

**PEACE-BUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

by

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The debate on the resolution of ethnic conflict is usually framed as a debate about the effects and manipulation of political structures. On one side of the argument, Chaim Kaufmann's argument in favor of partition as necessary for conflict resolution is primarily based on two arguments about structure. First, within each ethnic group, ethnic civil war puts extremists in power, so social structures with groups can be used to prevent the emergence of new political structures that can protect all ethnic groups. Second, ethnic civil war creates a security dilemma which makes it impossible for the groups to trust each other, further blocking the emergence of trans-ethnic political institutions.<sup>2</sup> The contrary argument, exemplified by a recent article by Barbara Walter, essentially accepts this part of Kaufmann's argument, but claims that the structural problems, especially the security dilemma, can be overcome by effective third-party guarantees.<sup>3</sup> Acceptance of this argument then leads to another debate, over the proper terms for structuring a multiethnic state, whether consociationalism, federalism, or other electoral schemes.

Most of these debates, however, are on one side of a more fundamental divide: the debate between "structuralist and social-psychological paradigms" of conflict resolution.<sup>4</sup> My argument here is that a focus on structure only overlooks the main obstacle to the resolution of ethnic war: not structure, but preferences. Kaufmann does not emphasize this point, but he does note it, saying, for example, "As ethnic conflicts escalate, populations come increasingly to hold enemy images of the other group".<sup>5</sup> Critics like Walter simply assume this problem away, asserting that combatants are usually able to resolve their differences. But Walter's cases do not support her claim. In fact, the key obstacle to resolving ethnic war is the preferences of the sides: they frequently do not want to agree to compromise, and when they do agree, they frequently see the agreement as a temporary concession which they plan to violate as soon as conditions permit. Furthermore, the source of these preferences is not only cognitive but also emotional, and the tools politicians use to appeal to these preferences are emotion-laden symbols. Leaders in ethnic conflicts often become trapped by the popular emotions they have roused, and lose the ability to negotiate for conflict resolution even if they might want to.

If this is true—if settlements or settlement attempts fail mostly because the parties (leaders, mass publics, or both) do not want them to succeed—then the argument about institutions and structures is at best incomplete, and at worst irrelevant. In game theory terms, resolving conflict is not a matter of overcoming mistrust in a prisoners' dilemma, but rather one

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<sup>2</sup> Chaim Kaufmann, "Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Wars," *International Security* vol. 20, no. 4 (Spring 1996), pp. 136-175; cf. Kaufmann, "When All Else Fails," *International Security* vol. 23, no. 2 (Fall 1998), pp. 120-156.

<sup>3</sup> Barbara F. Walter, "Designing Transitions from Civil War," *International Security* vol. 24, no. 1 (Summer 1999), pp. 127-155.

<sup>4</sup> Chester A. Crocker, Fen O. Hampson, and Pamela Aall, "Multiparty Mediation and the Conflict Cycle," in Crocker, Hampson, and Aal, eds., *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1999), p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Kaufmann, "Possible and Impossible Solutions," p. 141.

of changing preferences in a game of Deadlock. The real key to conflict resolution, then, is to change mass preferences. Recognizing that conventional diplomacy cannot change these preferences, structuralist analyses of conflict resolution tend to assume that third parties cannot affect them at all, arguing that mediators must simply wait until the conflict is “ripe for resolution,” most commonly when a conflict turns into a “hurting stalemate” in which the parties come to prefer a settlement to continued fighting.<sup>6</sup>

The value of the “social psychological” paradigm of conflict resolution is to focus on the importance of preference formation and change, and to demonstrate the importance of tools for changing preferences--policy tools collectively known as peace-building efforts. Efforts at conflict resolution often fail, from this point of view, because peace-building efforts are not given enough attention and support. Furthermore, since the preferences are in large part emotionally based, efforts to alter those preferences must also have appeal at an emotional level. In short, psychology is critically important--both at the level of individual psychology, and at the group level examined by social psychology. While peace-building is by no means a cure-all for severe conflict, it is the only kind of conflict resolution effort that aims at constructive change in the preferences of the groups in conflict.

In the rest of this paper, I will try briefly to explain why I believe this understanding to be accurate. I begin with a discussion of the roots of ethnic identity, an issue which figures deeply in the debate between Kaufmann and his various critics. I then extend the logic to discussing the processes of ethnic war, arguing that putting together theories of ethnic identity and theories of ethnic war strongly support the notion that the key barrier to ethnic war resolution is the emotionally-based preferences of the parties rather than the structure of the situation. A critical piece of this argument is the observation that ethnic wars tend to begin not because changes in structure cause changes in preferences, but rather because changes in preferences cause changes in structures. In short, hostile attitudes destroy effective institutions, so institutions can only be sustained if preferences allow. After some brief illustrations of these propositions, I conclude with a discussion of the nature of peace-building and its promise as a conflict resolution tool.

### ***Understandings of ethnic identity***

In an influential argument in the early 1990s, Crawford Young divided accounts of ethnic identity into three categories: primordialist accounts, instrumentalist ones, and constructivist ones.<sup>7</sup> Recently, however, a synthesis has emerged which draws on the strengths of all three accounts.<sup>8</sup> The synthesis is necessary because all three accounts offer insights vital to an adequate understanding of ethnicity, and how ethnic identity affects ethnic conflict and conflict resolution.

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<sup>6</sup> I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Richard Haass, *Conflicts Unending: The United States and Regional Disputes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> Crawford Young, “The Dialectics of Cultural Pluralism: Concept and Reality,” in Crawford Young, ed., *The Rising Tide of Cultural Pluralism: The Nation-State at Bay?* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> Examples of the synthesis include e.g., Ted Robert Gurr, *Minorities at Risk* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1993); and Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (London: Routledge, 1998).

The contribution of the primordial approach is to note the emotional power of ethnic attachment. As Harold Isaacs points out, the markers of ethnic group identity may be basic personal characteristics that fundamentally shape how people view the world and how the world views them. Group identity is frequently marked on the body, either naturally as racial characteristics, or carved on by circumcision or other artificial process. Native language shapes not only the life chances of the monolingual; it also proffers the words, and therefore the conceptual lenses, by which one understands the world. Religion shapes values and identity, explicitly and intentionally, in all of these ways. And ethnic identity offers a source of individual pride.<sup>9</sup> Walker Connor, who takes a position similar to primordialism, argues that the sum of these markers defines a group which acts like, and indeed claims to be, a kin group.<sup>10</sup> Ethnic loyalty, by this logic, taps some fundamental biological drives, such as defense of kin and territoriality, in addition to such ubiquitous social drives as the desire to honor one's ancestors. It is these mutually reinforcing bonds which give ethnicity its power, in the primordial view.

A strength of the instrumentalist account is to emphasize the role and motivations of ethnic leaders as political actors. As Robert Bates and Donald Rothchild point out, ethnic conflicts in Africa are often essentially conflicts between ethnically-defined patron-client networks over economic goods distributed by the state.<sup>11</sup> The literature on nationalism offers a similar account of the origins of ethnic nations.<sup>12</sup> Ethnic nations formed, in this view, beginning after the French Revolution when a "national" language was chosen from among a variety of different dialects, written down, and made the basis for mass literacy in specific states.<sup>13</sup> This was done because industrial society requires a standard means of communications, thus a single standard is set for an entire territory.<sup>14</sup> Instrumentalists point out that elites, who thus define ethnic groups and group interests, may be using ethnicity instrumentally in pursuit of their own personal interests. This perspective also compels attention to the fact that these elites may appeal to other, non-ethnic issues, for the same instrumental reasons; and they will, if convenient, redefine those issues in ethnic terms.

The value of the constructivist approach begins with the observation that an ethnic group's shared history and felt kinship ties are usually fictitious. As Ernst Renan famously put it, "Getting its history wrong is part of being a nation."<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the meaning of an ethnic

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<sup>9</sup> Harold R. Isaacs, *The Idols of the Tribe* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), pp. 26, 38, 143.

