Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics

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Scope

The aim of the Association for the Study of EthnoGeoPolitics (EGP), or EthnoGeoPolitics in short, is to further the study of and teaching on the cultural, social, ethnic and (geo-)political characteristics, processes and developments in different areas of the world, at universities, institutes and colleges in and outside the Netherlands. The association's journal, Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics, is above all intended to elicit analytic debate by allowing scholars to air their views, perspectives and research findings—with critical responses from others who may hold a different view or research approach. One can submit manuscripts—main articles (to be peer-reviewed), critical responses (published peer-reviews), short articles and/or book reviews—to info@ethnogeopolitics.org. At www.ethnogeopolitics.org, one can find information about the association's foundation, founding members, aims, activities and publications—and particularly the freely downloadable copies of the journal's issues.

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**Announcement**

***Call for contributions***

Our journal is ready to receive manuscripts for the next issues this year and
next year. The Editorial Board does not apply a strict wordlimit, but we prefer
full-fledged research articles of no more than 10,000 words. We also welcome
short analytical articles, book reviews, review essays, and opinion pieces.

Regular contributors may get a guaranteed space in future issues of our journal,
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contributions from the current issue onwards.

Furthermore, we welcome contributions for special issues on common themes,
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EthnoGeoPolitics is willing to (re)publish special issues in book form—and
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Editorial

Calling the New America Differently: Addressing a Resilient Injustice

Babak Rezvani

Introduction

Since the beginning of the new millennium the takfiri terrorist groups, such as Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Boko Haram and ISIL/Daesh, are ravaging the Islamic countries in the Middle East, Africa, South-East Asia and Central Asia, murdering tens if not hundreds of thousands of human beings in cold blood. I would use the word human being rather than “women and children” or simply “civilians”, because the male combatants are humans too, and have the right to live and to be treated with dignity and respect if captured—and not to be tortured and burnt alive.

The word Takfiri stems from the Arabic Takfir which roughly translates as “regarding (the Others) as infidels”. These terrorist groups have a rigid and intolerant understanding of the Sunni Islam and interpret its sources in ways which supposedly justify the killing of the “Others”. Although the victims belong to different faiths, the vast majority are Muslims—either Sunni, or Shia. However, the equally inhumane killings of civilians in the West receive relatively more coverage in the global media.

This is not surprising owing to the fact that the West has a hegemonic political position, as well as the dominance in the mainstream media and the control of the Internet. It allows manipulating these realities according to their “hegemonic” goals. In this way the West, also responsible for the wars in the Middle East, shapes the moral judgement on these political realities. This bias also explains lopsided reporting of events: to reiterate, Takfiri terrorist groups are primarily murdering inhabitants of Islamic countries, yet these massacres do not get the coverage and attentions that similar attacks in the West receive.

The hegemonic nature of the USA and the West are often disputed by political analysts and scholars among whom those from the USA and European countries constitute a majority. Whether or not they are still hegemonic, the USA and the West, in general, are still important players in world politics.

Consequently, certain statements by the new US Administration have unleashed a lot of debates and reactions. Indeed, there have been, and still are, many cases of injustice in the so-called Land of the Free, and it is appropriate to address them. However, there is a more resilient case of injustice in US history: the one afflicted upon America’s original inhabitants. Finally this article argues the appropriateness to choose a new name for America.
A new Era? A New America?

The political journal *Foreign Affairs* is the best-sold and indexed—i.e. listed in the *Web of Science*—journal that is available in regular bookshops in the United States and Europe. *Foreign Affairs* features essays, easily intelligible, but differently interpretable, by a large number of people. The articles in that journal are written by authors with different political orientations, but almost all essays discuss issues of world politics from an American perspective.

A lot of these articles focus on the US national interest or with the question whether or not the American military, economic and in general political power is still stable or waning. An oft-heard narrative since Donald Trump’s presidency is that a retreating USA will put its own national interest ahead of the collective Euro-Atlantic security in NATO’s realm.

Although nowadays the US power, and its position in the global political arena, is challenged by countries such as Russia, China, India and even by its traditional European allies such as France and Germany—and not to forget Brazil in case of a Neo-Monrovian back-to-the-western-hemisphere USA. Nevertheless, most of the arguments of a waning USA are exaggerated and perhaps are consciously written with a fearmongering and populistic purpose. The very fact that a large number of the journal’s articles deal with such issues and are read all over the world means that the USA is still an important global player.

