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By David C. Rapoport

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THE IMPORTANCE OF SPACE IN VIOLENT ETHNO-RELIGIOUS STRIFE¹

By David C. Rapoport



We have continued in possession of the very land which gave us birth. Sprung from its very soil we are able to address our city by the very names which we apply to our nearest kin; for we alone of all the Hellenes have the right to call our city at once nurse and fatherland and mother.

Isocrates, 'Oration on Autochthony'

Should the people of America divide themselves into three or four nations,. . . like most other *bordering* nations they would be either involved in disputes and war or live in constant apprehension of them.

John Jay, *Federalist Paper #5* (original emphasis)

The first notable discussion of space and conflict is in *The Federalist*, a good starting point for the subject still.² Neighboring sovereign states, it argues, are natural enemies, but animosities diminish greatly when the same peoples possess territorial autonomies within a single state. The concept of federalism eventually emerges from these starting points, and became in time the most successful solution for ethno-religious³ conflict ever devised.⁴

The Federalist emphasizes physical geography, that is, the nature of the terrain; the distances within and between states, issues especially important to the new American successor state. But the volume does not offer a general account of how new state boundaries alter existing social relations. And it ignores the potentiality of space to generate moral feeling, as in cases where sites are considered sacred, and/or when a community appeals to the principle of national self-determination, a right to a space it can control.⁵ These dimensions of space (that is, physical, political and moral geography), influence the course, conduct, and consequences of ethno-religious violence. This essay will discuss patterns since the 1880s, highlighting the era after 1945 to focus on several questions: What is the relationship between the massive redrawing of political boundaries occasioned by the fall of great empires and the steady expansion of the number of these conflicts? How do claims for space influence special features of ethno-religious strife within states? What are the international responses to domestic struggles for space? The third question consumes most of the essay.

¹ Early versions of this paper were prepared for the Institute of Global Conflict and Cooperation, University of California (Jan. 15, 1995), The Religion Colloquium, University of California, Los Angeles (May 11, 1995), and the APSA Annual Conference, Aug. 30, 1995). I am most grateful for comments by those attending, particularly Sandra Halperin, David Lake, Donald Rothchild, Fred Wehling, and David Wilkinson. Michael Barkun, Marita Kaw, Ibrahim Karawan, Jennifer Pournelle, Avivah Rapoport, Barbara Rapoport, Khachig Tololyan, and Joan Witte all read versions of the manuscript carefully and made useful suggestions.

² *Space* now often refers to expanses in which the solar and stellar systems, nebulae etc. are situated. In this essay, I return to a more classical notion; space refers to geographic expanses on earth where social systems are located.

Political scientists rarely pay attention to the importance of geography. Nicholas J. Spykman is perhaps the most distinguished

American exception. His “Geographic Objectives in Foreign Policy I” (with Abbie Rollins), *American Political Science Review* 33 No. 3 (June 1939): 391–410, and “Geographic Objectives in Foreign Policy II,” *Ibid.*, No. 4 (August 1939): 591–604, develop the theoretical bases of geopolitics and his later books, *America’s Strategy in World Politics* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1942) and *The Geography of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1944). For an excellent discussion of Spykman, see David Wilkinson, “Spykman and Geopolitics,” in *On Geopolitics: Classical and Nuclear*, Ciro E. Zoppo and Charles Zorgbibe, eds. (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1985), 77–129.

³ The statistical data used here was collected by others as ‘ethno-religious’ violence, meaning violence by groups which are ethnic or religious or have features of both. The term nationalist is often used to describe the same groups, and Walker Connor has persuasively argued that there is no sense in distinguishing ethnic and national groupings and, hence, the title of his perceptive study, *EthnoNationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

Elsewhere I argue that religious violence has special properties; see my “Sacred Terror: A Contemporary Case from Islam,” in Walter Reich, *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 103–31, “Some General Observations on Religion and Violence,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 3, no. 3 (Autumn 1991): 11–40, reprinted in Mark Juergensmeyer, *Violence and the Sacred in the Modern World* (London: Frank Cass, 1991), 118–30, and “Comparing Militant Fundamentalist Movements and Groups,” in *Fundamentalisms and the State*, Martin Marty and Scott Appleby, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

⁴ *The Federalist* suggests that the cultural differences between neighboring states are a consequence, not the original cause of their antagonisms.

Although federalism is a useful mechanism to restrain ethno-religious conflict, it is not clear that *The Federalist* had ethno-religious conflict in mind. The problem of Quebec illustrates also that special issues emerge when ethno-religious groups are involved, for Quebec is not just another Canadian province. See *infra* p. 9.

⁵ The neglect of the moral dimension of space appears ironic because the American *Declaration of Independence* introduced the principle of national self-determination into the political world. But the authors of *The Federalist* restrict themselves to the very immediate question of why the Constitution should be ratified.

The Unintended Consequences of Establishing Successor States

The conventional wisdom is that the world-wide profusion of ethno-religious conflicts is a peculiar post Cold War phenomenon. But the view is false; the number grew steadily throughout the past century. Ethno-religious concerns inspired over half of the violent struggles within states from 1945 to 1960. The proportion increased to three quarters from 1960 to 1990, and while the collapse of the Soviet world after 1990 produced some vivid instances, the gross statistics did not change much.⁶

No reliable count of such conflicts in the world before 1945 exists; my own rough estimate is that between 1875 and 1914 some 15% were ethno-religious, a percentage increasing to around 25% between 1918 and 1945. The figures for the two periods before and after 1945 demonstrate constant growth, albeit at an uneven pace.⁷

Simultaneously, a similar expansion in the number of states occurred. Nearly 5 times as many states exist today as did in the 1880s: a dramatic

restructuring of political space.⁸ The overwhelming majority of new states are successor states of great land empires whose territories were all contiguous (Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Soviet), or of sea empires or those with scattered overseas territories (British, French, Belgian Dutch, and Portuguese).

Obviously, violent ethno-religious struggles occur in other kinds of states too. Since the 1960s, for example, Spain (Basques and Catalans), France (Corsicans), Thailand (Pattenis), Ethiopia (Eritreans), and Afghanistan (fundamentalists, traditionalists, and tribal elements) have experienced the phenomena and none is a successor state. Nor do imperial disintegrations always leave legacies of ethno-religious strife; the collapse of the Spanish American empires in the early 19th century produced many unstable successor states which have and continue to experience limited expressions of ethno-religious violence.⁹

⁶ Roy Licklider, “Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars Since 1945,” unpublished APSA paper, 1993, 14. I have no numbers for subsequent events, and the number probably has grown but the percentage increase cannot be great.

⁷ Significantly, Walter Lippmann’s important discussion of relationships between domestic violence and international interventions prior to 1914 only offers one example of ethno-religious conflict, the struggle in the Balkans. See *Stakes of Diplomacy* (New York: MacMillan, 1915).

⁸ Complicated imperial jurisdictions make it difficult to assess the number of states in the 1880s, but the estimate of 42 for 1883 by *The World Encyclopedia of Universal Knowledge* (New York: World Manufacturing Co., 1884), p. 619, seems reasonable.

⁹ In Latin America native peoples normally define their struggles in revolutionary not in ethnic terms. Thus, for example, the *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru and the struggle largely by Mayans which began in the state of Chiapas in Mexico, January 1994 are claims to remake the whole system not claims for autonomy or secession, typical objectives of the ethnic body

Still, successor states do have the problem more often than other ones do. One reason is that spatial reconfigurations will often exacerbate existing ethno-religious tensions.¹⁰ The boundaries of earlier and successor states rarely coincide and in the process new possibilities for enormous and traumatic consequences may develop. Minorities may become majorities, and majorities minorities. The birth of the Irish Free State produced a Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, and should the island host one state, there will be no Protestant majority.

Sometimes mediating elements disappear. Cypriot Greeks and Cypriot Turks have a different relationship today than when the British were there. Internal balances and alliances may be destroyed. In the former Yugoslavia, Croats combined with Slovenians to check Serbian influence; the Slovenian secession, therefore, badly strained all relationships between remaining ethno-religious elements.

A people once united in a single state may be suddenly divided. The dissolution of the former Yugoslavia seriously fragmented the Serbian community, putting fractions in different states and making all but one a minority. The disappearance of the Soviet state left 25 million Russians (17 percent of the Russian population) living in successor states other than Russia, persons who are potentially beleaguered minorities in territories where their language was once dominant. The Soviet collapse also left one-third of the Armenian population outside of Armenia. The most vexing issue was the fate of those in Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, troublesome enough when all were part of a larger state, but a disaster when that condition vanished.¹¹ When the Ottoman empire collapsed, its Kurdish population was divided between the successor states of Turkey, Syria and Iraq.