<sup>10</sup> Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> Donald Rothchild, "Collective Demands for Improved Distribution," in Rothchild and Olorunsola, eds., *State vs. Ethnic Claims*, p. 173.

<sup>12</sup> The seminal work in the communications or linguistic theory of nationalism is that of Karl Deutsch. See, e.g., Deutsch, *Nationalism and its Alternatives*.

<sup>13</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 53.

<sup>14</sup> Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 34.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Stephen Van Evera, "Hypotheses on Nationalism and War," *International Security* vol. 18, no. 4

identity--who is included in the group, what its values are, and so on--is a set of ideas. Those ideas, constructivists point out, are generally either newly invented or newly interpreted by ethnic or nationalist intellectuals. It is, therefore, these intellectuals who “construct” ethnic identity.<sup>16</sup> In some cases, the history “discovered” by these intellectuals is actually invented from whole cloth.<sup>17</sup>

This fundamental point is actually conceded by both primordialist and instrumentalists. Thus the “primordialist” Anthony Smith is careful to define ethnicity as requiring only a belief in shared ancestry, not the fact of common descent. He also emphasizes the importance of intellectuals who “discover” the common history and identity of their ethnic group, and promote their view as a way of promoting the “regeneration” of their group.<sup>18</sup> Walker Connor, also seen as a primordialist, agrees on both counts.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the above instrumentalist account of the creation of nineteenth-century European nationalisms is also a constructivist account, dependent on the role of ethnic elites and intellectuals in “constructing” nations.<sup>20</sup> Even Clifford Geertz, considered the founder of the primordial school, argues that ethnic markers are culturally rather than biologically determined.<sup>21</sup>

There is, however, a limit to the plasticity of ethnic identity. While intellectuals can feel free to invent, reinvent, or obscure their group’s past to a large extent, they must build on certain pre-existing foundations, such as the defining ethnic traits listed by Anthony Smith: a group name, believed common descent, history, culture, and territory. The trick for the intellectuals, or cultural entrepreneurs, is to link a name and cluster of cultural elements to a history and mythology which both creates ethnic symbols and answers contemporary group needs. While ethnic groups are not permanent and fixed, in short, they are not infinitely malleable either.<sup>22</sup> Weakly supported national identities, such as the Yugoslav, Czechoslovak and Soviet, do not survive.

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(Spring 1994), p. 27.

<sup>16</sup> Crawford Young suggests the “constructivist” label in “The Dialectics of Cultural Pluralism”. One example of the literature he cites is Leroy Vail, “Introduction: Ethnicity in Southern African History,” in Leroy Vail, *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

<sup>17</sup> Leroy Vail, “Preface,” in Vail, ed., *The Creation of Tribalism*, mentions that Malawians believe that an “Nkhamanga Empire” existed in the northern part of their country in the early 1800s, but that this empire never in fact existed.

<sup>18</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 68, 105-107.

<sup>19</sup> Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, p. 212 and passim.

<sup>20</sup> E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>21</sup> Clifford Geertz, quoted in Charles F. Keyes, “The Dialectics of Ethnic Change,” in Keyes, ed., *Ethnic Change* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> Smith, *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, pp. 210-213.

There is, thus, a middle ground on which all three schools of thought about ethnicity can be reconciled. The barrier to such a reconciliation in the past has been the misperception that “primordialists” see ethnic ties as immutable, genetic links. Understanding that most “primordialists” see ethnicity as *culturally* rather than genetically determined opens the way to combining all three schools of thought. Indeed, the combination is necessary: if the puzzle of ethnicity is why it is so powerful and so widespread a political force, the best answer is that all three schools of thought about it are correct in identifying powerful forces that drive it. The outlines of a synthesis were sketched out by Crawford Young twenty years ago, before much of the current debate had taken place.<sup>23</sup>

The “primordialist” element of the synthesis begins with Paul Stern’s insight that loyalty to groups which include non-kin is primordial, and can be explained as a result of natural selection: those who can in a crisis count on fellow group-members’ loyalty--including such non-kin as in-laws--were presumably evolutionarily favored over strict egoists, who would have died when their groups would have fractured under stress. “Nationalism gets its force,” Stern therefore argues, “by drawing on [this] primordial sociality.” This argument is sometimes caricatured as a simplistic “killer ape” theory of human nature, and then ignored, but in fact its more sophisticated version is consistent with constructivist logic. The argument is not that ethnic violence is somehow encoded in human genes, but that *cultural* tendencies toward collective self-defense of kinship groups, and defense of territory, are likely to be evolutionarily favored.<sup>24</sup> Ethnic or national leaders then create ethnic symbols to mimic the cues which originally invoked a genuine kinship-group-defense response, and use them to promote defense of the ethnic group.<sup>25</sup>

Any particular ethnic identity, however, is the result of a social construction that symbolically equates ethnic identity with the family--hence the “motherland” and “fatherland” symbols commonly used by nationalists.<sup>26</sup> Anthony Smith argues that the core of an ethnic identity is a “myth-symbol complex,” a combination of myths, memories, values and symbols which define not only who is a member of the group, but what it means to be a member.<sup>27</sup> Thus ethnic symbolism is at the heart of this conception: the existence, status and security of the group depends on the status of group symbols, which is why people are willing to fight and die for them--and why they are willing to follow leaders who manipulate those symbols for selfish goals.

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<sup>23</sup> Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976).

<sup>24</sup> Johan M.G. van der Dennen, “Ethnocentrism and In-group/Out-group Differentiation: A Review and Interpretation of the Literature,” in Reynolds, ed., *The Sociobiology of Ethnocentrism*, pp. 1-47, makes the argument about protection of kin groups; Ralph B. Taylor, *Human Territorial Functioning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), documents human tendencies toward territoriality of their immediate surroundings.

<sup>25</sup> Gary R. Johnson et al., “The Evocative Significance of Kin Terms in Patriotic Speech,” in Reynolds et al., eds., *The Sociobiology of Ethnocentrism*, pp. 157-174. The authors’ evidence concerns only the evocation of kinship, not of territoriality, but their theoretical argument could be applied to both.

<sup>26</sup> Paul C. Stern, “Why do People Sacrifice for their Nations?,” in John L. Comaroff and Paul C. Stern, eds., *Perspectives on Nationalism and War* (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breech, 1995), pp. 109, 115.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, pp. 15-16 and *passim*.

### *Ethnic war processes*

Most of the more sophisticated arguments about how ethnic war occurs—both those of Kaufmann and of his critics—focus on the roles of ethnic fears and of the security dilemma. This account assumes that ethnic wars are the result of state breakdown. According to Barry Posen’s influential argument:

In areas such as the former . . . Yugoslavia, ‘sovereigns’ have disappeared. They leave in their wake a host of groups . . . [that] must pay attention to . . . the problem of security. . . [Thus], there will be competition for the key to security--power. The competition will often continue to a point at which the competing entities have amassed more power than needed for security and, thus, consequently begin to threaten others. Those threatened will respond in turn. . . This is the security dilemma: what one does to enhance one’s own security causes reaction that, in the end, can make one less secure . . . [T]hese strategic problems show that very little nationalist rabble-rousing or nationalistic combativeness is required to generate very dangerous situations.”<sup>28</sup>

Posen’s logic is that ethnic groups in Yugoslavia found themselves in the situation of “anarchy” faced by hostile independent states. In the absence of a common central government, no group could trust the others not to arm--in fact, someone would inevitably inherit the arms of the Yugoslav army--so all had to arm in self-defense. Their memories of World War II spurred them on in their efforts, promoting a spiral of insecurity as the self-defense efforts of each group increased the insecurity of the others. Once they began thinking in terms of self-defense and the World War II precedent, the groups could not help noticing that whoever attacked first would gain a big advantage, especially over unprepared groups of “enemies” isolated in one’s own territory. Eventually, someone was bound to give in to the logic of preventive self-defense and attack first, especially after armed groups of extremists began to appear.