The nature of Trump’s politics is discussed by a broad range of politicians and political thinkers. This article does not intend to discuss whether the world is at a greater risk now or that Trump’s presidency will be significantly different from a number of US presidents in the (recent) past. However, two facts remain and must be mentioned: that the USA still remains a global actor, and that a taboo of discursive political correctness is being violated that has existed in the USA for a couple of decades since the steady victory of the Civil Rights’ Movement.

Injustice in the Land of the Free

Indeed, a number of arguments are made by either Trump or his associates that run counter to the very fundamentals of the *Land of the Free*. The USA was established as a country of ideals; as a country in which people could freely live and observe their religion, political convictions and faith. Even though it does not have a good record of racial equality, as until relatively recently only its European white subjects were thought to have equal rights. However, later, the same fundamental ideas and rights were discursively extended to the rest of the society. Although the opportunities to success and social realities were not equal, the rights of its citizens formally were.

Removing citizens of Latin American ancestry from, and barring the entry of Muslims into, the country have become narratives—and in many cases political intentions—that awakened the American consciousness. Terrorist acts by a few individuals from Muslim ancestry have created a sense of fear among people. These individuals (are) believed to be
related to Takfiri terrorist groups in the Middle East. In reality, however, they may have been home-grown radicals or so-called Lone-Wolves.

As said before, the majority of terror attacks' victims, worldwide, are Muslims. Nevertheless, an image has been depicted as if the takfiri terrorism is a war of Muslims against the West in general and America in particular. Many discriminating potential policies by the Trump Administration are refuted and regarded as illegal by judges, at different levels and in different parts of the USA. In addition to the racial and religious discrimination, the planned abolishment of the Affordable Care Act (i.e. ObamaCare) is another fact that is regarded as a manifestation of injustice in the American society.

One must keep in mind, however, that some of the discriminating policies have been designed during Obama's presidency. Therefore, these policies cannot be regarded completely as Trump's as mentioned above. During Obama's presidency, a law was enacted that paradoxically ended visa-free travels for people of ancestry from certain Muslim countries that are actively in war against Al-Qaeda and Daesh/ISIL: Iran, Iraq and Syria. From that time onwards they need visa in order to enter the USA, even though they also were or became citizens of EU countries.

Be that as it may, collective insinuation of American citizens based on ancestry has a precedent in the American recent past: the internment of Japanese Americans during the Second World War. There has been, however, another similar injustice in the US past, which has not received the due attention that it needs: the internment, genocide, and in short injustice afflicted upon the America's native peoples.

The Americas and its Indigenous Inhabitants

Although all injustice is abject and needs due attention, I argue that the injustice on the Native Americans has never received the due attention that it deserves. The master narrative of US history begins either with American independence (Declaration of Independence) or with the British (and other European) colonization of US territory; it rarely begins in the Pre-Columbian era.

The nature of nationalism itself often prescribes states to claim as much antiquity as they can in order to legitimate themselves. Even though practically all modern nation-states are thought to be modern constructions, they do have traceable roots in pre-modern era. For example, the Franconian and Celtic civilizations are not shunned to be named as ancestors of the modern-day territorial-cultural polities of France and the UK. Perhaps more tangible are traces of the ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Roman civilizations in the cultural-historical infrastructures of the modern-day states of Iraq, Egypt and Italy.

Cristoforo Colombo, better Known as Columbus, should not be an appropriate reference of pride. It is ironical that many places (e.g. the country Colombia) exist on the American continent whose indigenous populations were decimated after “its discovery” by Columbus.
Figure 1  Calling the new America differently and hence addressing a resilient injustice
(by Babak Rezvani)
The idea of a discovery of the continent by Columbus is incredible, not only because there have been previous encounters between the American continent and the rest of the world, but mainly because the continent was already inhabited by people; the continent existed but only happened to be unknown to (most) Europeans.

Ancient civilizations such as the Aztecs and Incas were destroyed by an aggressive European conquest and colonization. Consequently, countless people were killed after their temples were destroyed and their land disowned. Similarly, the name of the continent, America, should in itself not be a reference of pride. It is named after Amerigo Vespucci, another sailor and colonizer.

