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Hopes that the end of the Cold War world might usher in an era of peace between and within the nations of the world were quickly dashed by new sources of domestic and international tensions. Two stood out: there was a resurgence of ethnic conflict in a number of parts of the world, particularly during the 1990s, while the assault on America on 11 September 2001 underscored the threat that the new menace of mass-casualty terrorism posed to the world. Often blamed for the first of these challenges to a new world order was ethno-nationalism. The phenomenon was commonly associated with the horrors of ethnic cleansing, a term that originated in the Balkans in the early 1990s. This gave ethno-nationalism a bad name and also meant that it tended to be linked with secession and the break-up of states, as well as with political mobilisation leading to war. Ethno-nationalism also tended to be associated with minorities dissatisfied with their place in an existing polity. But, in fact, the phenomenon was much broader than simply providing recourse for rebellious minorities. This volume explores the challenges presented by ethno-nationalism in a wide range of different contexts. While the primary focus of the book is on the post–Cold War context, the analysis in a number of the chapters extends well before this. This is most particularly so in the Irish case, where conflict not merely long predated the end of the Cold War, but where this watershed in world affairs arguably contributed to its resolution.

However, it is difficult to underestimate the importance of the end of the Cold War as an influence on the salience of ethno-nationalism. Practically everywhere in the world, political mobilisation on the basis of class has been on the wane since the end of the Cold War. The collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the demise of the Soviet Union underlined that for the time being at least, the forces of capitalism had
triumphed. The class struggle’s lack of credibility opened the door to other agendas, centred on the environment and on issues of identity, including gender and ethnicity. So prevalent were the latter that the post–Cold War era has been dubbed ‘the age of identity.’1 This volume examines how ethnic political mobilisation played out in a variety of circumstances, though without neglecting cases where it did have violent manifestations or the means by which states and the international community sought to provide constitutional political answers to ethnic conflicts.

Before summarising the arguments put forward in individual chapters, let me briefly discuss the changes in the international political system that placed ethnic conflict at the top of the political agenda in the 1990s and the consequences that flowed from the prominence of the issue. When Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the Soviet Union in March 1985, the Soviet system was in crisis. Among the problems Gorbachev faced were a stagnant economy, a costly intervention in Afghanistan and a serious challenge to Communist rule in Poland from the trade union movement, Solidarity. Gorbachev sought to address these problems through fundamental reform of the Soviet system, but in the process triggered far-reaching changes that brought about the collapse of Communist rule in Eastern Europe in 1989 and ultimately the dissolution of the Soviet Union itself in 1991. Gorbachev hoped to revitalise the Soviet economy through the twin approaches of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness). To create space for his reforms, he also sought from the outset to improve relations with the West. This led to his agreeing in April 1988 to a timetable for the complete withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan by February 1989.

The consequences of the abandonment of Communist orthodoxy within the Soviet Union itself were far-reaching. It led ultimately to permission being granted for the holding of multi-candidate elections in the Soviet Union in March 1989. When this liberalisation of the political system was copied in Eastern Europe it proved sufficient to bring about the rapid collapse of Communist political control. In August 1991, orthodox Communists made a last-ditch attempt to reverse the changes Gorbachev had introduced. The failure of their coup accelerated the collapse of the Communist system, with power shifting from the centre to the republics that made up the Soviet Union. Almost everywhere the ideological vacuum created by the demise of Communism was filled by nationalism. In most cases, the new political forces accepted the existing international boundaries or those bequeathed to them as a result of the break-up of the Soviet Union. But in some, conflict did arise as a consequence of internal communal divisions that were reflected in competing ethno-nationalisms.
Remarkably, the political transformation of a region stretching across a number of time zones was achieved both rapidly and with relatively little violence. Ironically, the main exception to this generalisation was Yugoslavia where, for most of the Cold War, Soviet influence had been weakest. Another region where ethnic differences gave rise to a series of conflicts was the Caucasus. While Communist rule survived in China, Vietnam and Cuba, Communism was no longer credible as a global alternative to capitalism. Further, not only was Communist ideology discredited, but there was also a waning in the influence of socialist ideas more generally. Notions such as class struggle and the promotion of equality achieved through the redistribution of wealth fell into abeyance. Other ideologies came to the fore, not least ethno-nationalism and politicised religion, conveniently if not entirely accurately labelled as religious fundamentalism. In a number of cases, the two occurred in combination. However, generally, religious affiliation tended to be transnational and gave rise to movements that were transnational in their ambitions.