This story, however, while logically coherent, is not true. The Yugoslav republics did not arm themselves because the federal government collapsed. Rather, the federal government collapsed because the republics were mutually hostile enough to arm themselves: anarchy resulted when the federal government lost control of the republics’ behavior. Posen’s logic is therefore backwards; anarchy was not the cause of the run-up to war, but the result of the run-up to war. This fact is further demonstrated by what did not happen--conflict among the other former Yugoslav republics. Serbia and Croatia fought each other, and tore Bosnia-Herzegovina between them, but security dilemmas did not arise between Croatia and Slovenia despite some border disputes; neither did Macedonia feel compelled to arm itself against Serbia in spite of historical rivalry.

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<sup>28</sup> Barry R. Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” *Survival* 35:1 (Spring 1993), pp. 27-47.

Posen is therefore wrong that the security dilemma caused conflicts with “very little nationalist rabble-rousing and nationalistic combativeness” in Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia descended into war because there was plenty of both. Jack Snyder and Robert Jervis, leading scholars of the security dilemma, note this in a recent work, emphasizing the importance of the “predatory” motives of ethnic groups in recent ethnic wars.<sup>29</sup>

Posen’s theory is even more clearly wrong for the case of the former Soviet Union. When severe ethnic violence first broke out in the Soviet Union, in the conflict over Nagorno (Mountainous) Karabakh in 1988, there was no indication of “emergent anarchy” in the region or in any other part of the Soviet Union. All that happened at first was that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev’s early reforms gave the Armenians hope that their longstanding demands for the peaceful transfer of the Mountainous Karabakh region—which was included in Azerbaijan though the majority of its population was Armenian—would finally be granted. The resulting nationalist mood then contributed to localized “ethnic cleansing” in villages and small towns of Armenia, provoking an Azerbaijani nationalist backlash in the form of the February 1988 anti-Armenian pogrom in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgait. These events occurred at a time when the Soviet state was still believed to have an iron grip on the behavior of its people, and especially on any anti-Soviet dissent. There was no more “incipient anarchy” in the Soviet Union of the period than there was in the United States of the 1990s, home to a widespread movement of armed, openly anti-government “militia” groups. Yet by the end of the year even the presence of large numbers of Soviet troops in the region was unable to prevent the expulsion of over a third of a million Armenians and Azerbaijanis from the other group’s republics—even when the Soviet troops were concentrated in the cities where the expulsions were occurring.

The breakdown of the Soviet state thus did not cause ethnic violence in and about Karabakh; rather, the Karabakh conflict encouraged other challenges to the Soviet state which collectively caused it not only to break down, but to break apart. Yet after the Karabakh conflict showed that sustained ethnic violence in the Soviet Union was possible, this “incipient anarchy” did not result in a large number of other violent ethnic conflicts in the Soviet Union. Though the Baltic States, Ukraine and Kazakhstan all had histories of ethnic violence between Russians and the local population, none of them saw ethnic violence in this period; and while there was Moldovan-Russian ethnic violence, it did not occur until after the August 1991 coup sounded the death knell of the Soviet Union. The only other case of ethnic war in the Soviet Union aside from Karabakh was an outbreak of violence between Georgians and Ossetians in the South Ossetian Autonomous Region in 1990-91. Yet even that case does not support Posen’s hypothesis, as it was the clear result of a predatory Georgian nationalism whose emergence predated the outbreak of the Karabakh conflict.<sup>30</sup>

I am not arguing here that the security dilemma is not applicable to ethnic civil war. Posen’s argument, as refined by Snyder and Jervis, is useful in explaining the results of a security dilemma once it emerges, and in illuminating the factors that may make the security

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<sup>29</sup> Jack Snyder and Robert Jervis, “Civil War and the Security Dilemma,” in Barbara Walter and Jack Snyder, eds., *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

<sup>30</sup> The Karabakh and Georgia cases are examined in more detail in Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), chs. 3-4.

dilemma worse. In the Yugoslav case, once Milosevic started pursuing political dominance in Yugoslavia, Croats naturally felt threatened and backed their own nationalists. And once the Croats began moving toward independence and reviving their World War II-era symbols, their extremists began threatening the Serb minority: early case of violence carried out under those symbols of intolerance spurred Serbs toward arming themselves in self-defense, a process Milosevic's organization happily facilitated. The Croats realized the advantages of a preventive attack and actually tried to disarm their Serbs before the latter could fully organize, but they were prevented from doing so by the Yugoslav army. That intervention, in turn, increased the motivation of the Croats for independence. A bit later, the emergence of armed Serb extremists did help motivate the Bosnian Muslims to go ahead with their dangerous push for independence. In sum, Posen's argument is usually wrong about why security dilemmas emerge, but the idea of the security dilemma is useful for explaining how conflict escalates to war when it does so.

Understanding the process that drives ethnic war therefore requires attention to the reasons why ethnic groups' goals become mutually hostile enough to cause security dilemmas. The nub of the debate between Kaufmann and his critics is here. Allied with the instrumentalist account of ethnicity is a related rationalist account of ethnic war that blames ethnic war almost exclusively on the behavior of ethnic elites. The role of Slobodan Milosevic in causing Yugoslavia's ethnic wars is the archetypal case; the classic article making this argument, and generating from it a general theory of ethnic war, is that of V.P. Gagnon.<sup>31</sup> Opposing this claim has been the journalistic "ancient hatreds" argument most closely associated with Robert Kaplan, but academics have ridiculed Kaplan's arguments in droves, emphasizing its overstatements rather than learning from its insights.

In fact, the same sort of synthesis that reconciles primordialist and instrumentalist accounts of ethnicity can be used to reconcile the "ancient hatreds" and "rational demagogue" accounts of ethnic war. The shortcoming of the "rational demagogue" account of ethnic war is that it cannot account for why people follow demagogues such as Milosevic. While it might be in Milosevic's interest to promote ethnic conflict, it is not obviously in the interest of the Serbian people to follow and support him. For example, while Serbs did have economic motives for their disputes with other ethnic groups in Yugoslavia, the fact is that in the 1990 Serbian elections Milosevic's campaign rhetoric emphasized that other ethnic groups were *not* to blame for Serbia's economic troubles: Serbs did not back Milosevic for economic reasons.<sup>32</sup> Serbia's people had no individually rational reason to attend his rallies and respond to his nationalist appeals regarding the status of Kosovo or the structure of the Yugoslav federation.

The best effort to solve this problem is that of Jack Snyder, who focuses on leaders' manipulation of information. If demagogues such as Milosevic can monopolize the flow of information to their people, by feeding them a steady diet of slanted news stories and an unrelenting drumbeat of conspiracy theories that supplant other ways of thinking about ethnic relations, they can simply dupe their people into seeing no alternative to ethnic violence that

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<sup>31</sup> V.P. Gagnon, "Ethnic Nationalism and International Conflict: The Case of Serbia," *International Security* vol. 19, no. 3 (Winter 1994/95), pp. 130-166.

<sup>32</sup> See Stuart Kaufman, "The Irresistible Force and the Imperceptible Object: The Yugoslav Breakup and Western Policy," *Security Studies* vol. 4, no. 2 (Winter 1994/95), pp. 281-329.

might not be in the interests of the population, but is in the interests of key elites.<sup>33</sup> The trouble with this theory as an explanation of Yugoslavia's violence, however, is that Milosevic did not create Serbia's nationalist mood. While extreme nationalist attitudes were indeed widespread in Serbia, and were increasingly so in the mid-1980s, Milosevic only discovered this fact in 1987, when he rode it to power.<sup>34</sup> Snyder notices this fact, tracing the origins of Serbian nationalism to the previous century and a half of Serbian official propaganda. But the implication is that the elite-centered rationalist explanation focused on incumbent leaders cannot explain why masses follow elites to ethnic war.