Because the Kurds everywhere lived near international borders, their loyalties were always suspect. A similar situation confronts a fragmented Serbian population. The special vulnerability of border peoples developed when the state itself did as the Bible's description of Pharaoh's decision to enslave Israel, a border people living in Goshen, suggests: "These people...have become so numerous and strong, that they are a threat to us...if war should break out they might take arms against us."¹²

New state boundaries create enormous uncertainties about the future of groups, uncertainties which can be cruelly aggravated if linked to memories of injustices and atrocities and to fears of how groups will exploit their new strength or protect new vulnerabilities. These anxieties will be especially intense at the moment when a new state is created or anticipated, and one should expect the violence and fresh succession efforts to occur most often then.¹³ Those who witnessed the births of India and Pakistan should not have been surprised by the violence and new secessionist claims which occurred after the initially peaceful dissolutions of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. And Ireland, the Sudan, Angola, Mozambique, Rwanda, Burundi, Zaire, Cyprus, Iraq, Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, and the Philippines, to name a few, experienced similar struggles, which began during the battle for independence or shortly afterwards, and have persisted intermittently ever since.¹⁴

Space and the Dynamics of Conflict

Space shapes distinguishing features of wars: length, intensity and purpose. Most ethno-religious struggles are a species of internal wars, wars within rather than between states. Twentieth-century internal wars lasted six times longer than international wars, and most internal wars since 1945 have been ethno-religious. This high proportion of ethno-religious struggles keeps growing, as does their length; internal wars today

and the concern of this essay. There were of course exceptions, (*infra*. p. 13.) The Latin American experience indicates that Spain virtually eliminated ethnic differences. Ironically, at home Spain was less successful as Basque and Catalan revolts show. See note 54 *infra*.

¹⁰ The distinction between successor states and others is not always made. See, for example, David Lake, "Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention," *IGCC Policy Brief* no. 3, March 1995.

¹¹ The Armenian campaign to transfer Nagorno-Karabakh during Khrushchev's leadership was the only case prior to *perestroika* where an ethno-religious group mobilized to seek a border change. See Julian Birch, "Border Disputes and Disputed Borders in the Soviet Federal System," *Nationalities Papers* 15, no. 1: 50-53. The most striking instance of a territory not containing its people is the case of the Tatars, three-quarters of whom live outside the Tatar Autonomous Republic.

¹² *Exodus* I, 9. See also Mark Levene, "The Frontiers of Genocide: Jews in the Eastern War Zones, 1914-20 and 1941," in *Minorities in Wartime*, Panilos Panayi, ed. (Oxford: University Press, 1993), 183 ff.

¹³ I do not know whether any statistics on this point exist.

¹⁴ Licklider, "Negotiated," 8.

persist six times longer than they did a century ago.¹⁵

Normally, length and intensity (casualties and numbers participating) are inversely related. Still, internal wars with ethno-religious issues witness more attempts at genocide and more frequent abuses of human rights.¹⁶

Wars end either through capitulation or negotiation, but when wars have an ethno-religious dimension decisive military victories and conclusive negotiated settlements occur less often.¹⁷ Sometimes, decisive victories terminate seemingly endless strife, but then tempt victors to attempt genocide.¹⁸

Why are ethno-religious struggles so savage and intractable? Conventional wisdom is that ‘identity’ questions command our deepest emotions, and space is so closely connected with identity that whole lands and particular sites often appear sacred. Yet there is more to the problem.¹⁹ International wars involving identity questions are shorter and more restrained than internal identity wars, and negotiated settlements of international conflicts, whatever the issues, are more durable than those of internal wars.

Space helps explain these differences. International wars normally leave each side with its own state intact, but because secession movements rarely succeed the protagonists must share the

same political space afterwards. Internal settlements create institutional checks and immunities—‘time-buying’ arrangements—but time does not always heal, and such ‘solutions’ could become recipes for indecision and, therefore, renewed tensions.

Space, or more accurately the contemporary conception of appropriate space, shapes the purpose of ethno-religious struggles too. In most civil wars, the aim usually is to control a state’s entire space. Some ethno-religious struggles have this feature, as Hutu and Tutsi violence in Rwanda and Burundi illustrate. Much more often, they seek to redraw state boundaries. The most common aim is a new sovereign state; *Irredenta* demands, union with related group(s) in other existing sovereign state(s), are made one-third as often.²⁰ They require support by the most relevant foreign state: and thus, Greece encouraged a Cypriot revolt, and Germany made *irredenta* claims in the Sudetenland. A third, and the least threatening, claim is territorial autonomy within an existing state. Obviously, claims for space are influenced, but not determined, by the fact that a community already is concentrated in space. As important as the issue of geographic concentration is, the doctrine that every people has a right to ‘national self-determination’ seems more significant; indeed, today no principle of legitimacy is more compelling or more explosive, because its existence makes every state vulnerable to being challenged by those who feel themselves apart from the community the existing state represents. And there is no way to realize this principle fully without dissolving most, perhaps 90 percent, of existing states!²¹

¹⁵ See Thomas A. Grant, “Protraction of Internal War,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, III, 3 (Winter 1992): 241–56; and Licklider, “Negotiated.” Grant compares first the lengths of internal and international wars, and then those of internal wars in the two halves of the twentieth century. But he does not distinguish the forms of internal war. Licklider does distinguish internal forms and compares their different lengths. My statement combines material in both pieces. Licklider indicates that ethno-religious wars were the longest internal wars but only marginally. In a study of terrorist groups, Christopher Hewitt concludes that the ethnic ones have more significant roots in their constituencies and, thus, endure much longer than revolutionary ones do. See his “Terrorism and Public Opinion: A Five Country Comparison,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* II, 2 (Summer 1990): 145–170.

¹⁶ Barbara Harff and Ted Robert Gurr, “Victims of the State: Genocides, Politicides, and Group Repression Since 1945,” *International Journal of Victimology*, I:1 (1989): 23–41 and Licklider, “Negotiating. . . .” Obviously, genocide allegations are exploited to draw in outsiders in an international world so interested in ‘victims.’

¹⁷ Licklider, “Negotiated,” 16

¹⁸ “The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars, 1945–1993” unpublished manuscript, 1994. See also Mark Levene, “Yesterday’s Victims: Today’s Perpetrators?: Some Considerations with Reference to Peoples and Territories with the former Ottoman Empire,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* VI, 4 (Winter 1994): 441–61.

¹⁹ For an interesting attack on conventional wisdom, see John Burton, *Resolving Deeply Rooted Conflict: A Handbook* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America).

²⁰ *Irredenta* means unredeemed, and refers originally to Italy’s efforts during nineteenth century to wrest Italian lands and people from Austria. *Enosis* means union and refers to the yearning of Greek populations to join Greece.

²¹ The most modest estimate is that 250 embattled ethno-religious elements with claims for statehood exist. Others reckon that 800, 8,000, and 10,000 groups are similarly entitled! Compare Ted Gurr and James R. Scarritt, “Minority Rights at Risk: A Global Survey,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 11 (1989); Richard Falk, *Explorations at the End of Time: The Prospects for World Order* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 198–202; Ivan Gyurcik, “New Legal Ramifications. . . .” 34; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 43–50; and Bernard Nietschmann, “The Miskito Nation.” Walker Connor put it another way, estimating that only 12 percent of 132 states were ethnically homogenous. “Nation Building and Nation Destroying,” *World Politics* 24 (1972): 32. Since then (1972), the proportion has dropped.

For an interesting recent effort to provide standards for international recognition of secessionist movements, see Alex Heraclides, “Secession, Self-Determination and Non-Intervention,” *Journal of International Affairs*, 45, 2 (Winter

The very possibility that this claim can be made means that quarrels originating in other less far-reaching issues may be transformed. In Sri Lanka a quarrel over the status of English as a national language changed direction after blood was spilled, moving inevitably towards secession. Violence, as Clausewitz knew, has its own logic tending to make the stakes of a struggle higher and higher in order to justify the ever increasing flow of sacrifices made, one reason why wars are more difficult to stop than to start. Ferrero describes the dynamics of the French Reign of Terror in the same way.

