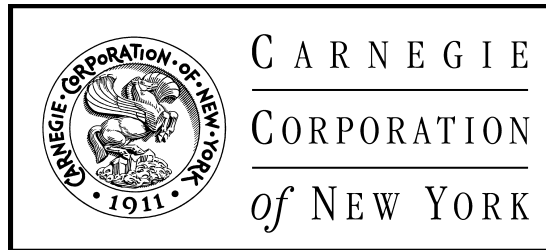# Carnegie Challenge

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The Enduring Challenge:
Self Determination and Ethnic Conflict
in the 21st Century

by David Callahan

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S eismic events in world politics tend to produce a well-spring of speculation about what will happen next. The two world wars were followed by intense discussions of what the world would look like in the future and, more importantly, what it should look like. After the end of the Cold War, political scientists and other seers were busy through the 1990s debating the future of international affairs and U.S foreign policy.

As often as not, prognostications made in the immediate aftermath of a major event in world politics are wrong, as is much of the policy analysis and advice informed by these predictions. New terrain in international affairs has a way of disorienting even the most seasoned observers.

The terrorist attacks of September 11th and the war in Afghanistan provide the latest test of our ability to look ahead and accurately divine the shape of things to come. America is now in a strange and unforeseen landscape: a massive, nearly unimaginable, blow against the homeland followed by an open ended conflict with many fronts. The debate over how the world and U.S. foreign policy will be changed by these events is only beginning, but several key ideas have already taken hold. Perhaps the most popular idea is that the struggle against terrorism will largely define national security strategy in the years ahead. The Bush Administration, echoed by many of its allies, has articulated a vision of a long twilight struggle against terrorists and "evil" rogue states that rivals the cold war doctrine of containment in its sense of historic scope.

A second idea is that conflict between modern and traditional populations, manifested by clashes of religions and cultures, will be a major driver of world politics. This vision of the future is closely related to a third idea with a wide following: That world politics will increasingly be defined by battles between the rich and poor—between those who are benefiting from the fruits of an increasingly globalized world economic system and the great masses of people who are shut out of such prosperity.

Each of these ideas holds important clues about the future. But something is sorely missing from current debates: An appreciation of the decisive role that self-determination movements and ethnic conflict will likely have in shaping world politics and American foreign policy in the decades ahead.*

During much of the 1990s, self-determination issues received a tremendous amount of attention, and for good reason. Conflicts between different ethnic groups in Bosnia, Rwanda, Kosovo, and the former Soviet Union dominated international news and drew NATO, America and the United Nations into several major interventions. And yet, even before September 11th, self-determination issues had largely lost their central place in debates about world affairs and U.S. foreign policy. The fast

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* This paper will discuss ethnic conflict and self-determination movements within a common framework. However, it should be stressed that these phenomena are distinct from each other, and there are variations within each category. Self-determination movements typically seek to create a new and separate state, semi-sovereign autonomous governing entity, or new political accommodation and power-sharing arrangements, while ethnic conflict may occur in a range of situations in which none of the parties involved are explicitly seeking major changes in governance structures. Moreover, the term "ethnic conflict," as used in this paper and by many other scholars, describes conflicts not just rooted in strict ethnic differences, but also racial, linguistic, tribal and religious differences.

changing currents of these debates had carried elite attention to other problems: managing globalization and its backlash; trading off cold war arms control agreements for the dream of national missile defense; dealing with growing Chinese power; and so on. Before September 11th, even as international aid workers worked to rebuild Kosovo and Bosnia, and even as Macedonia teetered on the brink of full-fledged ethnic warfare, self determination problems ceased to receive a great deal of attention.

While the emerging terms of the international security debate after September 11th promise to further marginalize self-determination issues, this should not be the case. The new debate is still fluid enough to be shaped. And if there is one critical idea that should help frame post-September 11th views of the world, it is this: *Ethnic conflict and quests for self-determination around the world are likely to be among the most important factors driving international politics in the next decades.* This phenomenon, moreover, should not be seen as separate from other global problems such as terrorism, failed states, rivalry among great powers, access to natural resources, and clashes between the modern and the traditional, or between the rich and the poor. Instead, self-determination issues weave through many of these problems. In the years ahead, self-determination movements and ethnic rivalries are sure to produce a steady stream of discrete conflicts that have little consequence beyond horrible local bloodletting. But just as surely, these movements will interact with a range of other glob-

al dynamics to create major challenges to peace and stability.

The events of September 11th and their aftermath are indicative of the ways in which problems of ethnic conflict operate below the radar in international affairs to affect outcomes. Why was Afghanistan such a hospitable home to Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda terrorist network? In part, because ethnic rivalries helped ensure that Afghanistan became a failed state after the Soviet withdrawal, which facilitated the rise of an extremist regime willing to play host to an international terrorist network. Why does al-Qaeda's anti-Americanism resonate strongly in much of the Arab world? In part, because of U.S. support for Israel, where one of the most intractable ethnic conflicts in the world has raged for years. What will determine the long-term success of efforts to rebuild Afghanistan and ensure that the U.S. intervention turns out to be a positive development for average Afghans? In large part, the ability of different Afghan ethnic groups to put aside their differences and share power.