What is needed is an account of how elite appeals interact with mass attitudes in driving ethnic relations to war, or in maintaining ethnic peace. To fill this gap I propose a symbolic politics theory of ethnic war.<sup>35</sup> Symbolic politics models are currently out of fashion, but they offer a powerful alternative theory about political choice.<sup>36</sup> According to this theory, ethnic politics is mostly about manipulating people's emotions, and symbols provide the tool for such manipulation. As anthropologist Zdzislaw Mach aptly sums it up, in politics, "symbols are . . . selected and combined so as to achieve a desired state of people's minds; to appeal to values, to refer to ideas, to stir emotions and to stimulate action."<sup>37</sup> In other words, politicians manipulate symbols--wave flags, refer to heroes, invoke myths--to induce people to make choices based on the values they are promoting. Thus politicians supporting a war evoke symbols of the nation's glorious past and refer to the foreign threat, while those opposing it try to evoke sympathy for the inevitable casualties on both sides and refer to the moral evils of war.

Symbols are so potent because they have both cognitive effects--they frame an issue--and emotional effects as well. Thus when abortion opponents use the imperilled fetus as the symbol of the issue, they are both framing the issue as one of the life of the fetus, and trying to elicit sympathy for what they consider an innocent and vulnerable baby. Ethnicity is a rich resource for politicians engaged in symbolic politics because it is so emotionally laden. Ethnic groups by definition have a shared history--and therefore historical heroes--which can be evoked, a belief in shared descent which allows claims of kinship; most have flags or other graphic symbols, and so on. Furthermore, the threatened ethnic symbol can be used to tap a number of values and

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<sup>33</sup> Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000).

<sup>34</sup> The best account of Milosevic's rise to power probably remains Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin, 1997), chs. 1-2.

<sup>35</sup> In Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*, ch. 2.

<sup>36</sup> The most prominent such theory is Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action*. Cf. David O. Sears, Carl P. Hensler, and Leslie K. Speer, "Whites' Opposition to "Busing": Self-Interest or Symbolic Politics?," *American Political Science Review* vol. 43, no. 2 (June 1979), pp. 369-384; and David O. Sears, Leonie Huddie, and Lynita Schaffer, "A Schematic Variant of Symbolic Politics Theory as Applied to Racial and Gender Equality," in Richard R. Lau and David O. Sears, eds., *Political Cognition, the 19th Annual Carnegie Symposium on Cognition* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1986), pp. 159-202.

<sup>37</sup> Zdzislaw Mach, *Symbols, Conflict, and Identity: Essays in Political Anthropology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), p. 37.

emotions simultaneously: it evokes fellow-feeling among those in the in-group, shared feelings of threat toward the out-group, feelings of superiority over the out-group, and a perception of interests at stake. According to Murray Edelman's classic *Politics as Symbolic Action*, this is the basic function of political symbols: to create around conflicts of interest a myth of struggle against "hostile, alien, or subhuman forces" as a way to mobilize support.<sup>38</sup>

If the symbolic politics theory does explain ethnic violence, then understanding whether people will engage in it requires that we look both at their fears and at their assumptions--the myths and prejudices which determine which symbols are likely to move them, and how they define their interests. Thus the 1988 Sumgait riots by Azerbaijanis against Armenians were framed by stories which played upon all of the standard Azerbaijani stereotypes, prejudices and fears about Armenians, as well as Azerbaijanis' myths about themselves. Armenian agitation for the transfer of Karabakh was portrayed against the stereotype of Armenians as troublemakers. Additionally, Azerbaijani identity was framed largely by Azeris' connection to the land, so Armenian demands for that land threatened not just Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, but the basis of Azerbaijani identity; while the stereotype of Armenians as well-connected with the powerful raised fears that the Armenians might get what they want--and destroy Azerbaijani identity. Furthermore, official reports of Armenian violence against Azerbaijanis, amplified by street orators' more lurid, if unsubstantiated, charges of widespread atrocities, reminded Azerbaijanis of the history of previous waves of Armenian-Azerbaijani violence in 1918-20 and in the 1940s--including an earlier wave of ethnic cleansing in Armenia whose victims had settled in Sumgait--sparking calls for revenge that the city authorities either could not or would not oppose.<sup>39</sup>

The central dynamic of the symbolic politics of ethnic war is this relationship between ethnic myths and prejudices, symbols, and fears. When pre-existing ethnic myths make it easy for politicians to arouse hostile attitudes against other ethnic groups, they can create the predatory political agendas that cause security dilemma spirals and ethnic war. In short, not just fear but hostility is necessary to drive people to fight ethnic wars. Resolving ethnic war, therefore, requires addressing not only the fear, but also the hostility.

### ***Hostile attitudes as a barrier to ethnic conflict resolution***

If this theory is correct, then hostile attitudes among ethnic groups should be a key barrier to the resolution of ethnic war. Furthermore, it supports Kaufmann's argument that the conduct of ethnic war should further harden these attitudes. If widely accepted myths and stereotypes motivate group members to support predatory political goals--typically, dominance of their own ethnic group over others--then the experience of ethnic war should strengthen their commitment to such goals. Massacres suffered and battles fought--whether won or lost--provide new myths and symbols to be used in furthering the demonization of the enemy that justifies the continuation of fighting. Indeed, and more to the point, those experiences so change public

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<sup>38</sup> Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action*, p. 19 and *passim*.

<sup>39</sup> The Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict, including both sides' ethnic mythology, is detailed in Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*, chapter 3.

opinion that the idea of a compromise peace loses all credibility, and those who propose it are widely denounced as cowards or traitors. Clausewitz also noted this tendency for the justifications for war to outrun its original political logic; and as a number of historians have argued, this goes far to explain why World War I continued as long and fruitlessly as it did.<sup>40</sup>

Popular opposition to compromise is also quite obviously the critical barrier to resolution of many of the more severe contemporary ethnic conflicts. In Sri Lanka, even the man who introduced chauvinist Sinhalese nationalism into Sri Lankan politics, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, found himself unable to control the emotions he had unleashed: in 1959, three years after winning election on a chauvinist platform, he was assassinated by an extreme nationalist Buddhist monk for trying to compromise with the country's Tamil minority. The emotions of Sinhalese nationalism—and the temptation of opposition politicians to exploit it—have bedevilled attempts to resolve Sri Lanka's ethnic violence ever since.

A more recent example is the case of Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosian, also a nationalist hero for his people as the man who led his country to independence in the early 1990s. Nationalist credentials notwithstanding, however, when Ter-Petrosian endorsed in 1998 an international proposal for resolution of the Nagorno (or Mountainous) Karabakh conflict involving Armenians and Azerbaijanis, he was quickly ousted and replaced Robert Kocharian, the hard-line former leader of Mountainous Karabakh. Ironically, Kocharian quickly recognized Armenia's desperate need for a resolution of the conflict, so in 1999 he began a series of one-on-one meetings with Azerbaijani leader Heidar Aliyev in an attempt to find a resolution. However, because Kocharian's political base was in Mountainous Karabakh rather than Armenia proper, he had to rely for political cover on the support of his premier, war hero and former Defense Minister Vazgen Sarkisian. When Sarkisian was assassinated in October 1999 by a group of political extremists protesting corruption in Armenia, Kocharian found himself too weak politically to pursue the opportunity, and no agreement was reached.

The Arab-Israeli peace process has been slowed by the same dynamic. Journalists routinely report that most Palestinians see peace with Israel as at best only an interlude before destroying it. Palestinian teenagers flock to summer camps in which they are taught terrorist techniques. And hard-line Israelis mirror the Arab adversaries by proclaiming that no peace is possible and compromise is betrayal—sentiments strong enough to have unhinged Prime Minister Ehud Barak's coalition in the runup to the 2000 Camp David negotiations with the Palestinians. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, for his part, reportedly asked President Clinton, when pressed at Camp David to make concessions on Jerusalem: "Do you want to go to my funeral?" Both leaders are severely constrained, if not stymied in their efforts, by hard-line public opinion.

