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Introduction: The Ethnic Nationalist Dimension in International Relations

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INTRODUCTION

This volume of the Journal of Political Science is the sixth issue in a series of special collections of original essays. The focus this time emphasizes the theme of the "Ethnic-nationalist Dimension of International Relations." The contents include seven essays that are really case studies of how an increasingly manifest and critical version of nationalism impacts on international politics. We believe that these studies reveal one of the more predominant characteristics of the post Cold War era.

The first essay, authored by Professor Bernard Schechterman, provides a necessary and quite eloquent introduction into the literature of the relationship between ethno-nationalism and international relations. The literature (or occasional lack of it) is revealing (and is traced as far back as the 1930s). Professor Schechterman's analysis leads to the necessary conclusion that we are viewing, with the possible dissolution of the Soviet Union and perhaps of China as well, a historical trend that is already generations old and is unmistakably a process of state multiplication and consequent conflict that is still on-going. The implications for the study and analysis of international relations are profound.

For a long time it has been convenient to categorize the globe's countries into First, Second, and Third Worlds with a total of 171 (more or less) sovereign states. Professor Bernard Nietschmann has provided a lucid and sophisticated supplement to this impression. He posits, for example, that there are actually 5000 Fourth World nations on the planet. The denial of nearly 97 percent of non-state claims to territory or nationality is responsible for three fourths of the world's 110 contemporary wars. The Miskito nation, located in but culturally distinct from Nicaragua, is an excellent case in point.

The internationalization of the entire planet has not exempted even so remote a country as Tibet, as Professor June

Teufel Dreyer suggests. Even though Tibetans preferred their isolation and wished to continue it they could not remain uninfluenced by their larger and more aggressive neighbors in the nineteenth century: Russia, China, and the Britain's Indian empire. China's occupation of Tibet since 1959 is actually the consequence of Chinese nationalism. Indeed, the Tibetan tragedy is the result of conflicting nationalisms since China claims Tibet as a long lost province. Professor Dreyer legitimately suspects that the sense of nationalism is so strong that even if China finally democratized Tibet would not be assured of regaining its sovereignty.

One of the classic dramas of stateless nations is, of course, the Palestinian community. Professors Yossi Shain and Reuben Aharoni explain how the Palestinians have been more successful than most stateless nations in drawing international attention to their cause and securing an important political role in world affairs. Their role and influence are practically undiminished even though the Palestine Liberation Organization supported the cause of Iraq in the Persian Gulf crisis. Can either the PLO or the Palestinian cause survive their association with Saddam Hussein? The authors believe they can do more than survive: the "Arab consciousness" and the cause of Arab unity will not allow Arab governments to either completely or permanently withdraw their support.

It has long been accepted that the Soviet Union is really the last great colonial empire in the world. It is also accepted that the Soviet empire is in decline. Professor Bradford R. McGuinn explores the characteristics of decline by emphasizing the situation in Azerbaijan, one of the Soviet Union's Islamic republics. Ironically, Azerbaijan is not a mono-nationalist society. As Mr. McGuinn carefully points out, Azerbaijani society contains not only nationalist urges but "particularist" ones as well. The secessionist possibilities in the Soviet Union, even if realized, will not resolve the problem of competing nationalisms. If anything, as this essay informs us, the problem will become more intense.

The earth simply does not have enough land for all distinct national communities to create countries for themselves. Professor Lynn Berat, in a lucid analysis of South Africa, makes this point very clearly. At the same time, common needs can make it possible for otherwise diverse communities to unite in the face of a common enemy. South African nonwhites are divided into Asians, Coloureds, and Africans. The latter are further subdivided into ten different groups. Nevertheless, Professor Berat sees the struggle in South Africa as one basically between whites and nonwhites and in the context of competing ethnonationalisms

with the system of apartheid beginning to break down in great part because of international pressures. Professor Berat provides more than an analysis: her essay includes an intelligent suggestion of a South African bill of rights that will harmonize the disagreements on issues of economic and minority rights, certainly a multinational approach.

One of the most current and potentially violent displays of ethnonationalism is, of course, the very real separatist expressions of the Baltic states in the Soviet Union. Professor Luba Racanska emphasizes the Baltics by noting the complication that the United States never recognized the annexation of the three republics by the Soviet Union in 1940. In the case of the Soviet Union ethnonationalism has even greater import than usual: the unprecedented disintegration of a superpower is coming at a time when the United States wants to continue support for perestroika while promoting democracy. The two may be incompatible.

The Middle East is noted for its political instability. In great part this is because national boundaries often ignore burgeoning nationalisms. At the same time, as Professor Charles G. MacDonald points out, the nationalist aspirations of religious and/or ethnic communities immediately confront the interests of their host states. While these states may have little respect for one another's political agendas they are not interested in complicating their goals by catering to separatist movements within their own countries. Further complication results when transnational religious movements appeal to sectarian interests across national frontiers.

These eight essays point to the great influence of ethnonationalism on international politics in the 1990s. There is little doubt that the hostility long evident between various communities will continue to accelerate as a definitive characteristic of the cold war era and will probably continue even if the cold war is somehow fully ended. The contributors to this volume correctly and incisively demonstrate the various dimensions of this global phenomenon.