The events of September 11th and the war in Afghanistan are not unique in the way that they showcase the profound—yet often dimly visible—influences of ethnic tensions in shaping major developments in international affairs. Many other pivotal events of the past can be viewed through this same prism, and many crises and conflicts of the future will likewise unfold within parameters set in part by the unmet aspirations or

chauvinist prerogatives of particular ethnic groups.

The discussion that follows is aimed at drawing attention back to the problems of ethnic conflict and self-determination in the 21st century. It offers an exploration of the dimensions of this problem, and the ways in which ethnic conflicts have had a major impact on international security and U.S. foreign policy since the end of the Cold War. Then it examines the ways in which Afghanistan's tragic past and future fate have been shaped by the dynamics of ethnic rivalry. Looking ahead, the paper suggests how the United States and other leading powers can more effectively respond to ethnic conflicts around the world. It also looks at the role of international organizations and NGOs in addressing self-determination challenges.

A Formula for Conflict: Many Peoples, Few Nations

In January 1993, Warren Christopher appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at his confirmation hearing to be Secretary of State. A brutal war was raging in Bosnia, and many other ethnic conflicts were simmering across the globe. Commenting on this turmoil, Christopher noted a ominous chasm in world politics: While there existed thousands of distinctive ethnic or linguistic groups, there were fewer than 200 countries, and the vast majority of ethnic groups lived as minorities in a state dominated by a majority group. This math held the potential for many tragedies ahead. Christopher raised the specter of unending con-

flicts like Bosnia if "we don't find some way that the different ethnic groups can live together in a country."[1] That same year, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan put the issue more sensationally: "The defining mode of conflict in the era ahead is ethnic conflict," he argued. "It promises to be savage. Get ready for 50 new countries in the world in the next 50 years. Most them will be born in bloodshed."[2]

The 1990s bore out some of the most dire predictions of those imagining a future of ethnic strife. In many ways the history of violent conflict in the post-Cold War era has been a history of ethnic conflict.

- 200,000 dead in Bosnia until a peace forged by American power ended the three-year war there in 1995;
- 800,000 dead in Rwanda in 1994, Tutsi slaughtered by their Hutu countrymen while the international community did nothing;
- up to 200,000 dead in Burundi during the 1990s in fighting between and among Hutu and Tutsi factions;
- thousands dead and several million displaced by Turkey's brutal war on its Kurdish minority through the 1990s;
- tens of thousands dead in Chechnya after Russian troops began a scorched earth crack down in late 1994 on an armed secessionist movement;
- an explosion of long brewing ethnic tensions in Kosovo in 1998, with massive Serb repression of Albanians triggering NATO's first-ever military campaign;

- major ethnic violence in East Timor, as Indonesian troops end a 25-year occupation of the island, triggering an Australian-led U.N. military intervention;

- unending bloodshed on the island nation of Sri Lanka, as the minority Tamil population stepped up its a long struggle for self-determination;

- escalating violence in the Israel as a peace process to create a separate Palestinians state remains unresolved.

This list could go on, and include a range of other conflicts that have erupted since the end of the Cold War. However, if we were to construct a list of conflicts unrelated to ethnic rivalries since 1992, it would be far shorter. Included on the list would be: a minor border conflict between Ecuador and Peru; escalating civil conflict in Columbia between guerrilla groups, narco-terrorists and government forces; the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea that began in 1998; and several other conflicts in Africa.

While the violent conflicts of the post-war era have been largely driven by ethnic rivalry, two common kinds of wars from earlier eras—interstate wars between countries and insurgencies fueled by political ideology—have become increasingly rare. In 1999, for example, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reported that of the 27 armed conflicts it was monitoring worldwide, only two were interstate conflicts.[3]

Does the dominance of ethnic violence in global conflicts over the past decade mean that the same pattern will hold over the next decade? This question is difficult to answer. A number of the ethnic conflicts after the Cold War can be seen as part of a great wave of state fragmentation that accompanied the collapse of Communism. These include the ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, in Chechnya and in other Caucasus states like Georgia and Tajikistan. With the early post-Cold-War era now in the past, many of these conflicts have either been decisively resolved or at least moved into a state of remission. However, other ethnic conflicts of recent years have been only the latest symptoms of long-running rivalries that have flared and subsided periodically over the decades. For example, Rwanda and Burundi have both seen several episodes of mass killings since the early 1960s, and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict likewise has roots that precede the present era.

Flashpoints of the Future

Looking ahead into the future, many of the ethnic conflicts of the past decade have a high chance of flaring up once more due to population pressures, competition for resources and the weaknesses of internal political structures. These same problems may cause conflict or self-determination drives in some ethically diverse states that have not recently seen major conflict. Meanwhile, globalization has the potential to exacerbate ethnic rivalries and self-determination efforts by causing groups to emphasize ethnic and communal bonds in the face of

powerful external cultural, economic and political forces. (It could also have the opposite effect of breaking down ethnic identities in favor of other identities more related to class and the market.)[4] Possible flashpoints for conflict related to ethnic conflict and self-determination include:

South Asia. The South Asian subcontinent is among the most ethnically fragile regions in the world and has recently shown signs of growing instability. In late 2001 and early 2002, the long simmering war in Kashmir escalated to new levels of intensity and galvanized the attention of world leaders. While this conflict is often characterized as a territorial dispute, it is also a classic struggle for self-determination, with Kashmir's majority Muslim population struggling against Indian Hindu rule and getting support for this effort from Pakistan. The possession of nuclear weapons by both Pakistan and India makes the Kashmir conflict among the most dangerous self-determination struggles in the world. Beyond the Kashmir conflict, South Asia is home to serious ethnic tensions within Pakistan, which is divided by significant ethnic and clan cleavages; and in India, where self-determination struggles in the Punjab and other regions periodically flare up, and where recent Muslim-Hindu violence has the potential to undermine stability within the country. The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka is also a long-standing problem.

