge between population and political sciences, there is an emergent field of study dedicated to the demography of armed conflicts and violence. This is the perspective surrounding the book "*Demografia dei conflitti armati. I casi del Ruanda e della Bosnia*" written by Silvia Di Gaspare. The first chapter of the book introduces the reader into the process of birth and further evolution of political demography as a subject of scientific study, giving voice to the most important authors who have contributed to its development over time. Of great interest is the section

in which are summarized the most important contributions made to the discipline during and after times of the great war by Italian demographers: Gini, Maroi, and Mortara. Di Gaspare identified here the ascend of two different research methods: one intended at informing public policy throughout the causality of demographic dynamics, and the other based on an observational approach and focused on the consequences of demographic factors. It is well known that countries characterized by a rapid population growth have a higher likelihood of experiencing an armed conflict than countries where the demographic pressure is lower. The final section of the chapter addressed the four primary explanations that scholars have given to this phenomenon: youth bulge, rapid urbanization, resource scarcity and population structure differentials regarding ethnicity and religion.

The second chapter is dedicated to a critical analysis of the main theoretical frameworks aimed at explaining the nexus among population changes, resources scarcity and the emergence of conflicts. From Malthus to Boserup, into the current debate between *neo-malthusians* and *cornucopians*, where the political ecology has recalled the attention to the way in which resources are allocated. Following Homer-Dixon, the author concludes this chapter presenting a state of the art of the most recent literature focused on the three types of resources scarcity: demand-induced scarcity, in which conflicts are triggered by an increasing demand for a resource; supply-induced scarcity, caused by the degradation and depletion of an environmental resource; and structural

scarcity arising from an unequal distribution of resources, given special attention to a situation characterized by abundance.

The third chapter has been strategically placed on this part of the book in order to explain the role played by resource scarcity on Rwandan genocide. Di Gaspare, after perfectly placing this case study within its own demographic context, recognized the complexity of the historical social, economic and political mechanisms leading up to the genocide acknowledging that conflicts might be caused by the scarcity of environmental resources, and that the outbreak of violent conflict hardly depends on how the State handles the situation. In this particular case, the unequal access to land in an agricultural economy, poorly urbanized and profoundly divided by ethnic groups (*Hutus* against *Tutsis*) produced huge levels of social stress that turned into a violent conflict. The author closes the chapter underpinning an important gap identified on research given the lack of studies where the relationship between population growth and resource scarcity is empirically tested.

The following chapter explains the way in which demographic pressure and ethnic divides might determine societal tensions after the occurrence a disruptive event that increases the likelihood of armed-conflict outbreak. The theoretical point of departure is the application of greed and grievance perspective to ethnic fragmentation, to arrive to realistic theories by the hands of the Power Transition Theory, that was born to contrast the Balance of Power Theory. From the analysis of empirical studies on this subject, the author emphasized the presence of mixed results. In fact, the risk of conflict outbreak seems to be higher both

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when the politically dominant group is represented by a minority and when the political power is divided among several groups, but this relation has not always been proven.

The case of study of the Bosnian conflict is presented in the fifth chapter as a clear example of the outbreak of a conflict because of ethnic competition (Serb, Muslim and Croat) in terms of population numbers. As stated by Di Gaspare, the Bosnian case is interesting because illustrates the importance of reconsidering how armed conflict can also be triggered in more mature populations (where the demographic transition has been already completed).

The author has devoted complete sections of the manuscript to clearly define and understand both the context and developments of each of the armed conflict in which the book is focused on. This manner of giving a detailed historical perspective allow the identification of the conflict and remains essential to explain its uniqueness and to make a significant move towards the possibility of predicting conflicts emerging from similar situations. This is undoubtedly, one of the features of the book that I think readers will appreciate the most!

*Thaís García-Pereiro.*