The Jacobins did not spill all that blood because they believed in popular sovereignty as a religious truth; they tried to believe in popular sovereignty as a religious truth because their fear made them spill all that blood.²²

The doctrine that every people has a right to a space necessary to govern itself, as its genesis in the American and French Revolutions suggests, is intimately connected with the idea of democracy. Nonetheless, the two moral imperatives (democracy and self-determination) often conflict. Democracies are uniquely required to determine majorities and minorities, a necessity which can exacerbate tensions between ethno-religious groups. For when majorities and minorities are identified in ethno-religious terms, they are much more likely to become permanent entities instead of ever-changing ones, and much more likely to experience difficulties in having a political life together. *The Federalist* observed that historical experiences showed republics (democracies) with permanent majorities and minorities to be the most violent of all political forms.²³

A century later, John Stuart Mill argued that as the great empires were most often multi-ethnic realms, the spread of democratic principles to their successor states would compound existing tensions.²⁴ Canada provides the most recent example for his case. When it finally broke all legal ties with Britain in 1982 to adopt a new constitution, the issue of Quebec became more troublesome. Majorities in the English-speaking provinces refused to continue Quebec's status as an entity with powers different from that of other provinces. If democratic principles can generate

such tensions, it is easy to understand why the steady increase in the number of such conflicts is not confined to successor states alone.

International Ramifications of Internal Struggles for Space

The chief, the overwhelming problem of diplomacy seems to be weak states... 'weak' because they are industrially backward and at present politically incompetent... to prevent outbreaks of internal violence.

Walter Lippmann. *The Stakes of Diplomacy*

Violence within states is an important, perhaps the most important, precipitant of wars between them. Matters provocative enough to generate war will certainly stimulate interventions to stop, moderate, and encourage internal violence in other less costly ways too. But which states intervene and why? What is the relationship between strife within a state and the more general structure of international tensions?

Physical Space: The Importance of Proximity

The conventional wisdom is that the most powerful states intervene most, perhaps because they are the most active participants in international affairs, and their interventions have led to dramatic, bloody, and far-reaching consequences.²⁵ Still, the a priori case for proximity is strong. Neighbors feel the effects most immediately in the form of refugees and with respect to regional power balances. Neighbors have the best access to act. Rebels want to involve neighbors because porous borders are critical to success. Ethno-religious violence generates additional pressure on neighbors. The boundaries of ethno-religious communities generally overlap those of neighboring states, creating persistent waves of sympathies and antagonism transcending borders. Armenian efforts in Nagorno-Karabakh to break loose from Azerbaijan brought neighboring Armenia into the fray. Nearly a million Azeri (a Turkic people) became refugees, and after much hesitation, Turkey blockaded Armenia. Many Kurds, and all their enemies, believe that the creation of Kurdistan requires Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria to give up territories. Turkish Cypriots believe that *enosis* (the aspiration of Greek Cypriots to join

1992): 399–420.

²² Guglielmo Ferrero, *The Principles of Power* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1942), 100.

²³ *The Federalist*, Paper No. 9

²⁴ *Considerations on Representative Government*, ch. 38.

²⁵ Note the genesis of World War I, World II, the Korean and Vietnamese Wars.

Greece) threatens them, and Turkey agrees. The ambition of Islamic fundamentalists to unify the Islamic world provokes anxiety among states with significant Muslim populations.

Related subjects provide additional support for the importance of neighborhood. Relations between neighboring states are usually characterized by troubled episodes. Richardson and Wilkinson's study of wars between 1820 and 1945 concluded that 94 percent occurred between neighbors, and that by far the most important element associated with the wars studied was contiguity. Even the number of frontiers a state possessed directly related to the number of wars fought.²⁶ While contiguous sovereign states may share many important political and cultural traditions, their interests keep conflicting, which is why *The Federalist* argued that it is much more difficult to explain neighbors who never go to war with each other than those who do.

Where does the weight of historical evidence lie? The data from 1870 to 1914 shows that the powerful do intervene often, often arguing that peace requires the absorption of troubled territories. Still, the evidence is not persuasive, because the territories of the global powers were so extended that they were 'neighbors' where they intervened, and they were close to each other too. This proximity kept making regional conflicts world ones, and the pattern was so striking that in 1914 Walter Lippmann predicted that internal violence would be the century's most persistent *international* issue.²⁷ Most examples of internal violence did not involve ethno-religious strife, but the few that did proved to be the most dangerous and intractable, especially in the Balkans, an Ottoman legacy on the frontiers of several major powers. Imperial absorption, often the last solution for persistent eruptions, failed here. In 1908 the European powers placed Bosnia under a reluctant

Austro-Hungarian jurisdiction. But since most Bosnians preferred union with Serbia(!) they were vulnerable to Serbian intrigues, which precipitated a sixth Balkan war or World War I.²⁸ Ethno-religious violence was less significant for global tensions after World War I, partly because Western empires had absorbed so much of the world. Accounts of World War II's genesis rarely emphasize ethnic elements, but Nazi irredenta demands upon Austro-Hungarian and German successor states (Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland) were critical.

After 1945, empires dissolved, rupturing the earlier link between power and neighborhood, which makes it easier to assess the importance of the two circumstances. The greater significance of neighborhood becomes apparent when one compares neighboring states with Cold War protagonists and then Western with Soviet metropolitan cores after their respective empires dissolved. I will defer discussing interventions in empires until I return to the moral meaning of space.

Cold War Protagonists and Neighboring States

A Cold War 'truism' is that participants were deeply involved in shaping power struggles everywhere. Yet the dangers of over-extension were understood also, and both sides avoided unnecessary marginal conflicts. The savage intractable character of internal ethno-religious struggles are costly, and their implications are often local. Cold War adversaries were much more successful than global powers were earlier; and whatever the reason, ethno-religious conflicts did not precipitate a third World War.²⁹

This restraint is especially striking when the issue was secession. In some 40 secessionist struggles during the Cold War, neighboring states opposed each other in 'most instances' but major

²⁶ David Wilkinson, *Deadly Quarrels; Lewis Richardson and the Statistical Study of War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 41–48, 62. I believe, though I lack confirming statistics, that the same pattern for contiguous states is demonstrable for the second half of the twentieth century, especially if one remembers that borders are 'extended' through alliances.

The British empire had the most frontiers, followed by the French, Russian, Chinese, and the Ottoman; the number of wars each fought reflected the same ordering. The first three were 'great powers,' the last two disintegrating empires. As empires dissolved, successor states inherited problems associated with the old imperial frontiers. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, the status of Tibet was an issue between Britain and China. When the British withdrew, India picked up the cudgels.

²⁷ Walter Lippmann, "Stakes. . .", ch. 7 and 8.

²⁸ I. Magnus Midlarsky, "Communal Strife in the Balkans." in Midlarsky, ed., *The Internationalization of Communal Strife* (London: Routledge, 1992), 184.

²⁹ Secession and *irredenta* claims, Alexis Heraclides thinks, disturbed too many states, and thus became too costly for Cold War adversaries to endorse. "Historical and Contemporary Assessments of How States Use Ethnic/Secessionist Movements to Achieve Political Objectives," unpublished paper, 44. Forthcoming in collection by the National Strategy Information Center, *The Impact of Ethnic and Religious Conflict on U.S. Interests*. Heraclides has done the most useful work on secessionist movements and international involvements and I am greatly indebted to it. See his *The Self-Determination of Minorities in International Politics* (London: Frank Cass, 1993) and various citations in this essay.

Cold War protagonists favored different sides only in four.³⁰

Support for secessionists was always contingent on the larger Cold War objective. The Soviet treaty with India encouraged India to aid Bangladesh to secede from Pakistan, but the Soviet purpose was to gain India as an ally. In the strategic Horn of Africa, the Soviets indirectly gave military aid to Eritrean rebels; but when Ethiopia joined the Marxist world, the Soviets deserted the Eritreans to give Ethiopians arms and training. Iraqi Kurds in the 1970s received valuable Soviet diplomatic support; but when the possibility of a Soviet- Iraqi alliance was offered, the Kurds paid the price and ‘settled’ for autonomy. After World War II, the Soviets supported Azeri rebels and a Kurdish republic (Mahabad) in Iran, the latter a Soviet objective since the 1920s, but under American pressure, the Soviets abandoned both groups. To counter Soviet influence in Nicaragua, the United States encouraged the Miskito Indians to revolt, a rare example of ethnic insurrection in Latin America.³¹ But when the Soviet-supported Sandinista government was forced out, the United States abandoned the Miskitos. Similarly, American help for the Tibetan rebels (the Khampas) vanished when Cold War tensions with China dissipated in the 1970s.³²

Angola was the gateway to a Cold War prize, the rich neighboring state of South Africa. The Soviets and Americans supported different ethnic factions wanting to capture or hold the state, but no element opted for secession. The several Lebanese conflicts involved both the United States and the Soviets, but neither supported secession.³³

Afghan rebels received enormous international aid. But secession was not an issue; the Soviet invasion to support an illegal government gave the United States and various Muslim states (Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt who agree on very little) a common cause.³⁴

³⁰ *Ibid* p. 8 ff. Heraclides notes three instances but there were four.