China. While the vast majority of China's 1.2 billion people are Han Chinese, China contains significant ethnic minorities and future self-determi-

nation efforts within China could have profoundly destabilizing consequences. Most notably, a serious secessionist bid by Tibet could bring the international community and the United States into conflict with Beijing's authoritarian government. Currently, no such secessionist bid is on the horizon, and the indigenous population of Tibet continues to grow weaker. However, if China moves in a more democratic direction, it is likely to embolden Tibetan opposition leaders and the situation could deteriorate quickly. Another significant self-determination movement in China is that of the Uighurs, a Muslim people of Turkic ethnicity who live in Xinjiang in Western China (part of an area the Uighurs refer to as Eastern Turkestan or Uighuristan.) Over seven million Uighurs live in China, and they have a long history of resisting Chinese rule; twice, in 1933 and 1944, the Uighurs temporarily constituted an Eastern Turkistan Republic. Over the past decade, protest activities against Chinese rule have been ongoing, and Uighur representatives and human rights groups have complained repeatedly about Chinese repression of Uighurs. Since September 11th, the Chinese government has arrested many Uighurs and closed mosques in Xinjiang, alleging ties between Uighur activists and al-Qaeda.

Indonesia. With the fourth largest population in the world and significant natural resources, Indonesia will help shape the future of all of Southeast Asia. Yet Indonesia has long faced significant internal challenges, and these challenges have worsened since President Suharto was forced from

power in 1998 after 32 years of rule. Ethnic rivalries and self-determination claims rank high among Indonesia's many problems. Since 1976, the Gerakan Aceh Merk (GAM, Free Aceh Movement) has sought an independent state in the Indonesian province of Aceh, on the northern tip of Sumatra. The conflict, which has claimed over 5,000 lives since 1989, has yet to be permanently resolved. Another separatist effort is underway in Papua, where calls for independence have been growing and conflict is increasing between separatists and the Indonesian military. In addition to these conflicts, there are other areas of ethnic and religious strife in Indonesia. In May 1998, the prosperous ethnic Chinese minority in Indonesia was widely attacked during rioting and roughly 150,000 Chinese fled the country during this period. In January 1999, fighting between Christians and Muslims in Ambon, the capital of Indonesia's Maluku province, brought on a near civil war that soon spread to other parts of the province. As many as 10,000 people may have been killed and close to 700,000 became refugees.[5]

The Balkans. Recent ethnic fighting in the ethnically divided nation of Macedonia, serves as a reminder that the fracturing of the former Yugoslavia along ethnic lines is a process not yet complete. Beyond the potential of more conflict in Macedonia, there is the possibility of conflict in Montenegro, where Serbian rule is increasingly challenged; Bosnia, where a lasting peace between Serbs, Muslims, and Croats is far from assured; and Kosovo, where violence has flared periodically

between pockets of remaining Serbs and the Albanian majority. All future conflict in the former Yugoslavia has the potential to once more draw in NATO and the United Nations.

The Caucasus. The 1990s saw a host of ethnic wars in the Caucasus, including two separatist conflicts in Georgia, a brutal and extended war in Chechyna, and a long running war in the Nagorno-Karabagh region of Azerbeijan. All of these conflicts are now in abeyance but none have been decisively resolved.

Great Lakes Region of Africa. Since 1959, Rwanda and Burundi have been the scene of repeated outbursts of ethnic violence. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda was by far the worst such outburst, but there was also large-scale slaughter in one or the other countries in the early 1960s, in 1972, and in 1988 and in 1993. This bloody historical record, along with continuing instability, ongoing armed warfare in Burundi, and long-term demographic and economic pressures, suggests the high possibility of future ethnic conflict in Rwanda and Burundi.

Kurdistan. The 25-30 million Kurds of the Middle East remain the largest group in the world without their own state. Scattered through Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, the Kurds were promised a state in the wake of World War I but these promises never materialized. Periodic Kurdish rebellions have led to ethnic wars both in Iraq and, most recently, in Turkey, where the government waged a highly repressive campaign against Kurdish separatists in

southeastern Turkey during the 1990s. With none of the states containing Kurds making any real effort to accommodate their desires for autonomy, new Kurdish uprisings in the 21st century would seem inevitable.