Claiming to be a Land of the Free, with an economic system that believes in the right of ownership, does not rhyme with a master narrative that is hesitant to admit that disowning land from its owners and neglecting a non-European antiquity are cases of injustice that still must be fully addressed.²

Conclusion: Choosing a New Name for a New Era

What should be the new name of the continent? Choosing a new name may be challenging and provide some food for thought (see Figure 1 above). Names that derive from such names and concepts as The New World, Das Abendland or the West are equally Eurocentric. One feature of the Americas is that unlike other continents, this landmass stretches from one pole to the other one; from the northern Arctic circle proximately to Antarctica.

Then, what would be a good name? Biarctica? Duoarctica? Arctoarctica? Poletoploe? Polonia? Poleland? Perhaps not a good idea, as it sounds too similar to Poland. Still, why would similarities to the existing names necessarily be a bad idea? There are many examples of toponyms which were transposed onto new places and which begot their own realities and identities. However, I propose a more authentic name.

One must know that in many Native American faiths the Mother Earth is sacred. Perhaps a good name is Pachamama, roughly translated as the Mother Earth in the Andean languages of Quechua and Aymara. Is it fair to call only one continent, one land mass, one part of the Earth as the Mother Earth? Perhaps, it is not fair.

However, it is fair to give the Americas a name derived from a name or a concept rooted in that continent’s Indigenous languages and cultures. A name derived from or related to Mother Earth pledges the due respect both to the Indigenous cultures as well as to the Earth, which itself is another victim of injustice.

It is appropriate to think about a new name replacing America; certainly nowadays, when the Americans and the rest of the world are reviewing, and reflecting upon, the current and past injustices. However, it is also appropriate that such a move should not be restricted
nominally; it is indeed of the utmost importance that such a move does not only address a name rather than the justice itself!

Babak Rezvani, Editor-in-Chief June 2017

Endnotes

1. A number of arguments, made by the American political thinker Noam Chomsky and his colleagues, can be read or listened to, at https://chomsky.info/interviews/.

2. It is therefore not surprising that the creed of a “good Indian, is a dead Indian” is still not frowned upon in the USA, accordingly as it should be in a democratic society, when history books still tend to take pride in “national heroes” who have done many wrongs to that country’s indigenous inhabitants.

NB: do you have any comments on Rezvani’s editorial? Please send these to info@ethnogeopolitics.org, or through the contact form at www.ethnogeopolitics.org.

Announcement: Flyer 22th Srebrenica commemoration in The Hague, the Netherlands, 11 July 2017 (in Dutch)
Main Article

Indirect Incitement to Violence: An Analysis of Stories of Nigerian Ethnic Conflicts
Chuz'maria bekee-Eberendu

Abstract
This paper demonstrates the constitutive effects of ethnic narratives. It explores the discursive conditions in which ethnic stories—myths, folktales, proverbs and anecdotes—reproduce violence in modern Nigeria. It offers an analysis of the discursive strategies of the stories and how they generate political structures that have a constitutive effect on violence. I argue that the discursive practices of the stories seek to revive past conflicts and reproduce violence, through the ways groups use them to constitute ethnic claims and reconstruct adverse historical events. The manners in which the stories represent ethnic causes and reconstruct past conflicts constitute and reconstitute ethnic meanings, thus recreating the conditions for reproductive violence.

Introduction
This study focuses mainly on the 1967-1970 Nigerian civil war stories. Effects of the stories need to be investigated if we are to understand the problem of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. The everyday constructions of ethnic conflict in the stories evoke an image of a society still at war (Oriaku 2002: 41-50). Descriptions of ethnic selfhood and otherness, genocide and starvation, political survival and superiority, and hatred, continually reinvest the groups with patterned use of linguistic and rhetorical resources with which they reconstitute the war in the present. Thus, each group narrates particular experiences of the war and attributes hostile intentions to others.

Ethnicity does not only relate to the politicisation of socio-culturally distinct groups as the basis of political representation or legitimacy. It also means the framing of group cognitions and emotions in ways that dissenting views are not expressed publicly or even privately. Here, ethnic conflict means the escalatory responses to reaffirm or challenge a group's identity and achieve certain objectives. In this situation, otherwise harmless expressions become deliberate acts and take on intense emotional significance.