There was no automatic reason why the rise of these ideologies should have resulted in violent political conflict. And, indeed, in many instances, movements espousing these ideologies were accommodated within democratic political systems. But these ideologies did contain the potential for generating violent political conflict, particularly in areas of the world subject to geo-strategic competition. A factor compounding the potential for conflict was the impact of the end of the Cold War on international norms. In the wake of the ending of the bipolar international political system, the interest of the major Western powers in upholding norms such as non-intervention and territorial integrity (particularly the anathema against secession) diminished. The readiness to accept the creation of new states was reflected in an increase in the membership of the United Nations from 159 member states in 1990 to 189 in 2000. Admittedly, there is scope for debate over the direction of causation, so it might be argued that the change in the interpretation of international norms was more a product of the impact of ethno-nationalist movements than a factor that facilitated their success. Or it might reasonably be contended that the two ran in tandem.

While the disintegration of the Soviet Union could be rationalised as the belated dismantling of the Tsarist Empire, no such rationalisation was available in the case of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia had come into existence as the result of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the course of the First World War. The new entity barely survived the Second World War from which it emerged as a Communist state, but unlike most of the states of Eastern Europe, this status was not the outcome of
occupation by Soviet forces. During the Cold War, Yugoslavia had remained a non-aligned state outside the Soviet bloc. Even under Communist rule, ethno-nationalism had been sufficiently powerful to ensure the devolution of considerable power to its six republics under a federal system, though the boundaries among the republics by no means neatly coincided with ethnic divisions.

The fact that the first multi-party elections in Yugoslavia took place within individual republics boosted the forces of secession since it meant that the elected governments of the republics had greater international legitimacy than the country’s federal institutions, boosting the prospect that if secession were proclaimed it would secure international recognition within a relatively short period of time. This set the scene for a violent contest for power in the country among competing ethno-nationalisms compounded by geo-strategic rivalry between the West and Russia. Constraining factors included the fear that events in the Balkans would set a precedent for secessionist movements elsewhere in the world and the spillover effects of the violence, including the flow of refugees from the region. The major Western powers sought to limit the impact of the break-up of Yugoslavia by insisting that this should proceed on the basis of the pre-existing boundaries among the republics to avoid the implication that force could provide an effective and legitimate way of redrawing borders. But this rule was modified so as to permit the secession of Kosovo from Serbia, though in this case the international community remained divided as to whether to accord recognition to a new entity that largely owed its existence to military intervention by NATO forces.

Events in the Balkans in the 1990s propelled ethnic conflict to the top of the international agenda. Further, developments elsewhere in the world, most particularly the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, ensured that it was seen as a global problem and not one that simply arose out of the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, large as that area was. The implications of the break-up of Yugoslavia for the rest of the world were mixed. On the one hand, it gave encouragement to movements seeking secession that success was possible, both in terms of establishing a new state and, just as importantly in the long term, in gaining international recognition. For example, the Kashmiri militants involved in the Kargil incursion in 1999 that threatened to detonate a war between the nuclear weapons states of India and Pakistan pointed to the war over Kosovo in justification of their actions. On the other hand, the bloody events in the Balkans were also a warning to states and regionally based nationalist movements of the very high costs if they failed to reach a political accommodation.
The assault on America on 11 September 2001 changed international priorities and the issue of terrorism displaced that of ethnic conflict as the major concern of most states. It also meant that states were able to portray insurgents as terrorists undeserving of any international support and state authorities benefitted from the reinterpretation of some violent conflicts that had previously been seen in ethnic terms as problems of terrorism. But a complicating factor was the international unpopularity of the Bush Administration’s conduct of the global war against terror. Further, not all states were successful in persuading the outside world to accept their characterisation of their rebels as terrorists, particularly where the actions of the rebels did not spill over international boundaries or could not plausibly be linked to groups such as al Qaeda. And counterbalancing the picture of rebels as terrorists was a developing readiness to condemn state authorities for their violation of human rights, extending to the advocacy of intervention in the most serious cases of states that abused their own citizens. Admittedly, beneath the use of this moralistic language, geo-strategic calculation and rivalry often lurked just below the surface. It is striking that both NATO and Russia contentiously invoked the concept of genocide when justifying interventions in ethnic conflicts in the Balkans and in the Caucasus in 1999 and 2008, respectively.3