The Costs of Ethnic Conflict

While all ethnic conflicts are tragic, not all equally threaten U.S. national security interests or the stability of the international system. Some ethnic conflicts can rage for years and have only a minor impact outside the country being torn apart. The two-decade civil war in Sri Lanka, for instance, has had little impact on the outside world, even as it has ruined a country and affected the lives of millions of Sri Lankans. In the years ahead, as in years past, ethnic conflicts will greatly differ in their implications for outsiders. At their most dangerous, future ethnic conflicts are likely to pose profound security threats to the United States and important allies. These conflicts may also produce a range of negative spillover affects. The bad things that can arise from ethnic conflicts and threaten outside parties include:

Terrorism. Lacking the military capacity for conventional war, minority groups pursuing self-determination often resort to terrorist tactics of warfare —the "weapons of the weak." Indeed, much of the history of terrorism over the past quarter century reflects ethnic struggle: recent bombings in Israel by Palestinians and, earlier, airplane hijackings by Palestinians during the 1980s; bombings in Eng-

land by the Irish Republican Army; bombings in Spain by Basque separatists; bombings in India by the Tamil Tigers; and bombings in Russia by Chechen separatists.6 Also, the attacks of September 11th— as well as the earlier attacks on U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, the U.S. barracks in Saudi Arabia and the U.S.S. Cole in Yemen—can be seen as partly related to an ethnic conflict. Sympathy for the Palestinian cause has been a central hallmark of various Islamic terrorists, including Al-Qaeda. While most terrorist attacks are narrowly targeted, such attacks have a long history of claiming innocent bystanders as their victims, including Americans. With terrorists potentially turning to weapons of mass destruction in future years, the likelihood of wider and more indiscriminate carnage from terrorism related to self determination struggles will grow.

Conflict Between Major Powers. Ethnic conflicts that begin at a small level can and do draw in major outside powers. The result can be that internal conflicts produce major tensions and the threat of violence among outside powers. During the 1990s, U.S. and NATO intervention in the Balkans created significant tensions between the U.S. and Russia, which was allied with Serbia. NATO's intervention in Kosovo also created a major rift in U.S.- Chinese relations when an American bomber accidentally destroyed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. During the 1980s, the civil war in Lebanon drew in Israel, the United States, Syria, France and Great Britain. In the future, a range of simmering hotspots could well explode in ways that produce

conflict between major powers. For example, although the probability is low, conflict between ethnic Russians living in the Baltic states (primarily Estonia, and Latvia) and the majority populations in those states, could bring the United States and Russia into direct conflict as Russia moves to defend its people in sovereign countries that have close ties with the United States. Likewise, in Asia, repression of future Tibetan or Uighuran self-determination efforts could trigger clashes between China and outside powers.

Creation of Failed States. An important lesson of recent decades is that failed states without strong central government pose significant dangers because they can become safe havens for terrorists and other rogue elements. Ethnic conflicts and self-determination movements, with their potential to rip governance structures apart, can create failed states. In the 1970s, after Lebanon descended into civil war, the country became a haven for a wide range of terrorist groups, as well as for drug producers and arms smugglers. As mentioned earlier, Afghanistan came to have many characteristics of a failed state following years of battle between different ethnic groups—and this facilitated the rise of the Taliban, which played host to al-Qaeda. A number of countries with simmering ethnic tensions today have the potential to be the failed states of tomorrow, including Pakistan and Indonesia. Moreover, an important consideration in U.S. policy toward Iraq is wariness that the fall of Saddam Hussein could produce a new and unstable failed state, with ongoing conflicts between the country's

three major groups: Kurds, Sunni Muslims, and Shiite Muslims.

Access to Resources. Ethnic conflicts that take place in resource rich areas can disrupt or limit the flow of resources to outside users. For example, a major reason that the oil reserves of the Caspian Sea remain underexploited is because they are adjacent to the zone of ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus. This has greatly complicated the challenge of building or maintaining oil pipelines to carry oil from the Caspian overland east to the Black Sea, where it can be loaded onto tankers. The supply of diamonds and other minerals has also been disrupted due to internal conflicts in Africa.

Diverted Internationalist Attention. Beyond the specific negative impacts that ethnic conflicts can have, as just discussed, these conflicts can take a toll on the world in a more general way by sparking crises that demand attention and management. In a world with less armed conflict, international leaders and institutions can focus proactively on building a better world order through more trade and economic development, as well through environmental protection and other positive initiatives. But in a world with a steady stream of crises and conflicts, the energies of world leaders and resources of international institutions get caught up in damage control and less attention is paid to long-terms efforts to create a stronger international order.

Afghanistan: Ethnic Rivalries, Global Consequences

In the fall of 2001, as the world focused on the war in Afghanistan, much attention was given to the complexity of the country's ethnic makeup. This complexity came as a surprise to casual observers of foreign affairs. After all, pre-September 11th, Afghanistan didn't look all that complicated: the Soviets had tried to dominate the country for a decade and had been driven out. Afterwards, rival guerrilla groups had slugged it out among themselves for a while—victors fighting for spoils in seemingly typical fashion—until the super-Islamic Taliban had risen to power. From afar, the distinctive feature of the Taliban seemed to be their fundamentalism, but in reality, their ethnicity as Pashtuns was a major factor in their cohesion. Still, in the 1990s, the story of Afghanistan appeared to be just another story of a country hijacked by extremists.

Wrong. As the American public learned more about Afghanistan and its rivalries among ethnic groups and warlords, both the country's history and its future began to look a lot more complicated. With a fragile coalition government working to create a lasting peace in Afghanistan, and U.S. leaders deciding on America's future role in the country, the dynamics of Afghanistan's ethnic rivalries are critical to understand.