To be sure, this hard-line public opinion in all three conflicts is sustained in large part by organizations. In Sri Lanka, a coalition of radical Buddhist monks and lay leaders has repeatedly played a critical role in undermining Sinhalese efforts toward peace, while the radical Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have routinely assassinated moderate politicians on their side. In the

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<sup>40</sup> See, e.g., Gordon A. Craig, "The Political Leader as Strategist," in Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 481-509; and Michael Geyer, "German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945," in *ibid.*, pp. 527-597.

Karabakh conflict, most Azerbaijani opposition parties subsist on, and feed, extremist attitudes toward Armenians, while the Yerkrpah union of veterans—the late Premier Sarkisian’s old power base—helps anchor hard-line sentiments among Armenians, along with emigre Armenian groups. And in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Palestinian hard-liners are sustained by the Islamist Palestinian group Hamas, hard-line PLO factions, and support from hard-line Arab regimes elsewhere, while Israeli extremists find support in the opposition Likud party, some parts of the Orthodox religious establishment, and hard-line organizations in the diaspora, especially in the United States. This social and organizational component of the problem does not, however, mean that the attitudinal dimension is unimportant; it just means that attitudes are harder to change because of the social context.

### ***Conflict resolution for ethnic war***

None of the foregoing should be taken to imply that the attitudinal barrier to conflict resolution renders the standard array of conflict resolution and mediation techniques inapplicable. On the contrary, precisely because of the attitudinal barrier, mediators are often indispensable.<sup>41</sup> They may provide the only useful channel for communication between the parties, or be the indispensable initiators of a negotiating process. Once negotiations get underway, they can be invaluable as a source of neutral suggestions of formulas for power-sharing or autonomy, or of confidence-building measures. Their ability to offer economic reconstruction packages or other aid may be irreplaceable in providing tangible incentives for peace; and their ability to threaten the sides with withdrawal of benefits, or even with some sort of coercion, may be critical in persuading the sides that continuing the conflict would be unacceptable. Finally, they can offer peacekeepers or observers to help maintain cease-fires and verify implementation of any agreement, helping to overcome the structural problems of mistrust so emphasized by structural analysts of conflict resolution.

As noted above, however, it is also necessary to alter the political processes inside each group that feed the conflict—the prejudices, the flag-waving extremist leaders, violent propaganda, and of course the terrorism and political violence. These are the rocks on which diplomatic efforts so often founder, and diplomacy cannot remove or avoid them. Leaders who take steps toward compromise are charged by opponents with selling out, while the public is reminded of the other side’s atrocities and perfidies (real or alleged), and the media resonate to the emotional charges. Sri Lanka’s leaders were repeatedly undercut and ousted by the opposition for compromise attempts, as was Armenia’s President Ter-Petrosian. Arafat, of course, fears a fate worse than Anwar Sadat’s: not only might he be assassinated, but his death might come before he can deliver to his people the tangible benefits of peace that might justify the sacrifice. Among the many reasons why ethnic wars are more often settled by military victory than by negotiations, this problem is surely one of the chief ones. It also helps explain why, when negotiated settlements are reached, they usually collapse into renewed fighting.<sup>42</sup>

Notably, neither side in the debate about partition addresses this problem. Those who

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<sup>41</sup> A useful listing of mediator roles is in Jacob Bercovitch, “Mediation in International Conflict,” in I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen, eds., *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1997), pp. 137-138.

<sup>42</sup> Licklider, *American Political Science Review*.

argue that partition is not necessary, but third-party security guarantees are, have no answer to the Kosovo dilemma. Kosovo, of course, is merely the archetypal example of this problem, in which even a determined and hefty third-party security force is unable to stop not only continued violence, but continued ethnic cleansing, of minority Serbs by vengeful Kosovo Albanians. Kaufmann, on the other hand, has little to offer in the Israeli-Palestinian or Mountainous Karabakh conflicts, in which all sides agree that some form of partition (as Kaufmann expansively defines the term) is necessary, but in which they disagree bitterly and violently about what the terms of such partition must be. In both types of cases, the barrier to conflict resolution is less the absence of a reasonable formula than the absence of the will for reconciliation.

Thinking sensibly about the partition debate therefore requires considering three separate issues. First, are the sides willing to accept a compromise peace settlement? If both sides retain the ability to fight, and at least one remains determined to do so, fighting will continue, as illustrated by the unfortunate cases of Angola and Sudan. Second, if they do want some sort of compromise, do they prefer power-sharing or partition? In some cases, ethnic partition is neither feasible nor desirable as a solution to ethnic war, while some sort of power-sharing is: Malaysia and South Africa spring to mind as examples. When the problems are mixed, the problem is, of course, worse: in Burundi, for example, violence continues because significant armed groups remain resistant to compromise, and of course the history of the country provides ample grounds for pessimism that any power-sharing solution could long remain stable. Nevertheless, partition remains off the table because no one considers the idea legitimate: neither Hutus or Tutsis have an ethnic homeland in which they could possibly be concentrated, and for that reason neither side considers the idea acceptable.

This point brings up the third question: can partition simply be imposed by force, and remain a stable solution—i.e., one that does not spark continued wars? The cases in which it does, such as Cyprus since 1975 or Karabakh since 1994, are cases in which the separatist side has overwhelming military superiority over the side that does not want partition. When that military superiority vanishes, as it did for the Croatian Serbs after 1991, it is likely that the government side will resort again to arms, as Croatia did in 1995.

Kaufmann might insist here that Croatia's temporary partition of 1992 at least stopped the fighting for a few years, and its expulsion of the Serbs in 1995 merely redrew the borders of the broader partition of Yugoslavia between Croats and Serbs, settling the political issues more or less permanently. He has not one but two good points here. First is the simple observation that temporarily stopping the fighting is better than not stopping it at all, and in some cases, like Cyprus, that temporary halt can last for decades. Second, his argument for partition is that ethnic war makes communities so strongly mutually hostile that violence is virtually certain to continue as long as they remain intermixed. The experience of Kosovo in the year since NATO's campaign there show that, at least in some cases, Kaufmann is correct. Common sense indicates that as long as the violence continues, the hostile attitudes that drive the conflict are unlikely to soften. As will be discussed below, this point leads to the interesting possibility that partition might be a useful, or even necessary, *temporary* solution to ethnic war which might help, in the long run, to achieve the liberal goal of re-integration of the communities in conflict.

Still, the key variable determining whether a solution can remain stable is in most cases whether the parties to the conflict want it to—i.e., whether they are reconciled or remain hostile. The question of conflict resolution, whether by partition or by power-sharing, then becomes how to promote reconciliation.

### ***Peace-building as the missing ingredient***

There is, of course, a reason why mediators do little to promote reconciliation: it means changing the internal political dynamics that keep ethnic conflicts going and prevent reconciliation. Should mediators try to do this, their attempts would be rejected by the parties as unwelcome interference in their internal affairs. Mediators focused on the here-and-now of delicate negotiations or prenegotiations are loathe to endanger their relations with the parties by protesting outbursts of violent rhetoric from regional leaders, or by getting tangled in disputes about biased school curricula or hard-line dominance of regional media. Instead, mediators are typically assured by the parties that the hard-line rhetoric is intended for domestic consumption only, to protect the leaders' right flanks; and the mediators, mollified, go on with their work. Indeed, the chances are high that one or both parties would pull back from participation in the peace process in reaction to efforts to moderate their rhetoric, so mediators choose not to take the risk.

The trouble is that ignoring such expressions of the conflict is shortsighted at best, and at worst counterproductive. As long as leaders find it necessary to stay in power through appeals to chauvinist public opinion, they will be unable to persuade their constituents to transcend chauvinist thinking and accept a compromise. School curricula aimed at dehumanizing the enemy and delegitimizing the enemy's aspirations not only contribute to this dilemma, but ensure that it will continue into succeeding generations.

There is, then, a dilemma. On the one hand, mediators, the representatives of sovereign governments outside those party to the conflict, cannot legitimately intervene so openly in the parties' internal conflict as to restructure their media or rewrite their school curricula. On the other hand, failure to address these problems likely means failure to establish a sustainable peace.