One group's ordinary acts become a direct assault on another group's position. This leads to reproductive violence, whereby actions of one group bring intense and aggressive responses from others, which in turn transmit hostilities that reinforce the use of violence to solve conflicts. It reflects a situation whereby a combination of mutual fear and revenge become part of the self-organising triggers of cyclical violence between ethnicities. This is often grounded in selectively remembered and interpreted experiences that invoke past threats in response to contemporary tensions.
To make my arguments, I will first outline how ethnic violence is studied and to clarify to what extent the phenomenon has to be looked afresh. The second section will briefly address the discursive effects of stories, which form the theoretical background of the study. My third task is to inquire into the ethnic circumstances and political issues which made civil war a feasible option in Nigeria. Following from this, I will present the political structures underlying narratives of the war in order to raise discourses that serve as determinants of self-sustaining conflicts in Nigeria. I will then proceed to connect the stories with certain recent events.

The Study of Ethnic Violence

Literatures that seek to define theoretical puzzles of ethnic conflicts are extremely diverse, but I am more interested in those that show how conflict is located in the continual interplay of the cultural world (Brubakar and Laitin 1998: 441).

One approach sees conflicts as the resultant effects of ethnically conditioned individuals (Smith 2003; Armstrong 2004: 9-18), certain inherited traits or specific cultural ways (McGarry and O'Leary 1995), emotionally given identities (Deng 1995, Kapferer 1998) or ancient hatred (Kaplan 1993), which predispose people to violence against ethnic others. These perspectives see ethnic violence as a result of the incompatibility and revival of cultural and identity categories. For example, activation of historic contestations can lead conflicts to become “irresolvable and non-influenceable events”, and “atavistic and endemic in nature” (Gallagher 1997; Richards 1996).

This approach is commendable in the sense that conflict has a natural border with unhappy social interrelationship and calls attention to underlying structural causes of violence. But it runs into the problem of primordial essentialism i.e. for seeing causes of ethnic violence as unchanging essences of culture (Brubakar and Cooper 2000: 1-47).

A second strand in the literature looks at ethnic conflict as an outcome of discursive formation (Brass 1997; Pandey 1992: 27-55; Zulaika 1988). It argues that ethnic conflict makes sense because it is constitutive of meanings and ideas.

This approach makes conflict to be seen as an infinite chain of constructions in conversation, and dependent on interpretive systems and complex meanings and ideas. It rejects the transcendental cultural truths and “totalising” perspectives of primordialism. It also opposes rational choice theory and argues that human political behaviour and motivational actions are not predetermined or instrumentally rational.

There is also an approach to ethnic conflict as an outcome of elite influences on the masses (Nzemiro 1984; Nnoli 1995; Brass 1997). In this perspective, elites act as ethnic representatives and make authoritative ethnic claims and decisions, which constitute an important factor in
the way ethnic interests are brought into effect. Ethnic elites speak for their groups and struggle among themselves for patronages. Where they feel excluded from power, they mobilise ethnic members into believing that the exclusion has come about by the actions of a whole community against another.

This approach makes conflict an infinite chain of complex interests and goals. It, however, has difficulties by imbuing elites with agency only and characterising the masses as passive subjects only. It also easily merges with rationalist, strategic accounts (Fearon and Laitin 2000: 846).

A fourth stand in the literature sees ethnic conflicts as the ultimate residues of colonialism (Mamdani 2001; Lemarchand 1996; Prunier 1995; and Malkki 1995). This view holds that the political, economic and social changes attendant to colonialism redefined ethnic identities, as people began to develop perceptions of political superior/inferior complexes. Colonialism re-ordered political authority and left behind hierarchical forms of identity.

In the interplay of identity politicisations, the key to explaining violence, then, lies in the point at which people were racially redefined into biologically and culturally inferior and superior groups. This approach is a novel cosmological and historicist account. But it can only explain conflicts in postcolonial societies.

These approaches have helped in explaining ethnic conflicts. However, the self-perpetuating nature and processes of modern conflict continue to offer challenges in understanding the phenomenon. Thus, the ways in which events of conflicts are narrated and displayed in remarkable discourse structures, which rely on political-cultural meanings, need to be investigated if we are to better understand the logics of violence. First, let me examine how discourses matter in order to gain fresh insights into phenomena, dynamics and problems of political violence.

Stories of Conflicts and the Constitutive Effects of Discursive Practices

The effects of cultural differences, elite politics and colonialism from where social beliefs, meanings of identity and ethnic interests leading to violence arise, are constituted because of the ideas that make them up (Wendt 1999: 114; Adler 1997: 319-363). The notion that ideas play a strong role in violence means that the discursive effects are generated by the constitution and construction of subjects/object and agent/structure, and power relations (Weldes and Saco 1996: 371).