Afghan politics has long been characterized by ethnic competition. This competition reflects the country's diverse ethnic makeup: today, roughly 38 percent of Afghans are Pashtun, who live mainly in the south; 25 percent are Tajik, living mainly in the north; 19 percent are Hazara, living mostly in central Afghanistan; another 6 percent are Uzbek, also living in the north; and the remaining 12 percent area variety of minor ethnic groups, including Aimaks, Turkmen and Baloch.[7] Like many countries with ethnic tensions, Afghanistan has a state with borders that don't reflect ethnic realities—in this case, a state created at the end of the 19th century by the British Empire. As Marina Ottaway and Anatol Lieven have written: "The Afghan state is a recent, partly colonial creation that has never commanded the full loyalty of its own citizens. Even today, many—perhaps most—Afghans give their primary allegiance to local leaders, ethnic groups, and tribes."[8]

Over the past two centuries, the Pashtun have been the principle leaders of efforts to build a modern central state in Afghanistan. These efforts yielded considerable success from 1880 through 1980, as Afghanistan developed into a modern nation-state. But they also triggered periodic resistance from other Afghan ethnic groups, who resented Pashtun dominance, as well as uneasiness in neighboring Pakistan, home to many Pashtuns, which feared efforts to create a united "Pashtunistan" carved from Afghanistan and Pakistan and having access to the Indian Ocean. Pakistan's fear of the cause of Pashtunistan shaped its policies toward Afghanistan during the 1980s and 1990s. As Afghan scholar Vartan Gregorian has written, "Pakistan has brilliantly used the call of Islam to sideline the nationalist aspirations of Pashtuns and irredentist policies

of Afghanistan by framing the struggle in larger, global terms."[9] In the mid-1990s, the fundamentalist Taliban offered the ideal vehicle for this effort, and Pakistan backed the Taliban's successful rise to power. By 1996, the Taliban—made up mainly of Pashtuns—were successful in controlling much of the country. However, resistance remained and was manifested along ethnic lines, with the ranks of the Northern Alliance made up mostly of Tajiks and Uzbeks.

Ongoing fighting between the Taliban and its adversaries through the late 1990s helped ensure that Afghanistan remained an impoverished, failed state. This environment provided a perfect refuge for al-Qaeda, whose presence was welcomed by a Taliban leadership eager for additional resources to deploy against its adversaries. The Taliban's embrace of al-Qaeda also reflected its desire to be less dependent on Pakistan.

As the international community confronts the daunting challenge of building a stable Afghanistan, the ethnic dimensions of a lasting peace must be carefully calibrated. Enduring distrust between different ethnic groups, as well as between different warlords and armed factions, makes it difficult to move Afghanistan easily down the road toward a modern democratic state. Inevitably, any new central state in Afghanistan with significant resources and powers will be the focal point for distrust and struggle. In both the near and long term, "a reconciliation government must be established that is truly inclusive," writes

Gregorian. This government must not be seen as a puppet of the United States or the Northern Alliance, and must reflect the Pashtuns' central role in Afghanistan. "Pashtuns won't easily relinquish two centuries of memory and power," Gregorian argues. "Without a major Pashtun role in the future of Afghanistan, there will be no viable peace."[10] Gregorian also emphasizes that steps should be taken to allay Pakistan's historic concerns about the quest for an independent Pashtunistan.

Another critical ingredient for success in postwar Afghanistan is a significant and lasting outside military presence that could keep new group conflict at bay, as well as large amounts of international assistance.[11] Many agree that the United Nations should take the lead over the long term in the reconstruction efforts. So far, however, a major military presence has not been put into place and reconstruction efforts have moved forward only slowly. Many blame the United States for a critical failure of leadership. As Afghan expert Barnett R. Rubin wrote in April 2002, "both Afghans and international officials see the [U.S.] refusal to expand the international force as the start of American disengagement, repeating the mistake of the 1990's despite promises to learn from that experience."[12] Rubin and other observers stress that the United States and the international community must make a far larger commitment to stabilizing Afghanistan if it is not to remain a permanently failed state with ongoing ethnic and factional conflicts, as well as enormous human suffering.

An Impossible Task? Managing Ethnic Conflict

Whether in Afghanistan or elsewhere, conflicts rooted in self-determination drives or ethnic rivalry are notoriously difficult to resolve. The claims and counterclaims driving these conflicts can stretch back centuries, and may be deeply ingrained in the culture of competing groups. In the Balkans, conflict between Muslims, Serbs and Croats have their roots in the 14th century conquest of southern Europe by Ottoman armies. In the Great Lakes region of Africa, conflict between Hutu and Tutsi reflects dynamics of competition that can be traced back to the tactics of Belgium's colonial administration. The list of other ethnic conflicts with ancient antecedents could go and on, as could a list of modern states concocted by colonial masters with borders that do not reflect ethnic or tribal boundaries.

At the same time, ethnic violence is not a phenomenon that is preordained by history or geography. In many states, different ethnic groups have lived together harmoniously for decades and, around the world, difficult self-determination disputes have been settled in a peaceful fashion. History demonstrates that there are many solutions to ethnic rivalries beyond dividing countries into separate states along ethnic lines. Examples of power-sharing through history include the dual monarchy of the Austro-Hungarian empire, the confessional democracy of Lebanon, and the multi-ethnic confederal systems of Switzerland and Canada. While many power-sharing arrangements have proven unsuc-

cessful in the long run, they nevertheless offer lessons and ideas to draw from in developing such arrangements in the future.