The solution to the dilemma is simple: governments cannot do these things, but they can support the efforts of international governmental organizations (IGOs) or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to do them. A key to promoting breakthroughs in peace negotiations, therefore, is long-term support for NGOs skilled in peace-building activities aimed at conflict transformation. "Peace-building" refers to any activity, whether at the elite, middle-range or grassroots level, aimed at encouraging non-hostile attitudes and building cooperative relationships across communal lines.<sup>43</sup> "Conflict transformation" means full reconciliation, transforming the overall intercommunal relationship to the point that it becomes a primarily cooperative rather than a primarily conflictual one. Conflict transformation is, of course, the ultimate goal; the middle-range purpose of peace-building is to change the regional political dynamics over time to make the political atmosphere friendlier to leaders' efforts to reach an

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<sup>43</sup> These definitions are adapted from the discussion in John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1997).

agreement to resolve the conflict. Such an agreement is, of course, a necessary stage before conflict transformation can be achieved.

Peace-building activities are often dismissed as either naive or ineffective, but it is a mistake to do so. If ethnic hostility and fear, harnessed by political symbols, are what keep ethnic conflicts going, conflict resolution is possible only if those problems are addressed. What peace-builders do is to bring together people from opposing sides of conflict to replace the myths about the other side with better information, and to replace the hostility and fear with enough understanding to make a compromise peace look attractive. Equally importantly, peace-building rebuilds relationships between communities and members of communities, replacing relationships of enmity with cooperative relationships. Such efforts among grass-roots leaders can build a political constituency for the diplomatic peace process so leaders can persuade their people to ratify a compromise settlement, then keep it on track in the implementation stage. At the level of middle-range officials, problem-solving workshops and “training the trainer” programs can work to institutionalize peaceful conflict-resolution processes at local and regional levels. And at the elite level, Track II diplomacy—informal talks between unofficial representatives of both sides—can be helpful in generating creative ideas for mutually acceptable conflict resolution formulas.

*Elite-level peace-building.* In spite of the wide range of tools available to formal mediators, it sometimes turns out that initial stages of pre-negotiation and negotiation are better pursued by unofficial groups—whose efforts can, after all, be disavowed. Track II diplomacy of this sort, typically carried out by elites who have access to top leaders, but are not part of the official leadership, allows for an informal and often more creative exploration of options than formal leaders are willing to risk. They also provide an opportunity for elites to begin building trust across the communal divide. One of the proudest successes of Track II diplomacy is the 1993 Israeli-Palestinian Oslo accords. The process that led to that agreement began as an informal series of discussions between two Israeli academics and some members of the PLO leadership. The participants worked together intensively in meetings facilitated by Norwegian intermediaries, getting to know each other personally and learning enough about the concerns of the other side that they overcame their suspicions and developed mutually acceptable compromise formulas. When official Israeli representatives were added, these discussions evolved into the formal negotiations that yielded the Oslo accord, the foundation of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process of the 1990s.<sup>44</sup> In part because of the success of those efforts, Track II diplomacy is the one type of peace-building to have become accepted as a normal part of modern diplomacy.

*Middle-range peace-building.* Middle-range peace-building efforts come in several types, which have in common the aim of influencing large portions of the society, but through opinion leaders or regional elites rather than through the governmental structure. One relatively well-accepted approach is the problem-solving workshop which gather “opinion leaders” in “informal, week-long meetings of the representatives of parties in protracted, deep-rooted and frequently violent conflicts in an informal, often academic setting that permits the re-analysis of

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<sup>44</sup> Jan Egeland, “The Oslo Accord: Multiparty Facilitation through the Norwegian Channel,” in Crocker et al., eds., *Herding Cats*, pp. 527-546; cf. Lederach, *Building Peace*, p. 32.

their conflict as a shared problem and the generation of some alternative courses of action to continued coercion, together with new options for a generally acceptable and self-sustaining resolution”.<sup>45</sup> The purpose of such efforts is less to settle the conflict, or even to generate ideas for a resolution (as in Track II diplomacy), but rather to help the participants begin to rethink their attitudes toward the conflict.

Joseph Montville has found that if such meetings begin with the participants’ sharing of their personal experiences of conflict, it helps humanize each side for the other by attaching a human face to the previously anonymous—and easy to ignore—suffering of the adversary.<sup>46</sup> While international relations scholars are often inclined to dismiss such efforts and tactics as soft-headed mushiness or psychobabble, the fact is that they sometimes work, where few other efforts can. The reasons are easy to understand. Psychologists have found that emotionally-based attitudes are hard to change except through emotional appeals.<sup>47</sup> So to the extent that ethnic hostility is emotionally based, founded in the powerful emotions caused when people become victims of violence, only emotional appeals that allow reinterpretation of those experiences are likely to result in changes in the hostile attitudes.

There is plenty of evidence that such issues do matter. Discussion of the 1915 Armenian genocide is a highly sensitive international issue, for example, because the Turkish government refuses to accept that its Ottoman predecessor was responsible for the genocide, fearing that acknowledgment of it might delegitimize its claim to the Armenians’ former territories, which not incidentally are now in large part inhabited by Kurds (who also participated in the genocide). The Armenian government, for its part, cannot avoid discussion of the issue, as the genocide was the defining trauma of the Armenian people in the twentieth century—and Turkish refusal to acknowledge it raises Armenian fears that it might be repeated, perhaps this time by the Turks’ ethnic kin, the Azerbaijanis.

On the other hand, to take a different example, Anwar Sadat’s willingness to acknowledge the Israelis’ and the Jews’ past suffering, and to grant some legitimacy to their aspirations, made possible a radical change in Israeli attitudes toward Egypt. Even the simplest acts, such as his willingness to shake hands with Israelis greeting him when he first arrived in Jerusalem, played an important role, ending a decades-long Arab policy of refusing to shake hands with Israelis.

Such transformations are necessary at the individual level, and are indeed nearly routine in well-designed peace-building programs. It is easy, for example, for hard-line pro-Israeli groups to argue that Jerusalem is not “really” as important to Palestinians as it is to Jews; it is

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<sup>45</sup> Christopher Mitchell, quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>46</sup> Andrew S. Natsios, “An NGO Perspective,” in I. William Zartman and J. Lewis Rasmussen, eds., *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1997), p. 353.

<sup>47</sup> Kari Edwards, “The Interplay of Affect and Cognition in Attitude Formation and Change,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 59:2 (1990), pp. 202-216; and Kari Edwards and William von Hippel, “Hearts and Minds: The Priority of Affective Versus Cognitive Factors in Person Perception,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 21:10 (October 1995), pp. 996-1011.

much harder to maintain that denial when face to face with individual Palestinians who passionately insist on their attachment to the holy sites there. Similarly, it is easy in the abstract for any conflict participant to argue, “my side suffered more”; but when face to face with someone from the other side saying, “my cousin was killed” or “my sister was raped,” it is impossible not to acknowledge that the other side suffered too. Such acknowledgment is often the first step toward reconceptualizing a conflict as a shared problem demanding a shared solution.

One reason conflict analysts often shy away from acknowledging the importance of these issues, even deeper than the disinclination to retreat from rationalist analysis to political psychology, is the religious and spiritual implication of these issues. Yet the spiritual dimension, too, must be frankly examined. As John Paul Lederach points out, what is required for conflict resolution is first reconciliation on a spiritual level, in which the need to have hard truths acknowledged must lead to mercy or forgiveness—a willingness to accept one’s own losses and move on—and the cry for justice must be squared with the need for peace, which may demand leaving some criminals unpunished.<sup>48</sup> As Lederach has said elsewhere, “the primary arena of church activity and faith—that of the spiritual, emotional and relational well-being of people—lies at the heart of contemporary conflict . . . [W]here neighbor fears neighbor and blood is shed by each, the emotive, perceptual, social-psychological and spiritual dimensions are core, not peripheral concerns”.<sup>49</sup> In short, churches are in the peace-building business, and can have an important impact, serving a function that is arguably essential. Analysts must recognize those facts.