This book arose out of a colloquium under the auspices of the International Political Science Association’s research committee on politics and ethnicity held in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in September 2007. That is to say, the chapters in this book, apart from this introductory chapter, had their origins in papers delivered on that occasion, though it should be stressed that they have all been revised and updated for this book, as will be evident from their content. The book is divided into three parts following this introductory chapter. The first comprises six individual case studies from a very wide range of divergent societies. The second part consists of three contrasting, though by no means contradictory, perspectives on the Irish conflict, while the three chapters in the third and final part take a comparative approach.

Individual case studies

In the first of the individual case studies, Ramón Máiz analyses the success of Evo Morales and the ethno-nationalist movement he headed, in the Bolivian presidential elections of December 2005. Latin America is a region of the world that tends to be neglected in studies of ethnic conflict. For example, the region is entirely absent from Stefan Wolff’s
global study of ethnic conflict. A common, but mistaken, assumption by scholars without specialist knowledge of the region is that ethnic divisions are of little or no importance, because they see it as a region dominated by conflict between left and right and by clashes between populist movements that transcend ethnic differences and the military. While the tumultuous politics of Venezuela and the military coup against a populist president in Honduras in 2009 might appear to justify this impression, other developments point to a more complex reality. Through charting the rise of Morales’s indigenous movement in Bolivia, Máiz shows the growing importance of identity politics in the region. In this context, the name of Morales’s party, Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement Towards Socialism) is misleading in suggesting continuity with parties of a previous era. But the name does underline Morales’s inclusive approach, in contrast to the exclusive approach of the party’s indigenous and much less successful rival, Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti (Indigenous Pachakuti Movement), as is demonstrated by Máiz in his detailed analysis of the discourse of the two parties.

The second case study focuses on one of the world’s longest-running and intractable ethnic conflicts. This is the dispute over Cyprus, partitioned since 1974 after Turkey invaded the island to protect the Turkish Cypriot minority. Hopes of an end to what since 1974 has very largely been a bloodless conflict grew with the prospect of the island’s membership of the European Union. In particular, the European framework allayed Turkish Cypriot fears that they would be vulnerable as a minority under any settlement that ended the partition. But the opportunity for a negotiated deal was lost when a large majority of Greek Cypriots voted against the terms of a complex set of proposals that came out of international negotiations on the issue in a referendum. The referendum preceded Cyprus’s admission to the European Union in May 2004, but this was not made dependent on a favourable outcome to the referendum.

There have continued to be talks between representatives of the two communities on possible terms for the reunification of the island since the Greek Cypriot rejection of 2004, but without the urgency that preceded Cyprus’s entry into the European Union. Emel Akçalı uses an innovative, interdisciplinary approach to explore the different mindsets of the two communities. Her fieldwork was conducted in 2005 and 2006. She uses mental maps to bring out people’s emotions, perceptions and values, thus underscoring the psychological dimension of their relationship with the territory. Greek and Turkish Cypriot respondents were asked to draw the country they would like to live in, as well as the
one they hoped to live in. The results show revealing differences not just in how the two communities perceive the territory in which they live but in their aspirations for the future as well.

The third case study examines the role that the notion of empire has played in the political discourse of post–Soviet Russia. Empire tends to be counterposed to nation and imperialism to nationalism, but these concepts are by no means as contradictory as they might appear at first sight. In the first decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the concept of empire was generally applied to the past in Russia. However, it re-emerged in contemporary political discourse as the country’s relations with the West deteriorated, especially after the war against Serbia over Kosovo in 1999. Olga Malinova distinguishes five different meanings of empire in Russian political discourse, ranging from the conception of Russia as a country that is bound to encompass many peoples and ethnic groups to Russia’s right to be a major power exercising influence beyond its borders. She also distinguishes between the use of the term by a cluster of perspectives that she describes as ‘imperial nationalists’ and by liberals.