³¹ See Bernard Nietschmann, “The Miskito Nation and the Geopolitics of Self-Determination,” in Bernard Schechterman and M. Slann, *The Ethnic Dimension in International Relations* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1993), 25–42. In Vietnam, American forces engaged in parallel activities.

³² June Teufel Dreyer, “Tibetan Ethno-Nationalism and International Politics” in Slann and Schechterman, *The Ethnic Dimension*, 43–56.

³³ The Israeli-Palestinian struggle was an ingredient in the Cold War struggle where adversaries favored different sides. But secession was not an issue and Israel was a state.

³⁴ Three enormous unanticipated consequences occurred. The war precipitated the collapse of the whole Soviet world, reinvigorated Islamic fundamentalism, and occasioned the fall

Neighboring states, the statistics demonstrate, more frequently and more persistently intervened in secessionist struggles though aid to rebels was almost invariably covert. In one important respect, Cold War adversaries and neighboring states have similar policies: aid levels were usually subject to more important concerns. Spanish Basque terrorists once found sanctuary on French soil where Basques lived, but not after the Spanish dictator Franco died. The Irish Republic initially gave the IRA valuable political and logistic support in 1969, when the latest ‘troubles’ began. As the Republic became confident that the Catholics in Northern Ireland would survive, its policies became less provocative to London.³⁵

Neighbors are often kinfolk and one would expect bonds between neighboring states and rebels to be stronger than those between rebels and Cold War protagonists. That expectation is probably accurate, but the Basque and Irish examples are not unique.³⁶ Uganda’s strong ethno-religious ties to Sudanese rebels impelled Uganda to provide logistic aid. But a more important consideration seems to have been a desire for Israeli aid. When the Ugandan dictator Idi Amin, himself a Kakwa (a Sudanese rebel tribe) decided that Libya’s Colonel Kaddafi, an enemy of Israel, was more generous, he accepted Kaddafi’s terms to turn his back on his kinsmen, even though rebel

of the Afghan monarchy, the traditional conciliator of tribal tensions. The tribal turmoil which still decimates the country is the direct result. On this last point, see Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

³⁵ When the situation stabilized and the ‘police riots’ were quelled, the Republic moved troops back from the border and its more traditional suspicion for the IRA emerged. See J. Bowyer Bell, *The Irish Troubles* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1993) ch. 3, and Terrence G. Carroll, “Northern Ireland,” in *Ethnic Conflict*, Suhrke and Noble eds., 31 ff. But the Republic kept exposing excesses in British counter-terrorist policies. See Donald Jackson, “Prevention of Terrorism: the United Kingdom Confronts the European Convention on Human Rights,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 6:4 (Winter 1994): 507–35.

When the Irish ‘troubles’ broke out, I had occasion to lecture at Bramhill, the British police academy. The most common question asked was whether the Americans would help the IRA as they did in the 1920s. It was difficult to make questioners believe that during the Cold War the situation was different. Of course, after the Cold War was concluded, American policy under President Clinton changed.

For the Basque situation, see Robert P. Clark, *The Basque Insurgents: ETA, 1952–1980* (Madison, WI: Univ of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

³⁶ Alexis Heraclides observes that while both instrumental and affective reasons were important for neighboring states, the former were probably more common. “Secessionist Minorities and External Involvement” *International Organization* 44: 3 (Summer 1990): p.373.

troops and the Sudanese issue helped him rise to power.³⁷

Ethiopian logistic support for rebel tribesmen in the Sudan reflected both Christian solidarity and an anti-Islamic sentiment. But Sudan's aid to Ethiopian rebels (Eritrean) was more important, and Ethiopian help waxed and waned in direct relationship to the Sudan's support for the Eritreans.

Ethno-religious rebels often turn to secession after considerable shed; and as this goal becomes more explicit neighbors become more uneasy, because they may have secession potentialities too and because the integrity of existing states is a cardinal principle of the international order. India provides a most dramatic example. It initially supported the largely Hindu Tamils against the Buddhist majority in Sri Lanka, a policy which also reflected anger at the latter's decision to allow Pakistan to use Sri Lankan airfields during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War. When Tamils opted for secession, New Delhi reconsidered, fearing a Tamil secession movement in an India already beleaguered by other secessionist groups. Indian troops helped enforce an agreement with Sri Lanka for greater Tamil autonomy. After a thousand Indian lives were lost, troops were withdrawn with little to show for the effort. Tamils also assassinated Rajiv Gandhi, India's premier, for 'treason.'

Many other more obscure examples exist. To get a border readjustment, Malaysia gave diplomatic support to the grievances of fellow Muslims (Pattenis) rebelling in Thailand. When the Patteni goal became secession, that support vanished. The Philippines began training troops to take territory disputed with Malaysia; Malaysia responded by providing funds and military aid to the Moros, fellow Muslims in the Philippines. After the Moros became secessionists, they were abandoned, but not before the Filipinos understood the point Malaysia was making.

Israel's aid to rebels was part of a more comprehensive policy of weakening states still in a technical state of war with Israel, most of which were bordering states. Israel encouraged ethnic rebellions in Iraq and Lebanon, and went further afield supplying military training and equipment to Sudanese rebels. The same policy applied to governments. Israel gave Ethiopia, a Christian

finger in the dike against a Muslim sea, help against Eritrean rebels supported by various Muslim states. When the Soviets embraced Ethiopia, Israeli aid ceased, but later resumed when the Soviets reversed their Ethiopian arms policy.

Although secessionist rebels can gain limited support, most neighboring states still help governments, especially if those states have territories adjacent to those held by an incumbent government. When secessionists hold territories neighboring borders are likely to become porous.³⁸ Aid to rebels is normally covert because it is embarrassing to defy the norms of sovereignty openly, demonstrating again (though does one need another demonstration?) that "hypocrisy is the tribute vice always pays to virtue."³⁹ Variations in the secrecy patterns occur. Pakistan conceals support for the Sikhs and Nagas in India, but when fellow Muslims are involved in the Kashmir, Pakistan's support has been more visible, more extensive, and less a matter of *realpolitik*. Still, governments rarely recognize a secessionist entity's claim to be a state.⁴⁰

Rebels bent on secession are strategically weak because they need their neighbor's support more than neighbors need them, which is why a kin bond does not prevent the rebel's struggle from being sacrificed so often to the needs of the neighbor. While the statistical evidence has not been compiled, it appears that the most common pattern is that one helps a neighbor's secessionists when that neighbor helps one's own. Some rebels are so weak strategically that they become playthings of all their neighboring states. 'Orphans of the universe,' the Kurds always suffer from foreign intrigues because they are dispersed in four

³⁸ Heraclides, "Secessionist Minorities. . .," 377.

³⁹ Lee C. Bucheit, *Secession: The Legitimacy of Self-Determination* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977), 20-30, 216-49; Charles R. Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1979), 92-195.

⁴⁰ Libya supports rebels in neighboring Chad, Morocco, and Corsica, but Libya is unusual among 'weak states' in going beyond the affairs of the neighborhood and seems unlimited with respect to space or cause. "We are the Mecca of freedom fighters and their natural ally. We are the first to welcome them from Ireland to the Philippines, etc.," says its self-proclaimed world revolutionary Col. Khaddafi, *New York Times*, 18 Dec. 1993, A-3. Libyan involvement in Liberia helped produce an ethnic conflict in 1989, which was by exacerbated by conflicting involvements of neighboring Nigeria and the Ivory Coast, and occasioned a brief commitment of American rescue forces. A more substantial peacekeeping presence by African forces began in 1990; after some twenty attempts, a peace was negotiated (1995) after several hundred thousand casualties. The country was in worse condition than at any time since 1847, the year of independence.

³⁷ Sudan retaliated by supporting Uganda's rebels when it could. The roles of Israel and the Kakwa in Amin's accession are discussed by Ade Adefuye, "The Kakwa of the Uganda and the Sudan: The Ethnic Factor in National and International Politics," in *Partitioned Africans*, A. I. Asiwaju, ed., 51-70.

states. A most gruesome experience occurred in the 1970s when Iran armed Iraqi Kurds to push Iraq to an agreement about disputed Shatt-al Arab territories. When Iran got what it wanted (1975), the Kurds were left dangling between the ferocious revenge of Saddam Hussein and a Turkey unwilling to accept Kurdish refugees who might stir up Turkish Kurds.⁴¹ Foreign involvements also exacerbated divisions constantly among Kurds themselves, a matter Palestinians understand well.