An example of such impact comes from Mozambique. A program in that country, sponsored by the Christian Council of Mozambique and entitled “Preparing People for Peace,” involved an integrated set of middle-range and grass-roots efforts. It began in 1991 with a five-week seminar for church representatives, focused on Bible-based conflict resolution techniques: the Bible is undeniably a rich source of sentiments on the need for truth, justice, mercy, peace, reconciliation and forgiveness. This phase was a “train the trainers” initiative, as the participants then fanned out into the countryside, back to their own home provinces, for two-week conflict resolution training seminars throughout the country. Overall, some seven hundred people participated in this program, which seems to have contributed to the relatively happy results of Mozambique’s early-1990s peace initiative.<sup>50</sup>

*Grass-roots peace-building.* Grass-roots peace-building also comes in many forms. The simplest to understand comes in the form of ordinary (or not-so-ordinary) public relations and public education efforts. A simple example comes from Burundi, where peace-building NGOs arranged for the broadcast on the radio of appeals for reconciliation at the same time that “hate radio” was spurring genocide against Tutsis in next-door Rwanda; the broadcasts seem to have helped stave off violence, at least for a time. Another public-relations-type effort comes from

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<sup>48</sup> Lederach, *Building peace*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Cynthia Sampson, “Religion and Peacebuilding,” in Zartman and Rasmussen, eds., *Peacemaking in International Conflict*, p. 275.

<sup>50</sup> Sampson, “Religion and Peacebuilding,” p. 289; and Lederach, *Building Peace*, pp. 53-54.

Mozambique, where a UNICEF-funded “Circus of Peace” toured the country, using drama and arts to explore the challenges of war, conflict, and reconciliation, serving as a way for the public to grieve over the country’s war losses, to position it to implement the peace that followed. More remarkably, NGOs in Bosnia and Burundi have also worked to create national processes for writing a national history acceptable to all groups, to replace the biased curricula that had previously promoted chauvinist attitudes.<sup>51</sup>

In situations in which the perpetrators of crimes or atrocities cannot always be punished, victims still feel a need at least for the truth about their suffering to be acknowledged. Truth commissions can serve this function for the grass roots, discovering and publishing the truth about such events so the psychological wounds can heal. Such commissions have been widely used, most prominently in South Africa, but also in Nicaragua and other African conflicts as well.

Another, unique and remarkable peace-building initiative is the “Seeds of Peace” program.<sup>52</sup> This program brings together Israeli and Arab teenagers (mostly Palestinians, including stone-throwing *intifadah* participants), for a three-week summer camp program in Maine. Exposed for the first time to the humanity of the “enemy”, participants share their tragic experiences, argue about their beliefs, but also learn to cooperate, often in such simple ways as playing together on ethnically mixed soccer teams. What the organizers find is that time and again is that after heated arguments and initial resistance, most participants come to an increased mutual understanding, with many keeping in touch after they return home, to try to promote efforts for peace.

### ***Obstacles to Effective Peace-Building***

While it is clear from these examples that peace-building can change attitudes, there is much that is not yet known about the effectiveness of peace-building efforts, and much that is known about its real and potential limits. One important constraint is the need for a deep understanding of the relevant cultures, and in particular of regional norms of conflict management. John Paul Lederach, a highly experienced leader of conflict resolution training programs tells a story of one training exercise in Guatemala, a role-playing exercise in which Lederach took an example of an actual family conflict from the region and had participants act out a suggested way of managing and resolving the dispute. The first reaction from the audience was a man who stood up and said to the role-players, “You two looked like *gringos!*”. Lederach realized that conflict resolution model he had been teaching was simply not compatible with Central American—in this case, Guatemalan—cultural norms.<sup>53</sup> Thus one of the most difficult tricks for peace-builders is to work with regional actors to develop peace-building programs in which the parties learn to improve their own conflict management skills, rather than being taught inapplicable Western norms.

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<sup>51</sup> Natsios, “An NGO Perspective,” pp. 353-359; Lederach, *Building Peace*, p. 54.

<sup>52</sup> John Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face: The Seeds of Peace Experience* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 2000).

<sup>53</sup> John Paul Lederach, *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1995), pp. 37-38.

Another problem stems directly from the nature of the organizations carrying out peace-building efforts, mostly NGOs. Because NGOs are numerous and typically small, there are frequently very many NGOs operating simultaneously in a single conflict area; but because they are often highly jealous of their autonomy, they tend to resist efforts to make them coordinate their efforts. The result is often wasteful duplication: one study found, for example, that the large number of peace-building efforts aimed at promoting reconciliation between Georgia and its separatist Abkhazia region in the late 1990s were almost all focused at the middle-range level, mostly involving the same cast of characters from local NGOs. As a result, local (Georgian and Abkhazian) NGO officials exhausted themselves each summer participating in repeated rounds of discussions of the same issues, while few efforts were made to extend the benefits of these efforts to the grass-roots level or to the elite Track II level.<sup>54</sup> in the Conflicts over Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transdnistria,” Ph.D. Dissertation, George Mason University, 1999. Worse, efforts might even end up undercutting each other, as has happened among relief NGOs, in which one NGO conditions aid on certain kinds of local cooperation, while another one offers unconditional aid in the same region.<sup>55</sup>

A third limitation is the so-called “re-entry problem”: when participants in peace-building workshops return to their polarized societies, they find few people receptive to hearing their new insights.<sup>56</sup> Emotionally-driven changes of heart are difficult to pass along. As a result, participants in such events often face strong social pressure to renounce their new views. Some participants even do so pre-emptively, announcing after their return that they had participated in a meeting with the other side merely to defend their group’s point of view.

The re-entry problem can be seen, in part, as indicating that peace-building as currently implemented occurs on too small a scale. If more people participated in such efforts, they could create a network or organization that reflected and validated their experience, so they could, if they chose, band together to resist pressure to renounce their moderate views. The “Seeds of Peace” program, which has by now had hundreds of participants, has in fact had this effect, as alumni have sometimes banded together to try to promote peaceful reconciliation, with the Internet providing a powerful tool for them to stay in touch.<sup>57</sup> More typically, however, peace-building or problem-solving workshops are one-time events involving only a dozen participants, or a score at most, so participants return to social isolation. But making these events occur frequently enough that they could have a larger social effect would lead to another problem: the limited-capacity NGOs that carry out these programs would have to grow in proportion to the larger efforts. The trouble is that what makes these NGOs work is the personal dedication of the people who work with them; expanding them would require large resources and would result in a

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<sup>54</sup> Susan Allen Nan, “Complementarity and Coordination of Conflict Resolution Efforts

<sup>55</sup> Natsios, “An NGO Perspective,” pp. 344-345.

<sup>56</sup> See Stephen Ryan, *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations* (Aldershot, England: Dartmouth Publishing Co., 1990), p. 83

<sup>57</sup> Wallach, *The Enemy Has a Face*, pp. 105-106.

commercialization of the process that might well undermine its effectiveness.<sup>58</sup>

A final problem of peace-building is that it is difficult to carry out peace-building projects while fighting is underway, and even more difficult for the projects to have much positive effect under those circumstances. Psychological analyses of conflict resolution agree with Kaufmann that violence is a key cause of hostile attitudes, and indeed one formulation has it that establishing safety, and a sense of safety, is the first necessary step toward reconciliation or “psychosocial recovery”.<sup>59</sup> In short, the violence has to stop, and a durable cease-fire established, before peace-building is likely to be effective. The most effective known examples of peace-building appear to be in places such as Mozambique, where they are carried out as part of the implementation phase of a settlement that has already been reached. The most promising locations for new efforts would be places where there are durable cease-fires, but where reconciliation remains far off: cases such as Cyprus, Bosnia, or Mountainous Karabakh.