The link to ethno-nationalism is to be found in the notion propagated by a number of nationalist writers that it is specifically the mission of the Russian people as an ethnic group to dominate the empire, while sustaining its multi-ethnic character through their capacity to bind in other peoples. The territorial ambitions of nationalists vary and at the most extreme there are those who imagine a future in which a new empire would stretch beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union. Some even imagine reviving the nineteenth-century idea that Russian soldiers might one day be able to wash their boots in the Indian Ocean. Of course, such speculation bears no relationship whatever to the realities of power now or in the foreseeable future or, for that matter, to any expectation in the government in Moscow that the reconstitution of the Soviet Union might become possible in any shape or form. The mirror image of Russian ultra-nationalists is to be found among alarmist Western commentators warning that Russia should not be allowed to ‘Finlandise’ Western Europe. For liberals, the key to Russia’s recovery of its international influence is to be found in its becoming a member of the club of democratic world powers. Malinova also shows how the discourse on empire in Russia during the last decade has influenced the thinking of the country’s leaders through analyses of speeches by Putin and Medvedev.

The dramatic events in Russia’s neighbour, Ukraine, in 2004 when non-violent mass mobilisation forced the authorities to accept the
re-run of Presidential elections reversing the outcome and leading to a change of government, form the subject of Ksenia Gorbenko’s case study. While both the evidence of electoral fraud in the initial outcome and its political orientation ensured that the Orange Revolution, as it was dubbed, received wide international support, Gorbenko’s analysis of the photographic representation of these events in Ukrainian newspapers underlines the country’s deep linguistic and regional divisions. But while these divisions continue to play a central role in Ukraine’s politics, they have not hitherto given rise to widespread inter-communal violence or, what would be likely to follow such an eventuality, the threat of secession or partition. A constraining factor is that it remains very evidently in Ukraine’s interest to maintain good relations with both the West and Russia, as far as that is possible.

The next case study analyses the political fortunes of Hindu nationalism, which in combining the criteria of indigenousness and religion is best described as an ethno-religious movement. Sangit Kumar Ragi demonstrates how the impact of market liberalisation and globalisation was a factor in the rise to power of Hindu nationalists in the 1990s, but he argues that in the last decade it has contributed to Hindutva’s relative decline, paving the way for the victory of the Congress party in India’s national elections in 2004 and 2009. In particular, he points to the failure of the India Shining campaign that formed the centrepiece of the Hindu nationalist government’s campaign for re-election in 2004. Ragi also shows how the impact of the market has dented the appeal of left-wing opposition to the Congress party. At the same time, India faces considerable problems in its regions, most particularly the long-running insurgency in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. It is nonetheless striking that Hindu nationalists proved unable to capitalise politically on the government’s handling of serious terrorist atrocities, such as the attack on Mumbai in November 2008.

The final case study examines Catalonia’s political evolution since Spain’s transition to democracy. Klaus-Jürgen Nagel employs a detailed examination of the electoral programmes and conference resolutions of Catalan political parties to show how the institutional architecture established after Spain became a democracy to accommodate regionally based ethno-nationalisms has taken root in the case of Catalonia. The result is that parties across the political spectrum have moderated the radical stances they adopted at the outset of the transition and, though differences remain in their attitude towards the devolution of power, they have come broadly to accept the rules of Spain’s multi-level politics. This achievement should stand Catalonia and Spain in good stead.
to meet the very severe challenge that the global economic downturn poses both to the region and the country.