Powerful proof of the significance of neighboring states emerges when one compares them with more powerful states in the same arena, for example, Cyprus and Lebanon. When Greek troops helped Cypriots seeking union with Greece to scrap a constitution guaranteeing the Turkish minority veto power, Turkey invaded the island to establish a second state composed of Cypriot Turks, one which only Turkey recognizes. Britain was a guarantor of Cyprus' original constitution, but the British, not being neighbors, could be brushed aside.

The Cyprus problem has led to discussions, resolutions and actions by several international bodies including the UN, NATO, the Conference of Islamic States, etc., and a variety of individual states. But Greece and Turkey remain the key actors, and fear of war with Turkey led Greece to dampen Greek Cypriot enthusiasm for enosis, which Greece initially fanned when Britain ruled the island. Intermittent U.S. efforts to create a single state again have always been frustrated, leaving the United States to settle for any situation which would keep both Greece and Turkey in NATO. But acceptable situations are not necessarily satisfactory ones, necessitating a UN peacekeeping ever since.

The tangled strife of Lebanon during the 1970s and 1980s, precipitated by the influx of Palestinian refugees from neighboring states, illustrates the point again. Both Cold War powers had interests in the outcome and were at various times directly on the scene. Still, the Soviets had minimal influence over events; they were allied with both the Syrians and the PLO, and despite Soviet objections, the Syrians continually hampered and weakened the PLO. The United States put troops in Lebanon, but made a humiliating withdrawal after the destruction of the Marine barracks (1982).

The importance of the neighboring powers was paramount. Israel and Syria were consistently involved, having the greatest interests and the most direct physical access. They sent troops, and armed sectarian militias playing them off against each other. Other regional powers (Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq) intervened using distinctive methods, yielding different results.

No sectarian group seceded, a result which would have upset neighboring states, although one neighbor, Israel, favored partition if no competent moderate government emerged.

The Lebanon experience finally demonstrates that when a region is already torn by international conflict, ethnic discord in one state could drag in most of the neighbors, complicating and intensifying issues.

The acute danger of harnessing unresolved ethnic issues to Cold War tensions is illustrated well by the special cases of Korea, Vietnam and Germany. In each *irredenta* aspirations were significant, two states claiming to represent one nation.⁴² Withdrawal was particularly difficult because the local parties were recognized as states and deeply committed to the Cold War ideological struggle, and such circumstances solidified alliances. Korea and Vietnam provoked the bloodiest conflicts of the Cold War, but they did not result in The War everyone feared most. The consequences might have been different if violence had occurred in Germany, which everyone considered to be so much more important and which was closer to the center of both alliances.

Former Imperial States: Neighbors and Non-Neighbors

The contention that space is more important than power becomes quite compelling when states shorn of their empires are compared. Post-imperial intervention policies of Western and Soviet metropolitan cores were remarkably different, which distinctive geographies help explain.

Western states remained powerful, retaining large investments in their former territories where many nationals resided, a recipe for massive military intervention in the wake of internal violence before 1945. But now direct military interventions were limited to rescue threatened nationals. Beyond that, when former imperial powers participated in internal conflicts, they normally supported existing governments with

⁴¹ Iran was an American ally and received military aid at the time, as did Israel, another American ally which supported Iran. But the issue was one primarily between neighbors, which is why it is discussed in this section.

⁴² During the Vietnam War, the United States tried to use ethnic divisions for its own purpose. See Jane Hamilton-Merritt, *The Hmong, The Americans and the Secret Wars for Laos, 1942–1992*. Many are still in Thai camps raising the troubling question of what the U.S. obligation should be.

diplomatic aid, limited military help, and other forms of assistance. Note UK aid for Nigeria against Biafra; U.S. support for the Philippine government against the Moros; and French help for various governments in Chad, Gabon, Togo, and the Cameroon. The only exception might be Belgian military assistance to Katanga secessionists in the Congo (Zaire) in 1960. But the Belgians were ambivalent, and later (1979) Belgian and French troops helped put down a similar rebellion in the same province.⁴³ Post-imperial policies were not uniform. France was by far the most active former imperial power, believing itself to have special interests in all French-speaking African states (including those once under Belgian administration), a view those states generally accepted!⁴⁴ French troops intervened in the former Belgian territories in 1990 and 1993 for the Rwanda government and against Tutsi rebellions. In 1994, France intervened again, ostensibly for humanitarian purposes, so gruesome had Hutu government atrocities against the Tutsi become. The French created 'safe havens,' which also limited for a time the victory of the Tutsi dominated Patriotic Front.

Supporting the integrity of successor states had foreseeable consequences, though they were not the reason for the policy. Often existing governments violate human rights and abuse particular ethnic elements. In the case of Rwanda, for example, a French-supported government initiated genocide attempts in 1994, leading to serious questions in France about the wisdom of the principle of always supporting governments. French support for an Algerian government which denied Islamic parties opportunities to win a national election has had more profound domestic consequences. A serious terrorist campaign began

⁴³ Belgium initially wanted to support the integrity of the state, but then lost faith in Lumumba and switched to Tshombe in Katanga in order to salvage something.

⁴⁴ See Tamar Golan, "A Certain Mystery: How Can France Do Everything It Does in Africa and Get Away With It?" *African Affairs* 80 (Jan. 1981): 8.

French post-imperial activism is difficult to explain. French imperial policies, like the Spanish, aimed at a common nationality, which may mean that its post-imperial guilt is less paralyzing. Clearly, France has a special interest in keeping the French language alive as a world language, and there are more French speakers in Africa than in France. African governments regularly contribute money to candidates in French elections. Whatever the reasons, the French are the only ex-colonial power to keep troops in Africa, and the few times they have supported rebels in French successor states, the latter did not seek secession, i.e. Central African Republic, 1979.

The French were occasionally active in post-imperial African states once under British rule too, and gave the Biafra secessionists arms in Nigeria.

in July 1995, presumably by Islamic elements determined to break those support lines. This special case is complicated by the fact that Algeria and France are neighboring states, and the significance of that fact becomes clearer when we describe the disintegration of the Soviet empire.

The Soviets exhibit a radically different picture, particularly with respect to secession. Ironically, Russia, unlike the Western states, voluntarily gave up its hold but now is, and will probably remain, a very active intervening power. A recent Russian General Staff report estimates that there may be as many as 30 conflicts in former Soviet territories which are, or about to be, violent, a number which could grow to 70 soon.⁴⁵ Even before the Chechnya rebellion (1994), some 40,000 Russian troops were engaged in various ways, usually as peace-keepers.

In two significant respects the spatial dimensions of the Western and Soviet empires differed. The former were sea empires, while the Soviet realm was a land empire, one with wholly contiguous territories resembling its Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian predecessors. Russia's size is unprecedented too; no previous metropolitan core remained a neighbor of virtually all her successor states.

Space helps explain the issues contended too. Boundary disputes are inevitable legacies of imperial disintegrations. Western imperial successor states disputed boundaries with each other, but not with the metropolitan core. Although most boundary disputes occur in the outlying states, Russia also has many boundary problems, and some are very serious, such as the dispute with the Ukraine over the Crimea. The seas provide indisputable boundaries between metropolitan cores and colonial territories. Land empires are not so fortunate.⁴⁶

Land boundaries are generally more permeable than sea boundaries. In the Soviet case, boundaries of successor states often were created initially by Communist fiat to sever ties with historic and/or natural boundaries, a fact of great potential significance.⁴⁷ The Soviet dissolution left 25

⁴⁵ Alexander A. Kononov and Dimitri Eustafiev, "The Problem of Ethnic Minority Rights Protection in the Newly Independent States," *Minorities*, Cuthberton and Leibowitz, eds., 172.

⁴⁶ Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), 34, 210.

⁴⁷ For a different view of how geography might influence ethnic divisions, see W. Connor, "Illusions of Homogeneity," *Ethnonationalism*, 118–43. Stephan Van Evera has a more extensive discussion of the natural and historic boundaries in the Soviet case, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War."

million Russians in surrounding successor states. To force them out, some successor states have adopted discrimination policies which, in effect, means that no Russian government can survive if it abandons those in the 'near abroad'.⁴⁸

The problem of dispersed metropolitan populations is always a serious one. In the sea empires, the most bitter and prolonged violence occurred in territories containing the most sizeable European populations, i.e. Algeria and Kenya. Once independence was achieved, the hostility to the Europeans was so great that most either left voluntarily or were forced out. (In the case of Algeria, which borders France, a considerable number of Algerians were displaced by the war for independence making it even more difficult to separate the politics of the two states.) The 'Irish problem' has been so persistent because the island contained a thick concentration of Scottish (Protestant) settlers. When the British bought Cyprus, many Turks remained, and after Cyprus achieved independence, Turkish Cypriots looked to Turkey for help against Greek Cypriots and received it.