Precisely because thoughts and beliefs are socially constituted, discourse is indispensable to the ways social meanings and beliefs are legitimatized or delegitimized. The social construction of stories means that they are constitutive discursive practices that form at once a network of actions, descriptions, interpretations and imaginations, which encode and
constitute subjects and objects, and (re)construct particular ‘truths’ and identity whether communal or individual.

Discourses, as Michael Foucault (1972) argues, are socially constituted acts that circulate in ordinary contexts. Stories constitute an “integrated framework that comprehends narrated event and narrative event within a unified frame of reference” (Bauman 1986: 6) but in their everyday form conceal people’s capacities for action while serving to index social experience. Everyday stories are social acts of giving matter-of-fact voices to events. They are as Jameson (1981) describes something of a “political unconscious” process. They inform group folkways and subconscious deeds, which constitute discourses that do not just narrate events in unproblematic ways but also actively reproduce or undermine power and identity relations (Wetherell and Potter 1992).

Stories are not merely an important component of social life but also are constructed to specify political direction, organise social vision and socialize group members (McIntyre 1982: 190-209; Ricoeur 1984, 1988; Taylor 1989). As Achebe (1990), Okpewho (1985: 7) and Obiechina (1993) argue, stories are bound to a shared living experience “continuously sustained by social and moral props” (Hoskins 2002: 16; Edgerton and Rollins 2001: 8). Narrative crafts collective imaginaries by producing living memories whose primal purposes are to convey the irrefutable condensed experience from generation to generation (Solzhenitsyn 1973).

As such, stories provide an informative picture of living social realities of recurrent violence—which is quite noticeable since the 1990s Balkan and Rwandan violence. In Nigeria, violence has demonstrated the constitutive effects of resurgent historical stories. Effects of ‘living’ stories of the past have encouraged Nigerian groups to look back to days of a perceptible strong ethnic group. A perceptible past generates not only thoughts about ethnic others, but also of beliefs of ethnic superiority, inferiority and greatness, and memories of hatred, brutalities and dehumanisation through which historical stories have their constitutive effects on violence.

A Perceptible Past: History of a War

The history of Nigerian-Biafran War, 2nd July 1967—15th January 1970, though short, has sufficiently been told. Its memory still lingers in the minds of many of the groups involved. This is why it is important to briefly rehash the immediate and remote causes of the war. The war was between the then Eastern Region of Nigeria dominated by the Igbo group and the rest of the country.

The Eastern Region claimed that the war was fought to protect its members being killed in very large numbers in northern Nigeria. It regarded the killings as genocide and thus declared itself an independent state in order to protect its own people. The Federal Military Government of Nigeria, on the other side, claimed the war was fought to reunify the country. It regarded the independent state declaration of the Eastern Region as an act of secession. These are competing narratives in which each side is worried that claims of the other side
serve will deny their own claims. At the same time, each side also re-appropriates key narrative elements of the other side to justify its own claims.

The emotional intensity surrounding the war can only be understood in terms of the 15th January 1966 coup. Symbolising the wider conflict between the Hausa-Fulani and the Igbo groups, the coup d'état recreated the long history of animosity between these groups. The coup provided experiences in which ethnic fears of destruction by the other side converge.

Acutely felt existential threats were regularly invoked. Led by Major Nzeogwu, the coup aimed at establishing a strong, unified and prosperous nation, free from corruption and internal strife. Instead, the coup increased political distrusts and polarisation, and changed the political balance in the country. For instance, the coup planners were composed mostly of officers from the Eastern Region.

The victims of the coup were mainly political and military leaders from the Northern Region. This was perceived in the north as highly threatening and raised their fears. In particular, the style and result of the coup were interpreted in the north as a deliberate plan to eliminate its political leaders and subjugate the region to outside control. The situation calmed down a bit when Gen. Aguiyi-Ironsi—an Easterner—defeated the coup and took over governance of the country.

However, Ironsi failed to douse the inflamed ethnic situation through his inability to quickly court-martial the coup plotters. He exhibited political naivety by enacting Decree 34 which created a unitary government. The Decree was resented in the north because it was perceived as making the northern region subservient to the southern regions. In other words, the north was afraid of its future.