Beyond more distant historical examples, the international community has a growing body of more recent knowledge and experience when it comes to dealing with ethnic conflict and self-determination movements. These insights—which come from dozens of conflicts over the past decade and before—can help guide responses in two general categories: prediction and prevention; and intervention and reconstruction.

Prediction and Prevention

Self-determination bids and ethnic rivalries are infinitely harder to resolve once they have turned into full-fledged wars. Typically, however, the outbreak of fighting is preceded by years of growing tensions and often there are opportunities for outside parties to play a constructive role in defusing these tensions. Today, as a result of hard-learned lessons from past ethnic conflicts, the international community knows a great deal both about predicting and preventing ethnic conflicts.

Prediction. Not every ethnically diverse state is a powder keg waiting to explode. Conversely, a state that appears stable may in fact be quite fragile. There are three chief factors that point to the possibility of ethnic violence: a history of state repression of an ethnic minority or encouragement of violence toward a minority; a history of violence among ethnic groups; and the existence of ethnic

pockets within newly independent states. None of these conditions guarantees violence and it impossible to devise a reliable formula for predicting ethnic warfare. Still, most of the major ethnic conflicts of the 1990s were hardly surprising viewed through the lens of these factors. The upsurge of the Kurdish insurgency in Turkey during the early 1990s was a classic example of a conflict brought on by growing state repression of an ethnic group's culture. Other examples of state repression leading to ethnic violence during the 1990s include the worsening of violence in Indian-controlled Kashmir in the face of high levels of separatist activity, much of it abetted by Pakistan; the growing militancy of Palestinians in the occupied territories, where Israeli interventions were common during the 1980s and 1990s as it sought to ensure internal security; and the rise of Albanian militancy both in Kosovo under harsh Serbian rule during the 1990s and in Macedonia, where ethnic Albanians also felt mistreated.

Other ethnic conflicts during the 1990s arose due to the existence of ethnic pockets in newly independent states, including in the former Yugoslavia, where Serbs and Croats found themselves in states ruled by other ethnic groups; and in Azerbaijan, where Armenians in the Nagorno-Karabagh region worked to overturn their minority status. Tensions also surrounded pockets of ethnic Russians in the Baltic states and in Ukraine, as well as the problem of some two million ethnic Hungarians living in Slovakia and Romania. In Rwanda and Burundi, the Hutu and Tutsi generally live side by side,

rather than in pockets. But, in both these countries, a long history of bloodshed between the two groups and enduring enmity made the countries ripe for new violence.

Prevention. An understanding of the factors leading to ethnic conflicts suggests clear strategies of prevention. Patterns of state repression of ethnic minorities can be met with a human rights strategy of documenting abuses and penalizing governments through sanctions or other forms of punishment. By pressuring state governments to reduce repression, the international community can help reduce the urgency of a secessionist effort. The past decade has seen the emergence of a growing body of law and new institutional arrangements that provide the international community with fresh levers for advancing change. These include the creation within the Organization for Co-Operation and Security in Europe (OSCE) of a High Commissioner on National Minorities, the adoption of the U.N. Declaration on Minorities of December 1992, and new precedents involving the extradition and prosecution of those who engage in human rights abuses. In addition, human rights advocates have been working to increase the relevance and applicability of existing international agreements, such as the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Still, much more needs to be done to create the kind of robust transnational human rights regime that can offer maximum protection to minorities and help prevent ethnic rivalries from turning deadly.

The problem of distinct ethnic pockets in states can be dealt with through power sharing arrangements within central governments and/or strategies of semi-sovereignty, whereby ethnic regions are given significant autonomy in an "historical homeland" to run their own affairs. Homeland regimes can ensure culture rights, particularly around language and education, which are common areas of minority grievance.[13] In Eastern Europe and elsewhere, there are several successful examples where the international community has helped develop internal guarantees of minority rights that have defused growing ethnic tensions, including a successful effort in the 1990s to ensure the political and cultural rights of some 600,000 Hungarians living in Rumania.

Overall, in the wake of the 1990s, with its intense ethnic conflicts, the international community is now far better at seeing these conflicts coming and taking steps to defuse them. Still, the ability to predict and prevent conflict counts for little if international leaders do not have an emerging conflict on their radar. All too often, in the 1990s, simmering crises only attracted the attention of low-level diplomats from the United States and elsewhere—and failed to command the urgent attention of top leaders. In Rwanda, the ominous developments leading up to the 1994 genocide were tracked closely by U.N. forces in Rwanda and some western diplomats. But warnings of an impending cataclysm went unheeded at the highest levels of western governments. The same pattern can be seen in other conflicts. Such neglect comes

as no surprise given the demands on the time of top national security officials in the U.S. and other western countries, who often have their hands full dealing with a variety of other international challenges. Also, emerging ethnic conflicts often do not attract attention because they take place in regions of the world that are not seen as vital to the interests of leading world powers. In these cases, even full knowledge of impending bloodshed may result in little or no action because of a lack of political will.