The Russian term for the world occupied by other Soviet successor states—the 'near abroad'—indicates an intention to make the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) more cohesive than any political association left by Western empires (i.e., the British Commonwealth of Nations or the Annual Franco-African Summit). To induce the reluctant to join and to secure mutual defense agreements that would keep its troops on the scene, Russia first backed rebels and then governments in Moldova, Georgia, and Azerbaijan.⁴⁹ Russian

International Security 18:4 (Spring 1994): 21–2.

⁴⁸ The surprising electoral success of Russian nationalists led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (Dec. 1993), a Russian from the 'near-abroad' owes much to the fact that they championed this issue. Significantly, President Yeltsin always responds positively to pressures to do something about Russians in the 'near abroad.'

A recent effort to get the CIS to adopt a policy of dual citizenship for Russians (24 Dec., 1993) failed, and the discrimination is serious. Latvia, for example, denied citizenship to 34 per cent of its population who are Russian and whose families came after 1940 when Latvia was annexed, making it impossible for Russians who have lived in Latvia all their lives to be naturalized. Similar citizenship barriers exist in most successor states. Russians frequently experience discriminations in schools and jobs. Sometimes their property is confiscated, and everywhere they are required to learn local languages, which they resist as an affront to their identity. Latvian officials have been attempting to raise money from the West to finance Russian emigration. See *New York Times*, 10 Nov. 1993, A-18; 12 Nov. 1993, A-5; 24 Dec. 1993, A-1; 1 Mar. 1994, A-3.

⁴⁹ *New York Times*, 27 Oct. 1993, A-15. Georgian suspicions are haunted by memories of 1801 when Russian troops who helped them break away from Persia remained for nearly two centuries. At this writing, we do not know whether military involvements

populations in successor states are major elements in promoting a larger union, activities which increase Russia's interest in their security.

Russia manipulates forces in unstable neighboring successor states partly to check other neighboring states' efforts. Violent secession movements make irredenta claims to join other successor states; for example, Ossetians in Georgia wish to reunite with Russia, and elements in Moldova want to rejoin Romania.⁵⁰ Inevitably, apprehensions of Russian intentions emerge in other states of the former Soviet world which seek third party security guarantees. Thus, the efforts of former Warsaw Pact states to join NATO, which willy-nilly provoke Russian suspicions.

Changes in spatial relations in Central Asia and the Caucasus are creating new circumstances, unknown either to the Soviets or the Czars. Since 1991 five new Turkic republics (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) have been looking to Turkey for inspiration and support. This pressure could reorient Turkish policy from Europe towards Central Asia for the first time since the early Ottoman Empire. Even though Turkic refugees from the Caucasus and Central Asia traditionally found asylum among the Ottomans, and the early republic had a vision of uniting all Turkic peoples in one national state, preoccupation with Europe persevered. Recent manifestations of this potential reorientation are Turkey's blockade of Armenia to help Azerbaijan and the presence of Turkish volunteers in Chechnya⁵¹. If Turkey becomes active in Central Asia, can Russia be passive?⁵²

The establishment of unstable successor states on the former Soviet Union's southern flank made Iran a power in the region for the first time in a century. But the dynamics of the two periods are very different. Earlier, Iran defended itself against

in the activities of successor states signify the breakdown in control of the military or is a deliberate aim of state policy. Whatever the truth is, Russia did not reject the consequences.

⁵⁰ Moldova, Azerbaijan, the Ukraine, and Georgia (which has had uprisings in Abkhazia, Ossetia, and in the Russian Caucasus) so far have experienced the most serious problems.

⁵¹ William Safire, "Made Under Duress," *New York Times*, 21 Aug. 1995, A-17

⁵² *New York Times*, 16 April 1994, A-1. See Ciro Zoppo, "Turkey and the Independent States of Central Asia" in *Storm Clouds Over Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*, David Carleton, ed. (London: Dartmouth Press, 1995 forthcoming). Zoppo shows that the initiative comes from the leaders of the four Republics who solicited Turkish commitments. While "Turkey has no territorial ambitions (it is) hosting 7,000 students and is on record as willing to provide extra help to the new states in training of statesmen and *military personnel*." (My emphasis)

Russian imperial expansion; now the political appeal of Islamic fundamentalism puts Russia, with a significant Muslim population, on the defensive.

Beyond the problem of unstable neighboring successor states, another serious possibility exists. The extraordinary difficulties in coping with the uprising in Chechnya makes one wonder whether Russia can keep its own secessionist elements at bay;⁵³ disintegration threats in the metropolitan cores of imperial states are more common than most realize.⁵⁴

It is moot whether Russian imperial ambitions led by either the right or left will revive. Russian history provides its own interesting precedent. To regain seceding Czarist territories, Lenin armed the Soviet Union with a new doctrine for a multi-ethnic state.⁵⁵ The German imperial revival after the Versailles humiliation may be another relevant parallel. Against this, one could cite Russia's own precarious internal unity, its voluntary decision to sever links with most other republics,⁵⁶ the fact that empires rarely revive, and that anti-imperial sentiment everywhere else is so strong. But Russia's intentions may be irrelevant, because a power with so many unstable neighbors must

worry immensely about its own security and thus become active in their affairs.

Another imponderable element is that the metropolitan power itself, unlike Western counterparts, is experiencing a radical new understanding of its identity. If the Ottoman experience is a useful analogue, where the Armenians, Kurds, and others provide grim testimony, the process could have serious consequences for minorities.⁵⁷ Russia retained significant non-Russian populations because of permeable land boundaries and numerous refugees from ethnic turmoil elsewhere. Difficult Russian economic circumstances compound the problem, especially since enterprising refugee elements have excited considerable envy.⁵⁸

The catastrophic speed of this redefining process has no historic parallel. An empire which took four centuries to build collapsed virtually overnight without a major war and without time to come to terms with the likelihood of its dissolution. Significantly, during the Soviet period Russians, unlike their Western counterparts, did not see themselves as an imperial people so much as one engaged with other nationalities in common efforts to spread world revolution; and the unexpected hostilities and humiliations have had a traumatic and unforeseeable impact.

Moral Space: The Development of *Moralpolitik*

How does moral space shape international reactions? When the national self-determination principle became universally accepted after World War II, a crucial dividing line between the two halves of the century materialized; *moralpolitik* as distinguished from *realpolitik* developed. *Realpolitik* represents a politics based on state interests, while *moralpolitik* is divorced substantially from those interests at least as conventionally defined. *Moralpolitik* had striking implications for three important subjects: conquest, imperialism, and human rights.

Perhaps the most remarkable consequence, although it was noticed least, was that conquests virtually disappeared from the international scene.

⁵³ In 1991 it unilaterally seceded; initially, Russia neither resisted nor recognized the act, but fears of the potential precedent induced Russia to provide covert support to rebels struggling to rejoin Russia. In 1994 Russian troops were employed in furious encounters, and at this writing (Sept. 1995) the issue is still unresolved.

⁵⁴ The problem usually develops later. "When the center no longer has anything to offer, the parts want to live on their own," Ortega said to explain why separatist movements developed in Spain after the American empire was lost. The Spanish empire was an enterprise created by Castile, and as long as the empire was a going concern, Spain did not experience separatist movements at home. See "How to Make and Break a Nation," *Invertebrate Spain* (New York: Norton, 1937). Scottish and Welsh separatist movements can be understood this way as well; like the Basques and Catalonians before them, the Scots and Welsh were especially involved in the imperial enterprise, and revived arguments for autonomy when the British empire collapsed. In the Soviet case, the international mission was even more crucial as a bonding enterprise, and when that fell apart in the Afghan experience, a complete dismemberment began. For a different, but not necessarily contradictory, picture, see Jessica Eve Stern, "Moscow Meltdown: Can Russia Survive," *International Security* 18:4 (Spring 1994): 40–65.

⁵⁵ See for example, Firuz Kazemzadeh, *The Struggle for Transcaucasia 1917–1921* (Westport, Conn: Hyperion Press 1951); Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917–18* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1957); and *Transcaucasia: Nationalism and Social Change*, Ronald Suny, ed. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 1983).

⁵⁶ This decision came after five states (the three Baltic ones, Georgia and Moldava) peacefully seceded. Without Russia, the Soviet Union could not survive.