The North's fear of assimilation into a rapidly progressing and educated South underlies much of its regional politics to this day. There was already an acute social uncertainty, which the coup only helped to aggravate. As such, there was a high passion and incentive for revenge in the region. This culminated in the May 1966 riots throughout the North that witnessed the massive killing of Easterners. This was followed by a counter coup by the Northern military officers on 29 July 1966, which brought in Col. Gowon as Head of State. Gen. Ironsi and many officers of Eastern origin were killed.

The counter coup was solely planned to take revenge on the East and many Easterners were killed. The scale of killing on 29 September 1966 alone horrified Easterners. During such ethnic tensions and bouts of violence, acceptance of narratives increases rapidly with fears of attacks on one's identity and very survival by the other. This includes fear of physical security and fear of extermination. Easterners felt they had become victims of genocide. This fear culminated in the declaration of the independent Republic of Biafra on 30 May 1967 by the administrator of the region, Col. Ojukwu.

In trying to understand the political dynamics at work in the intensely felt immediate causes of the war, it is obvious that the political contradictions of the country are significant remote
causes. The country’s composition of about 250 ethnic groups (Otite 1990) is powerful because it speaks to intensely felt concerns in the present. The diverse ethnic composition makes the country not only highly vulnerable to political contestations but also bolsters the narratives that emphasise the ethnic groups’ political struggles.

There are feelings of high insecurity and vulnerability among the groups, which force them into intense economic and political competitions. The three largest groups—Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo—followed different development paths within which they have maintained different beliefs that attribute hostile intentions to each other.

For instance, the North believes the South’s domination of the social, educational and economic spheres are intended to ‘re-colonise’ them, while the South believes that the North wants exclusive and perpetual control of the central government. These beliefs set off spirals of ethnic fears and distrusts. In this situation, ethnicity and regionalism continued to weaken the centre as the competing social and religious identities of the groups remained strong.

One of the pre-independence incidents that underlined ethnic polarisation, was the 1956 target year for independence. The Northern region strenuously rejected this date and its leaders were seriously booed in Lagos, which culminated in the Kano riot. The North wanted to secede because of the humiliation. Similarly, the western region threatened to secede if Lagos was not included as part of the region in the new Constitution. These contrasting demands marked the first time the country faced threats of secession.

Political events after independence, such as the 1962 census and the 1964 general election (both of which were dogged by allegations of malpractices), further destabilised the country. The Northern region accused the Eastern region of seriously inflating its figures. A second census was conducted in 1963 and the East received figures it refused to accept.

Similarly, the 1964 election was characterised by violence and irregularities. The President (Dr Azikiwe) refused to appoint a Prime Minister and rescinded his decision after four days of political tensions amidst fears of a military coup. Again, in 1965 the Western-region election engulfed the nation in another political crisis. The Northern People’s Congress (NPC), which formed the national government, was accused by the region’s hitherto dominant party Action Group (AG) of massively rigging the election in favour of its partner in the region—the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP).

This election was so characterised by arson, violence and indiscriminate killings and other kinds of violence, that there was complete breakdown of law and order. The region descended into anarchy and people lived in constant fear for their lives.

This was the state Nigeria was in when the January 1966 coup occurred. What are crucial in the narratives of the civil war, are the subjective interpretations and general understandings offered to the groups. Thus, arising from the war are narrative dynamics that I now analyse in order to understand contexts of violence in the country.
Stories and the Reproduction of Violence

*Images of the ethnic ‘Other’: Fantasies, fabrications and appellations*

One striking narrative feature of the 1967—1970 civil war was the way ethnic identities were disfigured and invested with emotional significance. Identities were reconstructed through images of the war and became characterised by perceived threats to ethnic self-esteem. Important images of the war, which did evoke rich adversarial constructions of identity threats, include ‘inyamiri’, ‘awusa’, ‘kobokobo’, ‘berebe’, ‘sabo’, or ‘kulekule’.

Since the end of the war, these labels have become widely shared, borrowed, repeated and reinforced, and constitute ethnic ingredients of interpretative frames. The labels illustrate emotional and political power and provide evidence of ethnic creations of reality. As creative sources of identity images, the labels are powerful influences on people’s impressions and attitudes. More so, these express and wield power as these are spread further through popular discourse that establishes these as part of everyday ethnic knowledge.