Bosnia provides a good example: it can be argued that the partition-based settlement there was the prerequisite for post-conflict efforts to return refugees driven out by ethnic cleansing campaigns. Today, there are numerous efforts underway to promote ethnic re-integration in Bosnia.<sup>60</sup> Temporary partition, therefore, may in some cases be a necessary precondition for later ethnic re-integration. It is likely that Kosovo also fits this profile: a *de facto* partition of Kosovo by creation of a haven for Kosovo Serbs in one region of the province (e.g., in a Russian peacekeeping zone) would be a way to end the continuing violence there, establishing the preconditions for efforts at peace-building and ethnic reconciliation that would, in the end, permit Serbs to return.

### ***Harnessing the Potential of Peace-Building***

Because of these problems, peace-building often seems ineffective. To some degree, this is true because careful evaluation of peace-building efforts are quite rare, so discussion of such efforts is often marginalized in the debate (“No good data on this”). However, because peace-building efforts now typically operate on too small a scale, with too little coordination, and often in conditions not conducive to their success, no evaluation of current practices would be likely to do more than hint at peace-building’s potential as a conflict resolution tool. Seeds of Peace, one of the few exceptions to most of these limitations, is aimed at teenagers rather than opinion leaders, so it, too, cannot have a measurable influence on the conflict. To be given a truly fair trial, peace-building efforts would have to be carried out on a much larger scale, and as part of an overall conflict resolution strategy.

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<sup>58</sup> I am indebted to Jim Richter for pointing out this obstacle.

<sup>59</sup> Kimberly A. Maynard, “Rebuilding Community: Psychosocial healing, reintegration and reconciliation at the grassroots level,” in Krishna Kumar, ed., *Rebuilding Societies after Civil War: Critical Roles for International Assistance* (Boulder: Lynne Reiner, 1997), p. 210.

<sup>60</sup> See Nenad Dimitrijevic, ed., *Managing Multiethnic Local Communities in the Countries of the Former Yugoslavia* (Budapest: Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative, Open Society Institute, 2000), Part II.

Such an approach might involve the following:

1. The international community would fund larger, coordinated sets of peace-building efforts for resolving high-priority conflicts. A few million dollars per conflict per year would substantially increase the scale of current peace-building programs, allowing them to reach larger audiences and achieve a significant impact. A single funding source could ensure that the efforts of the notoriously independent-minded NGOs were coordinating simply by directing funding to those programs that best contribute to an overall vision.
2. These coordinated peace-building programs would be made an important part of the overall conflict resolution strategy, and linked to mediation efforts. A key role peace-building can play is to prepare the ground for peace among the populations at the grass-roots level *before* true negotiations begin, as well as while negotiations are ongoing and in the implementation stage after a settlement is reached.
3. Diplomatic support for peacemaking efforts, including mediation, would be made contingent on the parties' cooperation with peace-building efforts. Parties would have to agree to facilitate unofficial problem-solving workshops and conflict-resolution training programs and other peace-building activities.

To make these efforts work, governments and NGOs would have to form a partnership in the peacemaking area similar to the growing government-NGO partnership in delivering humanitarian assistance. A first step, as noted above, is to secure support from the groups or governments in conflict, through diplomatic approaches explaining how peace-building will help incumbent leaders by building support for their peacemaking. Since participation in peace-building dialogues essentially involves a free visit to a resort (where conflict issues are discussed), leaders might offer participation as a perquisite to lower-level officials who support their peace policy. Such officials are an appropriate target of peace-building efforts, and offering the perk would give them an incentive to be vocal in support of peace. Funding of a U.S. initiative might best be handled through autonomous groups such as the U.S. Institute of Peace or the National Democratic Institute, which are skilled at identifying and monitoring NGOs on the ground who can carry out such work. A multilateral initiative might be coordinated through a relevant regional IGO, such as OSCE for conflicts like Bosnia and Karabakh that are in the OSCE area.

Most peace-building efforts, however, change attitudes only at the individual level; such changes must also be leveraged to alter the overall climate of opinion. Mediators need to emphasize the importance of conciliatory rhetoric from governments engaged in negotiations. Indeed, leaders of the parties should be held to strict accountability for their domestic rhetoric, warned that unnecessarily harsh statements made to internal audiences might be grounds for suspension of diplomatic efforts and other forms of assistance. While seemingly counterproductive, this is necessary: leaders must develop alternative tools for gathering support other than extreme nationalist appeals. That is, they must develop a language for talking publicly about peace and reconciliation that resonates emotionally with their followers, to enable them to counter emotional nationalist appeals. Obviously, pressure in this direction must be sensitive to cultural peculiarities: the point is to promote a discourse that the parties themselves

see as conciliatory, not necessarily the rhetoric that the mediators themselves would prefer. Peace-building tools such as truth commissions can help promote the right public mood by countering false charges with accurate facts, while helping the parties work together to create a language of reconciliation that works for them.

Relatedly, leaders must be convinced of the need to turn their media into promoters of peace before an agreement is reached. A first step would be to fund the creation of television programming featuring peace-building efforts, and intervening diplomatically to gain access for such programs on local government-sponsored broadcasts. Fund could also be provided for other documentary and dramatic films (for TV and cinema) that promote reconciliation and humanize the “other”. It would also help to fund and publish studies detailing the economic costs to both sides of continued conflict, and the likely economic benefits of a peace agreement—including the offer of funding for reconstruction in case the conflict is resolved.

Another set of policies should be aimed at recasting ethno-nationalist myths into cooperative and tolerant ones, especially by promoting the writing and teaching of fair-minded history instead of the ethnocentric and scapegoating kind. Again, this may seem unnecessarily intrusive but it is necessary. If children are taught in school that their group’s demands are unquestionably justified, and that opposing claims are threatening and unjustified, then it becomes impossible later for national leaders to defend a settlement of the conflict based on compromise. NGOs, possibly in cooperation with international governmental organizations such as OSCE or the OAU, can be used in this role. In at least two cases, this has been done: peace builder Joseph Montville has helped organize national processes for writing a common, non-discriminatory history in both Bosnia and Burundi.<sup>61</sup>

Furthermore, governments and international organizations must routinely assess school curricula, and criticize and pressure countries that teach hostile myths to their schoolchildren. This should be made an ordinary part of diplomatic discourse, as discussions of human rights records have now become. For example, histories that obscure the past crimes of one’s own group—including Turkey’s refusal to acknowledge the 1915 Armenian genocide—should be condemned as incompatible with normal participation in the international community. (The shameful international refusal to use the word “genocide”, in deference to Turkish sensibilities, should be ended in the name both of truth and that acknowledgment’s status as a precondition for Armenian-Turkish and Armenian-Azerbaijani reconciliation.) Similarly, novels and poems that encourage ethnic hostility should be removed from schools’ literature curricula. In Europe, the OSCE could usefully take on this job, institutionalizing a process of evaluating the national histories and literatures appearing on school curricula. International academic conferences aimed at assessing the historical literatures in both countries, including academic writings and history and literature texts used in schools, could also play an important role.

Among the more routine peace-building efforts should be establishment of grass-roots dialogue groups aimed at constituencies that oppose conflict resolution but that might be responsive to the right kind of peace-building appeal. Veterans’ groups, for example, are often vocal opponents of peace processes (as they are in Armenia); engaging them in dialogues with

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<sup>61</sup> Natsios, “An NGO Perspective,” p. 359.

their Azerbaijani counterparts, while risky, might in a well-designed program begin to chip away at their hostility to peace talks. Additionally, capacity-building efforts should be funded, aimed at helping the network of pro-peace NGOs in the region to expand.

Many of these tasks are, to be sure, long-term ones that would take decades fully to bear fruit. That is as it should be. Conflict resolution is not only about reaching agreements, but about reaching agreements that can hold permanently. No one should consider satisfactory the 1972 settlement in Sudan that came undone a decade later. The job of peace-building is to create an atmosphere in which a settlement can be reached, and be sustained once reached. In ethnic conflicts, characterized as they are by deep fear and hatred, the job realistically takes decades to be completed. Though its effectiveness is not yet fully known, peace-building is the only tool that can even undertake that job.