One key to effective prediction and prevention is to appreciate a hard-learned lesson of the 1990s, namely that conflicts in seemingly unimportant places can undermine global security or create situations that western nations feel they must respond to. While no western nation had vital interests in Rwanda, the massive humanitarian disaster of the genocide and subsequent refugee crisis was such that a costly international intervention became unavoidable. The United States alone spent several billion dollars during this intervention. It is infinitely less costly to defuse a nascent crisis than to deal with the fallout of a major conflict.

Another key to prediction and prevention is to make far greater resources available to these tasks. In the United States, budget cuts affecting the diplomatic service and the concentration of intelligence resources on first order national security threats (e.g., nuclear proliferation) have left the U.S. without the resources to adequately monitor many regions of the world, such as Central Asia

and Africa. The United Nations' perpetual fiscal crisis has also severely limited the power of that institution to discharge its mandate of preventive diplomacy, and the U.N. has not been able to enact proposals that have been put forth to give the Secretary General far more capacity to actively monitor conflicts and engage in conflict resolution activities. Meanwhile, regional collective security organizations like the Organization of African Unity also lack resources or are underdeveloped institutionally. A new commitment is needed —within the United States, but also internationally —to find the resources necessary to ensure more effective responses to emerging crises. Over the long run, such an investment will more than pay for itself.

Intervention and Reconstruction

Even in an ideal world, the best and most proactive efforts at prediction and prevention will often fail. When ethnic conflicts occur, the international community faces difficult choices about how to stop the violence and create a lasting peace. Over the past several decades, the history of outside intervention in ethnic conflicts has been one of mixed success, and it is impossible to underestimate the challenges of defusing such conflicts and rebuilding divided, war-torn nations. But, just as the United States and its allies have learned much about how to predict and prevent ethnic conflicts, so too have many useful lessons been learned about intervention and reconstruction.

Intervention. A fundamental obstacle to effective intervention by outside powers in an ethnic conflict is that few outsiders want to incur the risks that such intervention entails. In the United States and other western nations, national leaders face significant political pressures to avoid foreign entanglements that might result in military casualties. To put soldiers in harm's way, and to possibly have flag-draped coffins arrive from overseas, is a step hard to justify except if vital national interests are at stake. Yet most of the ethnic conflicts of the past decade have not directly threatened the vital national interests of major outside powers. The Rwanda genocide, as discussed, was a human tragedy almost beyond imagination—but one that did not directly impinge upon the vital economic or political interests of leading outside powers. Even the Bosnian conflict, the worst violence in Europe since World War II, did not pose enough of a threat to the vital interests of NATO countries to trigger prompt intervention. Looking to the future, ethnic violence inside Pakistan or India or Indonesia or a slew of smaller, less important states may well not be seen as posing direct threats to the interests of major outside powers.

To be sure, there will always be instances where outside powers muster the moral wherewithal to intervene in internal conflicts that do not impinge on vital interests. America's intervention in Somalia, the eventual NATO intervention in Bosnia, and the NATO intervention in Kosovo, show that humanitarian principles are not entirely absent from the calculus of intervention. And, more than

ever, the growing effectiveness of airpower in combination with advanced intelligence-gathering capabilities, hold out the promise of military intervention with reduced risks. Still, looking ahead, it is likely that outside intervention in future ethnic conflicts will often come too late, if at all, and new instances of massive human suffering will go unstopped—unless fundamental changes are made in the global collective security system.

To deal effectively with future ethnic conflicts, the international community must create a way to intervene in these conflicts that does not force the leaders of outside powers to ask whether vital interests are at stake. One crucial step is to transform the collective security powers of the United Nations. Currently, U.N. peacekeeping forces are made up of contingents from national armies—with contributing countries typically very cautious about being part of missions that might incur casualties in places where no vital interests are at stake. To be effective in conflicts that threaten only humanitarian principles or international stability generally—but no single nation's vital interests—many have argued that the United Nations needs its own rapid deployment force. Different visions exist for such a force, but it has been frequently proposed that such a force would be made up of volunteer military professionals drawn from a wide variety of countries so that the casualties incurred by this force would not have political consequences for any national leaders. The force would be under the command of the U.N. Security Council and, specifically, the Council's

Military Subcommittee, which includes representatives of the five permanent members—all of whom would have a veto over the force's operations.[14] Is a standing U.N. military force a pipe dream? Right now, probably so, given the U.N.'s lack of financial resources, its internal management problems, and the great hesitation on the part of the United States and other countries to truly empower this institution. Yet, over a half century ago, the far-sighted architects of the U.N. put into place the rules and infrastructure needed to develop and manage a U.N. military capability with real teeth. Perhaps the central lesson of the past decade of internal conflicts—at least in this author's view—is that the time has come to act on the latent promise of the U.N. Charter.

Reconstruction. As a long effort begins to reconstruct Afghanistan, and as new challenges of nation building are confronted in the years to come, the international community has an increasingly large body of knowledge to draw from about how to bring peace to countries torn by internal conflict. Today, international efforts are underway to heal a number of nations, including Bosnia, Kosovo, Northern Ireland and Rwanda. Past efforts at nation building include international missions in Somalia, Lebanon and West Africa. The experience of these efforts does not readily offer up easy formulas for success. But a number of lessons are clear. First and foremost is the imperative of money and patience. Reconstruction is a long and expensive endeavor—often taking many years—and to walk away too early is to risk a renewal of violence.