⁵⁷ See Mark Levene, "Yesterday's Victims. . ."

The most serious political transformations resulting from the loss of empire in Western states occurred in France and Portugal. The struggle over Algeria brought the French Fourth Republic down and Portugal became a democratic state. Important changes, but less significant than results in the Turkish and Russian cases, and changes without direct violent impact on ethnic groups still residing France and Portugal.

⁵⁸ *New York Times*, 9 Jan. 1993, E-5. Two million came in 1993; some 9,000 were sent back, and 10,000 left voluntarily during the year.

The number of conquests are very small—four in 50 years—and each case are associated with very special circumstances. Only one state, South Vietnam, was extinguished by conquest. Two elements in the process were significant: the struggle began against French imperial rule, and North Vietnam made *irredenta* claims. India conquered Goa (1961), an act tolerated because Goa was a Portuguese conquest. However, when Indonesia annexed another Portuguese possession, East Timor (1975), the UN did not recognize the act. The occupation has not yet been reversed, but resistance has provoked savage responses, discrediting Indonesia's human rights reputation. Israel did not attempt to annex the West Bank, and its annexation of the Golan Heights and Jerusalem were not internationally recognized. Hence, the return of the Golan is a condition of peace with Syria, and a final settlement with the Palestinians may require a new status for Jerusalem.⁵⁹

More conspicuous than the barrier to new conquests, and closely related to it, was the implication of national self-determination and *moralpolitik* for existing imperial states. Empires were seen as products of historical conquests, and secessionist movements within them attracted various kinds of sympathetic support from different elements, always from the Global South, always from one side of the Cold War and sometimes from elements of the other, too.⁶⁰ Rebels, like the Basques and Corsicans, who claimed territories within the metropolitan centers of Western empires received no international credibility.

⁵⁹ The process seems to have begun in Latin America. Independent states were not annexed, and, while territorial cessions occurred, they were infrequent compared to those of Asia and Africa.

⁶⁰ The two different attitudes towards secession are expressed in UN documents and Resolutions. The "Self Determination of Peoples" is mentioned in the Charter, and its use to justify secessionist movements in empires was most firmly expressed in the Declaration of the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples of 1960. The 'Friendly Relations' Declaration of 1970 rejects secession from 'independent states.' The Geneva Protocols (1977), additions to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, make a similar distinction; Protocol I (art. 1, para. 4) treats 'wars of national liberation' as though they were international conflicts while Protocol II reserves to existing states full rights of self-defense against other insurgencies. See John Dugard, "International Terrorism and the Just War" in *The Morality of Terrorism*, 2e, David C. Rapoport and Yonah Alexander, eds. (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1989), 77–98.

Ironically, this 'double standard,' often called anti-Western, was first applied by European states aiding rebels in the Ottoman empire.

All imperial successor states were recognized as national states also, and the appeals of groups within them to the self-determination principle were almost everywhere ignored—at least publicly.⁶¹ Such contrasting international support patterns help explain why secessionist rebels normally succeeded only in colonial empires. Nearly fifty violent secession movements between 1960-1995 occurred in successor states, but only two succeeded. Bangladesh broke away from Pakistan (1971) after a newly signed defense treaty with the Soviets enabled India to invade Pakistani territory.⁶² Eritrea finally won independence in 1991, an event neighboring Muslim powers among others helped bring about. The Eritrean claim to be struggling against colonialism seemed credible because Ethiopia incorporated Eritrea after World War II, contrary to international agreement and without Eritrean consent.

Violent dismemberment of successor states may be impossible without much outside help, and that rarely happens. States with the slimmest prospect for survival, the new African ones, were able to maintain themselves,⁶³ just as did the most problematic new states of the nineteenth century, those in Latin America which also experienced serious periods of internal, but not ethno-religious violence.⁶⁴ *Irredenta* claims are made less often than those for sovereignty, perhaps because foreign states aspiring to absorb groups in other states often seems bent on conquest; the memory of how the Germans absorbed the Sudetenland and Austria prior to World War II still lingers. Also states with *irredenta* claims are usually multi-ethnic themselves, and expanding one ethnic element may seriously transform domestic politics. The most successful, and least bloody example is the takeover of Goa, an absorption which could not alter domestic Indian balances. The more complicated cases of Korea, Vietnam, and Cyprus will be discussed below.

⁶¹ Rebels in the Soviet sphere also gathered little international support, though in eastern Europe they were crushed so quickly the issue never fully materialized.

⁶² Richard Sisson and Leo Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 198–201. The treaty was necessary to re-assure Indians that China would not intervene.

⁶³ Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood," *World Politics* 35 (Oct. 1982):20.

⁶⁴ Colombia was the only Latin American state dismembered, when it could not prevent Panama from seceding (1903). After the Colombian Senate refused to ratify the canal treaty, the U.S. encouraged a revolt and took military and political (that is, a 'premature' recognition) steps to protect the insurrection.

When states act collectively in international organizations opposition to secessionist ethno-religious insurgency seems strongest. The UN even used troops to prevent Katanga (Shaba) from seceding in the Congo (Zaire) in 1963. When states act collectively they must give their reasons in public, and the integrity of existing states is a principle states all accept. Only the record of Islamic collective bodies is less clear. In 1976 the Islamic Conference (43 states) endorsed 'the right of the fraternal people of the Turkish Muslim Community of Cyprus' to be heard at all international forums. But Turkey alone recognized a Turkish Cypriot state.⁶⁵ The League of Arab States (torn by three contradictory concerns: Arab, Islamic, and national influences) experiences the same conflicts that divide member successor states. Moral support to Muslim rebels in the Philippines and Ethiopia make it the only regional organization to encourage secessionists in non-imperial contexts. But the League never endorsed the secessionist aim as such; it urged rebels to seek a peaceful solution with the framework of the existing state, and invariably condemned secessionist rebellions in Arab states.

Moralpolitik, most often connected with international organizations, is perhaps more conspicuous in commitments to human rights (particularly in violent contexts), peacekeeping, medical aid, and famine relief. Antecedents were the post-World War I treaties establishing Austro-Hungarian successor states and recognizing that the national determination principle often created serious problems for minorities. The League of Nations pledge to protect minorities proved ineffective, but the UN retained the principle and the hope of enforcing it, though little was accomplished during the Cold War.⁶⁶

After the Cold War, beliefs in the value of collective action for such activity intensified. Nearly two-thirds of the UN peace-keeping operations occurred in this brief period, and for the first time major powers (except China) sent troops. When the belligerents themselves desire assistance, and intervention is limited to narrow tasks, intervention can be effective as UN involvements

in Cyprus (1974-?) and Somalia (1992-) indicate. But it is difficult to expand the consensus to deal with peacemaking, as the experiences in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia made clear.⁶⁷

Shortly after the former Yugoslavia dissolved, the UN *Declaration of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, or Linguistic Minorities (1992)* gave *moralpolitik* its most explicit formal ground. The 1992 Declaration is an enormous breach in the principle of non-interference, providing a right, quite possibly a duty, to intervene collectively. It is too early to assess the Declaration's import,⁶⁸ but the momentum for action, let alone successful intervention, requires both a greater consensus on defining minority rights and their pre-eminent importance than is presently available, and a better understanding of the ultimate effect that well-intentioned but poorly-supported interventions have on the directing organization's credibility.

Conclusion

Violence within states always disturbs relations between them. Ethno-religious violence, perhaps more troubling than other forms, has spread steadily since the late 19th century. After World War II, half of the internal struggles were ethno-religious; by the 1960s it outstripped all others put together, a fact which Cold War pre-occupations obscured.

As great empires with ethnic divisions collapsed, successor states sought to develop nations as social bases, a course which usually produced violence and failure. The spread of democratic principles appears relevant also, a worrying possibility because no legitimate alternatives to the democratic form exist now.

New boundaries seriously disturb pre-existing ethno-religious relations, reversing majority-minority relationships, eliminating traditional mediating elements, fragmenting peoples, and suddenly casting some in vulnerable border areas. At the moment of creation uncertainties about the future are maximized, making violence most likely.

⁶⁵ Naomi Black, "The Cyprus Conflict" in *Ethnic Conflict in International Relations*, Astri Suhrke and Lela Noble eds. (New York: Praeger, 1977), 60.

⁶⁶ L. P. Mair, *The Protection of Minorities: The Working and Scope of the Minorities Treaties under the League of Nations* (London: Christophers, 1928), and John Coakley, "Approaches to the Resolution of Ethnic Conflict," *International Political Science Review* 15, 3 (July, 1994): 297-314. A 1966 UN Declaration revived interest in the general problem, culminating in the 1992 Declaration.