**Irish perspectives**

The next part of the book consists of three studies regarding the Northern Ireland problem. The first of the three by Jennifer Todd examines the role of the equality agenda in the Northern Ireland peace process. She argues persuasively that this aspect of the peace process has not received the attention it deserves. Much of the focus of those writing on the peace process has been on the political institutions created under the Good Friday Agreement. However, the peace process has clearly not depended on their operation, since the functioning of the institutions has been beset by frequent crises so that in practice Northern Ireland has been governed under direct rule from London for much of the time since 1998. Todd draws a distinction between equality as a steady state and equality as a threshold. The former, she argues, involves the enforcement of equality across the board between the two communities, whereas the latter focuses simply on the removal of the inequalities under which Catholics had laboured. In practice, the latter view has been the one adopted by the British and Irish governments, correctly in Todd’s view, since she contends that this approach makes it possible for the society to move towards a plural and participatory polity.

Niall Ó Dochartaigh employs the example of Northern Ireland to demonstrate a very significant difference between state-framed nationalism and counter-state nationalism, which is that in the case of the former, the state possesses the wherewithal to embed itself on a national scale, whereas naturalising an alternative national territorial framework presents a much larger problem for counter-state nationalists. Taking this distinction as his point of departure, Ó Dochartaigh gives a detailed account of the local focus of militant Irish nationalism during Northern Ireland’s troubles, the period of violent instability in the province dating from the late 1960s. He shows how dependent Republican paramilitary organisations were on pockets of local support in sustaining their campaigns of violence and he illustrates the crucial importance of local solidarities by describing the hostile reaction to the Official Irish Republican Army when it abducted and murdered a British soldier who was at home on leave in a Catholic estate in Northern Ireland’s second city of Londonderry/Derry.

Cillian McGrattan argues that the approach taken by constitutional Irish nationalists in Northern Ireland, in other words nationalists who
have sought to advance the cause of a united Ireland by wholly peace-
ful means, have been maximalists practically throughout the course of
the troubles. He disputes the argument associated with the theoretical
work of Donald Horowitz that ethnic outbidding by a radical competi-
tor in the form of Sinn Féin accounts for the stance taken by the main
constitutional nationalist party, the Social Democratic and Labour
Party (SDLP). In particular, he shows that decisions taken in the early
1970s that committed the party to a maximalist position preceded any
challenge from Sinn Féin. He uses the case study to underline the theo-
etrical point that key decisions of political actors play a crucial role in
the construction of ethnic contention. McGrattan notes that some
of the leading figures within the SDLP recognised the adverse impact
that the party’s stance had on the prospects for an accommodation
with Unionists. It is worth emphasising that these were figures in the
party who gave a higher priority to socialism than to nationalism and
had a different conception of equality than just that between Protestants
and Catholics.

Comparative analysis

The final part of the book comprises three comparative studies. The
first by John Coakley assesses the capacity of federal systems to accom-
modate a set of territorially concentrated ethnic groups. To this end, he
examines the functioning of the federal model, noting that there is rela-
tively little disagreement in the literature on which countries have fed-
eral systems and which do not and, despite disagreement over a small
number of borderline cases, the consensus is that there are currently
about 24 federal systems, the majority of them being long-established
federations. In most cases, the internal boundaries of federations and
those of putative ethnic homelands do not coincide. Further, a number
of ethnic federations, that is, federations in which the units have been
designed to coincide with ethnic divisions have failed. But the pressure
from ethno-nationalists for recognition of ethnic communities through
autonomy or the institutionalisation of federal arrangements remains
unrelenting. Consequently, there is every reason to expect further experi-
mentation in this area. Coakley concludes that ethnic federations some-
times survive and sometimes fail but the full explanation requires a
case-by-case analysis.

Diarmuid Maguire’s chapter explores the dynamics of protest mobili-
sation and state response within what he calls ethnic-national locales.
To analyse the use of space in such conflicts he examines the cases of
Northern Ireland and Israel. He argues that the battle between the state and protestors to control space tends to be especially fraught in divided societies. He contrasts the actions of Israel to delineate the living space of Palestinians through the construction of a separation wall with the efforts of the British state to bring the two communities in Northern Ireland together in a post-national framework. The former reflects a policy of containing and isolating the Palestinians in the absence of a negotiated settlement, while the latter arises out of the province’s peace process.