*Inyamiri* refers to the Igbo experiences of severe hunger and thirst during the war. In Igbo local language (nye m mmiri—“give me some water”), they begged for water while they fled from violence. Their suffering provided the basis for the Hausa-Fulani name for the Igbo *inyamiri*, which is a corrupt, simplified expression of *nye m mmiri*. Thus, the term refers to the manner Igbos suffered during the war and symbolises specific experiences of helplessness and victimisation. For the Igbo, it often provides grist for the mill of conspiratorial theories of Igbo starvation, destitution and death. For the Hausa-Fulani, it reduces the Igbo as a defeated group, typically leaving the impression that the Igbo are servants and the Hausa-Fulani are masters who respectively should beg for and dispense the necessary things of life.

The altercation in 2008 between Nigeria’s former Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Ojo Maduekwe, an Igbo and former Ambassador to the United States, and Retired Brig-Gen. Oluwole Rotimi, a Yoruba, demonstrates this impression. On the altercation Rotimi wrote: “I have dealt with people like you in the past. I was the Adjutant General of the Nigerian army that thoroughly defeated your ragtag Biafran army” (*This Day* 2009). This altercation posits a continuous historical antagonism. It also indicates how ethnic perceptions of the war are applied both minimally and more expansively.

It is true that in times of conflict many fantasies and fabrications emerge; but the prevailing Nigerian ethnic stories project the war as a struggle against communal adversaries. This demonstrates the war stories as being part of Nigerian ethnic identity politics, which is not only the collective self-definition of ethnic-others as victims (or perpetrators) but also the collective self-presentation of ethnic-self as victors.

Nigerian groups are all faced with the challenge of defining the out-groups as well as redefining the in-group within the context of constructed labels. One effect of this is that ethnic identity becomes defined in advance and prone to violence. During the war, the Igbo
distinguished themselves from the Hausa-Fulani in terms of ‘we are educated and civilised while they are not’.

The war highlighted self-serving selective ethnic perceptions. This was very much evident in the Igbo reconstruction of Hausa-Fulani into awusa, which in colloquial Igbo means stupidity. The Igbo expectation during the war was that the Hausa-Fulani would be subdued because they are a stupid, docile and intellectually inferior people. This speculation was supported by the Igbo perception and development of a greater sense of Hausa-Fulani identity through the Hausa-Fulani occupation as herdsmen. This is implicated in the Igbo term for the Hausa-Fulani—awusa.

Hausa-Fulani are great herdsmen and the Igbo find an identity relationship between the Hausa-Fulani and the animals they rear. This is exemplified in the meaning of Igbo descriptions like onye awusa (Hausa person), which has a cognitive meaning with foolishness, ignorance and intellectually inferiority.

The fact is that in escalated conflicts, groups incorporate the emotional significance of their humiliation and anger both as a rallying point and as a way to evoke deep threats to their identity existence and very survival. Hence, it is plausible to argue that at one point in the war, the Hausa-Fulani activities contained culturally rooted aspirations to challenge their descriptions as a stupid, backward people. This can help to explain the senseless massacre of the Igbos in northern Nigeria by the Hausa-Fulani group that partly contributed to the war.

Another ethnic term during the war was kobokobo that the Yoruba called the Igbo. Yorubas who narrated and still do narrate the war by using the term to seek to confine the Igbo within their ethnic homeland. The term Kobokobo describes the Igbo as innately domineering, aggressive, rude and overbearing. Utilised within the war stories, the term gives out the Yoruba perception of using the war to ‘roll back’ the resurging Igbo development quest. It symbolises the Yoruba idea of the Igbo as belonging to a deeply opposed cultural value system.

In the self/other perceptions of Yoruba, Kobokobo projects an Igbo world of incompatible culture defined by strange and unfamiliar practices. The violence-prone character of the term explains many of the tensions between the two groups. The Igbo constitute a sizeable ethnic minority in most urban and rural areas outside their ethnic homeland and this is seen as a proof of hostile intent. As a result of their high mobility, the Yoruba regard the Igbo as ‘interlopers’, ‘irritating foreigners,’ as ‘impostors,’ and as ‘pretenders.’ Kobokobo is, therefore, a term the Yoruba use to define the Igbo in relation to what Yoruba presumably are not.

The Igbo widely blame the Yoruba for their defeat in the war. This perception is compelling in the stories about an agreement between Awolowo and Ojukwu. This is reflected in the Igbo label for the Yoruba sabo (saboteur), which is deployed as a concept of deceit and
distrust. The term was a reference to Awolowo’s reneging on his promise to secede along with Biafra and declare the Yoruba Oduduwa Republic.