⁶⁷ Collective efforts at peacekeeping by regional groups have shown similar problems. Note, for example, ill-fated efforts by the Arab League in Lebanon (1976) and the Organization of African States in Chad (1981).

⁶⁸ For a good discussion of the 92 Declaration, see Koen Koch, "The International Community and Forms of Intervention in the Fields of Minority Rights Protection" in Culbertson and Leibowitz, *Minorities*. . .

The resulting conflicts are long, peculiarly intense, and recurring. Space, the object of the struggles, helps explain these features. To have one's own space is a crucial ingredient in identity, and while belligerents in international wars retain separate spaces, participants in internal struggles have to cohabit a territory afterwards.

Distances between two given states helps explain who intervenes, why, how, and the probability of successful intervention. When great powers had extensive territories, they were more likely to be each other's neighbors, and internal violence, especially that animated by ethno-religious issues, could spark global conflict. The creation of new states created new neighbors, changed the identity of the interveners, and reduced the likelihood that a conflict would drag others outside the region in. Because its spatial dimensions are so different from those of other metropolitan cores of former empires, Russia is the most active intervening power today. But its territories do not impinge on those of other major powers, making it unlikely that it will precipitate global conflicts.

Each new space created made the world *larger*. A counter-intuitive argument to be sure, if one's political imagination is imprisoned by the metaphor of a global village which technology keeps shrinking daily. As the world grows larger, most individual struggles become more local. We may be more aware that an ethno-religious conflict exists, but that does not confer a greater will to act decisively. Indeed, the relationship may be inverse. Even in the Cold War, the major protagonists and the international community as a whole were reluctant to involve themselves in ethno-religious strife, except when that strife was associated with the Cold War or with Western imperialism, and especially when both elements were believed to be combined, as in the Palestinian and South African cases.

Proximity makes some states much more crucial than conventional estimates of power would have us believe. Neighbors have substantial interests in the outcome of violence next door, which leads them to stimulate or aggravate tensions, and dampen them too, fearing dismemberment precedents and wars not vital to their interests. Violent ethno-religious movements have less maneuvering room than states do; time and again rebels are abandoned or given aid to continue but never enough to win.

This game can be played badly, and neighboring states may be dragged into war especially in areas where pre-existing hostility

exists such as the Middle East or Eastern Europe. Again, the example of the former Yugoslavia seems instructive. Disagreement among UN participants probably prolonged the violence and strained venerable alliances. But in the past, the Balkan predicament precipitated war between the major outside intervening powers, only a remote possibility now. Tensions may still escalate,⁶⁹ but since 1945 ethnic bond claims have rarely been strong enough to provoke war between neighboring states. Greece made a humiliating retreat, when Turkey showed that it would risk war rather than abandon Turkish Cypriots. (Would the outcome have been different if Greece and Turkey had been on opposing sides in the Cold War?)

The importance given to the 'right to space,' shapes intervention patterns in decisive ways also. Conquest, hitherto a very common solution for internal violence, became intolerable. Empires became illegitimate; secessionist movements in them were encouraged but by the same token would-be secessionists could not use that argument against successor states because the latter were not understood as imperial regimes. But as violence did not cease, a new framework for intervention was developed: 'human rights', 'humanitarian assistance', and 'prevention of genocide,' problems which required collective intervention.

These developments created a *moralpolitik*, or a politics divorced substantially from state interests as conventionally defined, and perhaps a politics created by a world which had grown larger and seems more attractive to those geographically remote from the scene of the conflict who need to salve their consciences. The tension between *moralpolitik* and *realpolitik* is demonstrated in international efforts to try war criminals in the Balkan conflict, which seems an insuperable obstacle to negotiating a peace.

Moralpolitik was given its most comprehensive basis in the 1992 *UN Declaration of the Rights of Persons*, but that *Declaration* did not enhance capacities to act constructively. Earlier experiences in Lebanon, Somalia, and Yugoslavia suggest that by the time a problem is defined in humanitarian terms, it may have already become virtually insoluble by limited interventions. The UN failed its first major test after the 1992 *Declaration* in the 1994 Rwanda crisis, and the first state to act (France) had substantial interests

⁶⁹ A dispute over the status of Macedonia, for example, could precipitate a broader war between the four neighboring states (Bulgaria, Albania, Greece, and Turkey) with vital interests there. Greece and Turkey will be opposed on a second issue, more serious than their Cyprus dispute.

invested. A related test was the UN (U.S.) intervention to restore democracy and a respect for human rights in Haiti (September, 1994). The extraordinary indecision and last-minute compromises associated with the action may signify the absence of substantial questions of interest.⁷⁰ A significantly different response occurring at the same time to Iraqi mobilization on Kuwaiti borders reflected the presence of substantial interests and a different principle.⁷¹

In 1991 two events which seemed to signify changing attitudes towards violent secession opened a Pandora's box.⁷² Eritrea was recognized. Also, Germany, Austria, and Hungary recognized Croatia's right to secede from the former Yugoslavia—a precedent followed by some NATO powers, even though Croatia had not met the European Community's standards for minority rights. These were decisive steps in Yugoslavia's dissolution.⁷³

But there are other elements here too. Ethiopia unlawfully incorporated Eritrea, and the case, therefore, may never be a precedent. Yugoslavia's tragedy may teach us that premature recognitions are agonies to avoid, not precedents to follow, and the more recent disappointments of the Kurds suggest that this second reading is more probable. They were exhorted to rise during the Gulf War; and later to protect them from Saddam Hussein's revenge, UN Resolution 688 (April 1992) created a safe zone protected by the victorious allies. The Kurds seized the opportunity to establish a quasi-state which put secession on the table again. But every relevant power seems determined to maintain

Iraq's integrity; dismemberment anxieties are still very much alive.⁷⁴

My concern has been with intervention in specific states; and in approaching the issue that way, one might reasonably conclude that the problem is serious for the international world as a whole, but 'manageable.' But what about the cumulative world-wide effect of strife in so many countries?

This is a subject for another study, and a less optimistic one. Here the most relevant such effect is that of refugees: the flight of persons through space. In November 1993 (*before* the most recent floods from Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia) one out of every 130 persons in the world was a refugee. The long-run consequences of this ever-increasing flow affects us all, albeit unequally. Weaker states in Asia and Africa often carry the heaviest burden. Sudden migrations from the Balkans to other parts of Europe exacerbate internal problems occasioned by earlier population movements, providing fuel for growing right wing movements and violence. Traditional rights of political asylum are being severely restricted. The matter will not end there.



⁷⁰ On successive days different *New York Times* reporters interpreted the concern of the Clinton administration to emphasize or downplay human rights abuses in Haiti, as indications of whether an invasion was imminent. See 18 and 19 July 1994, A-4, A-5.

⁷¹ No issue seems to galvanize the UN more than an invasion of a duly constituted state, and it is significant that two of the three UN military interventions in Korea, Kuwait, and the Congo were against invasions.

⁷² "In the wake of the astounding events of the last three years, one can detect a weakening of the existing taboo against secession, indeed the signs of an emerging paradigm shift whereby secession will no longer be treated as unthinkable by the international system." Heraclides, "Secession, Self-Determination, and Non-Intervention," 399.

⁷³ See Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 12–14; John Zamecica, *The Yugoslav Conflict*, Adelphi Paper No. 270 (London: Brassey's, 1992); and John Newhouse, "The Diplomatic Round," *The New Yorker*, 24 Aug. 1992, 63. Although the Croats appeared to count on recognition, they also overestimated both the ability and the will of a sympathetic German government to do more.

⁷⁴ Note the recent secession of Somaliland from Somalia which no state has recognized. See Rayika Omaar, "Somaliland: One Thorn Bush at a Time," *Current History* (May 1994): 232–236.



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INSTITUTE ON GLOBAL CONFLICT AND COOPERATION



The University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC) was founded in 1983 as a multi-campus research unit serving the entire University of California (UC) system. The institute's purpose is to study the causes of international conflict and the opportunities to resolve it through international cooperation. During IGCC's first five years, research focused largely on the issue of averting nuclear war through arms control and confidence-building measures between the superpowers. Since then the research program has diversified to encompass several broad areas of inquiry: regional relations, international environmental policy, international relations theory, and most recently, the domestic sources of foreign policy.

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Susan L. Shirk, a professor in UC San Diego's Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies and in the UCSD Department of Political Science, was appointed director of IGCC in June 1992 after serving for a year as acting director. Former directors of the institute include John Gerard Ruggie (1989–1991), and Herbert F. York (1983–1989), who now serves as director emeritus.





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