The final comparative chapter by Rob Aitken examines the application of consociationalism in the peace processes of Northern Ireland and Bosnia-Herzegovina. The term ‘consociationalism’ was coined by the Dutch political scientist Arend Lijphart to describe a combination of devices – power sharing, proportional representation, segmental autonomy and mutual vetoes – deployed to create stable governments in a number of small European states. Consociational devices, and most particularly power sharing, have proved popular with external mediators seeking to create stable governments in ethnically divided societies in the wake of violent conflict. While Aitken accepts that consociationalism can contribute to peace and an end to violence in the short term, he argues that this approach runs the risk of entrenching and therefore perpetuating the ethnic polarisation that occurs in the course of violent conflict. But he identifies differences among consociational settlements, contending, in particular, that the Good Friday Agreement is more flexible than the Dayton Peace Agreement.

The authors of this book share a common commitment to the scholarly study of the relationship between politics and ethnicity that is the objective of the IPSA Research Committee. But, as will be very evident to any reader, there is a wide divergence not only in how they approach the study of the relationship but also in their political viewpoints. These differences are as sharp from within particular societies as they are across continents, so they should not be put down to the fact that scholars from many different countries are represented in this volume. What is more important, particularly in relation to individual case studies, is the expertise that scholars living in and/or from the societies being examined are able to bring to their analysis.

Some common themes of the contributions are worth highlighting. Perceptions are vitally important to an understanding of ethnonationalism, whether these take the form of the discourse political leaders or parties use, how the other side in a conflict is represented in the media or the images people have of the society in which they live. The point is
perhaps most obvious in societies that are deeply divided along ethnic lines. But it also has significance in states in which the domination of a particular ethnic group is taken for granted or is masked by a commitment to civic nationalism.

Another theme that runs through the book is the importance of both geography and history, not necessarily as such, but in the interpretations of leaders, commentators and ordinary people. In this form they are intimately bound up with who people think they are. But, as a number of the chapters emphasise, people’s identities are not fixed. They are subject to change, though in this context a concern is that they may become fixed if institutions are not sufficiently receptive to the possibilities of change. Reactions to globalisation, both positive and negative, also receive attention. However, the colloquium took place before the global economic crisis in the autumn of 2008, so the opposite of globalisation, deglobalisation, finds no place in any author’s analysis. In any event, it still remains too early to speculate as to how long the downturn will last and if any recovery will prove durable.

Further, the political implications of the crisis have only just begun to be painted in very broad brush-strokes. Thus, it is commonly argued that the pendulum has swung back to the state, giving it a central role in the regulation of the economy, and away from the market as a self-correcting mechanism operating transnationally. Also important is how the crisis will affect the international balance of power. If there is a shift away from the West and towards the new Asian powers of China and India, as some commentators contend, that is likely to have profound implications for ethno-nationalism, at least where it is connected to separatist objectives. In particular, neither China nor India has any reason to view secessionist movements favourably and that may influence whether the multiplication of states that has occurred since the end of the Cold War will continue.

But even if the fragmentation of states should continue, nonetheless, much effort will still be needed to achieve political accommodation within states, since most ethnic groups do not inhabit self-contained homogeneous spaces that can readily be transformed into viable political entities. The requirement that people with different ethnic identities should be able to get along in the same locality, as they by and large do, is not going to disappear. At the same time, it is important not to view the phenomenon of ethno-nationalism negatively as if all ethno-nationalists were intent upon expulsion, transfer or ethnic cleansing and the destruction of multi-ethnic societies. As this volume underlines, ethno-nationalists themselves vary very considerably in their approach
to promoting the politics of identity. Indeed, ethno-nationalism takes so many different forms that there is room for argument as to which movements or parties should be included within the term’s scope. But whether it is narrowly or broadly defined, ethno-nationalists seem likely to continue to pose significant challenges to the prevailing order within states and internationally.

Notes

5. See, for example, Edward Lucas, ‘Do Not Let Russia “Finlandise” Western Europe’, Financial Times, 9 October 2009.
7. See, for example, even before the failure of Lehman Brothers, John Plender, ‘The Return of the State: How Government is Back at the Heart of Economic Life’, Financial Times, 22 August 2008.
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