A central challenge for outside powers is to work to maintain domestic support for nation-building efforts and to ensure that money is available to make good on promises of reconstruction assistance.

Second, and equally critical, is the need for a long-time outside military presence, in most cases. As the world has learned in Bosnia and elsewhere, peacekeeping missions may need to go on for many years to ensure that peace agreements are enforced, warring parties remain separated and security is maintained on the ground.

A third basic imperative of reconstruction is to properly manage nation-building efforts. The recent history of reconstruction efforts in Bosnia and Kosovo is replete with stories of stunning bureaucratic ineptitude, with multiple national and international agencies stumbling all over each other and failing to work together in a timely and effective fashion. Afghanistan is now beset by the same problems, by many reports. Also worrisome in past experiences has been the egregious levels of corruption that often characterize reconstruction authorities, with vast amounts of international money disappearing. This unfortunate history points to the need to reinvent and strengthen both national and international aid agencies, along with the necessity of continuing to address the profound management problems that exist within the United Nations.

Finally, it is not enough to simply get better at the basic mechanics of peacekeeping and reconstruction. The international community must also bet-ter utilize and deploy the growing body of knowledge about how to reconstitute civil society, defuse longstanding hatred between ethnic groups, and to create governing structures that ensure the rights of minorities. These challenges, of course, are the most difficult of all. Yet if the political will exists to commit to long-term nation building, it is increasingly the case that tested solutions exist to the problems of divided societies.

Conclusion

Issues of self-determination and ethnic conflict are among the most challenging problems facing international leaders. The recent escalation of conflict in the Middle East between the Israelis and Palestinians underscores the nightmarish quality of internal conflicts rooted in historic rivalries and shared ancestral territory. What is particularly troubling about these problems are the profound limits of even the most enlightened and well-crafted policies. In the 1990s, for example, active outside efforts to monitor tensions in Kosovo and prevent a major war there failed, leading NATO to intervene in early 1999. The United States was particularly involved in preventive efforts in Kosovo— issuing warnings to Serb leaders to restrain their actions, deploying U.S. forces in neighboring Macedonia, and helping engage the resources of the OSCE and U.N. to respond to human rights abuses and explore alternative to violence. Still, Kosovo exploded into war.

As significant as the obstacles are to resolving internal conflicts, they are far greater when the United

States and others in the international community do not tap all the knowledge available to them. Too often, hard-learned lessons from previous conflicts are not applied to new conflicts and, as may be the case with current U.S. policy toward Afghanistan, mistakes are repeated. In particular, a major disconnect exists between the growing body of scholarship on ethnic conflict, intervention, and nation-building—and the policymaking organs of national and international institutions. In truth, however, the greatest disconnect exists between what policymakers know should be done in this area and what they can or will do given limitations on political capital and financial resources. Nowhere is this more true than in Washington, D.C., where U.S. political leaders seem to live in a perpetual state of denial about the considerable financial resources and high-level attention that ethnic conflict and self-determination issues demand. This denial leaves policymakers frequently behind the curve of conflicts, reacting to developments rather than anticipating and shaping developments.

One cannot blame policymakers for wishing that these problems "from hell," as Warren Christopher once described Bosnia, would somehow just vanish. Unfortunately, in the years ahead, the challenges posed by self-determination quests and ethnic rivalries may well grow more frequent and severe.

Notes

1. U.S. Congress, 103-1, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Hearings: Nomination of Warren M. Christopher to be Secretary of State (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1993), p. 72.

2 David Binder with Barbara Crossettee, "As Ethnic Wars Multiply, U.S. Strives for a Policy," *New York Times*, February 7, 1993, p. A1.

3. *SIPRI Yearbook 2001: armaments, disarmament and international security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2001), pp. 15-51.

4. On this complex issue, see: Richard Munch, *Nation and Citizenship in the Global Age* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Monterrat Guibernau, Nations without States: Political Communities in a Global Age, (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1999).

5. International Crisis Groups, "Indonesia: The Search for Peace in Maluku," February 8, 2002.

6. See the comprehensive database of terrorist acts maintained by the Centre for Defence and International Security Studies, at: http://www.cdiss.org/terror.htm

7. *The World Factbook, 2001* (Washington, D.C.: The Central Intelligence Agency). See: http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/

8. Marina Ottaway and Anatol Lieven, "Rebuilding Afghanistan: Fantasy versus Reality," Policy Brief, Carnegie Endowment, January 2002, p. 1.

9. Vartan Gregorian, "The Pashtunistan Factor: Any Afghan Government Would Have to Accommodate Largest Ethnic Group," *The Gazette* (Montreal), p. B3.

10. Vartan Gregorian, "A Place for the Pashtuns," *The New York Times,* November 15, 2001.

11. "Afghanistan and Central Asia: Priorities for Reconstruction and Development," International Crisis Group, November 27, 2001.

12. Barnett R. Rubin, "Is America Abandoning Afghanistan?" *The New York Times*, April 10, 2002, p. 27.

13. For a good discussion of this topic, see: Gideon Gottlieb, "Nations without States," *Foreign Affairs,* vol. 73, no. 3 (May/June 1994), pp. 100-112.

14. For links to a full range of proposals to create a U.N. Rapid Deployment Force, see: http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/peacekpg/reform/standby.htm#analysis