At the time the war started, Awolowo was in prison in the Calabar province of the Biafran Republic. It was said that an agreement was made between him and Ojukwu to declare Yoruba secession after his release. To underscore this agreement, Awolowo’s speech in 1967 that “if the East is allowed to secede either by an act of commission or omission, then the West and Lagos will opt out of the Union”, is usually highlighted.

The eventual refusal of Awolowo to secede Yoruba is still remembered as a political and ethnic sabotage against the Igbo. Ironically, this perception is also adopted by the Hausa-Fulani who call the Yoruba berebe. The term connotes untrustworthiness. The Hausa-Fulani believe that Awolowo failed to declare a Yoruba republic when he was made the Nigerian Federal Commissioner for Finance during the war. While the Hausa-Fulani considered Awolowo’s appointment as an epic victory against the Igbo, it however fostered a widespread Hausa-Fulani attitude of distrust for the Yoruba.

Though the Hausa-Fulani and the Yoruba fought on the same side, it is evident that the narratives of each group characterise differently what is clearly the same conflict. For this reason, each group constructs key terms and selects the metaphors that have a central meaning for its support base. While they fought together, they harboured mutual suspicions.

As the Hausa-Fulani nowadays still believe the Yorubas are untrustworthy, the Yorubas on the other hand often float references to the Hausa-Fulani as being inherently backward. The Yoruba label for the Hausa-Fulani is kulekule which is associated with inarticulate and fanatic people.

The assumption behind the label is that the Hausa-Fulani lack the prerequisite intelligence to lead Nigeria. The group must therefore be enlightened, first through education and second by emulating the Yoruba. Although the term refers to the Hausa-Fulani religious practice of purdah it evokes the image of Hausa-Fulani as a repressive group. Kulekule refers to veiled women but for the Yoruba it literally means “locking up”. Thus the label is applied to create the image of the Hausa-Fulani as a people unwilling to modernise. The implied assumption is that the Hausa-Fulani are uncivilised and putatively inferior.

Constructions of difference: Superior/inferior complexes and opposed values

The war continues to be constructed within an Igbo versus Hausa-Fulani framework. The discursive tactic, however, is the conflation of personalities and individual actions with the rest of the group. The two main protagonists, Gowon and Ojukwu, have been defined in purely ethnic terms and became at one with ‘these people’ to the remainder of their groups.

The connection illustrates how ‘ethnic’ identities and stereotypes get constructed in Nigeria. The connection also shows how the traditional practice of story-telling mold individuals into
Typical of every southern group, the general impression of many Igbo is that the Hausa-Fulani are illiterates. On this belief, it was picked up that Gowon was not intelligent enough to argue with Ojukwu, which by extension means that the North was no match to the East. The implicit message was that Gowon who was trained at Sandhurst was no match for Eton College educated and Oxford trained Ojukwu. This yielded many tales such as the one that tells how Ojukwu used his brilliance against Gowon by asking questions Gowon was not able to answer, which forced Gowon to accept the Aburi (Ghana) accord on Ojukwu’s terms.

The Aburi meeting refers to the accord reached to grant Biafra a confederal status in Nigeria, which was signified and celebrated as a triumph of Igbo superiority over Hausa-Fulani inferiority. The message was that Gowon did not understand the meaning and implications of confederacy, and it was only after it was explained to him in local Hausa language that he understood and then later rejected the accord.

This is another way of saying that ethnic self-perception plays a strong role in the way the war has been and is being perceived and constructed. Quite regularly, the civil war is constructed as either a “war for national unity” or “war of survival.” Each has different constitutive effects and supports a different political “moral” for each of the groups and actors.

The “war of unity” highlights the instability in the country and the need for the Federal Government to protect the national interest and the country’s sovereignty. As a war to preserve the territorial integrity of the country, a popular federal slogan of the war was “To keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done.” At the same time, the name ‘Gowon’ became an anagram of “Go On With One Nigeria.” With the control over the organs of governance, the Hausa-Fulani reconstructed the personality of Ojukwu as a justification to mount violence against the Igbo.

Ojukwu was portrayed an illegitimate rebel through which the Igbo were perceived as “the ethnic group that plunged the federation into the recent civil war” (Ogunlade 1976: 63). Ojukwu was blamed for refusing to be placated during the Aburi reconciliation meetings. This was seen as typical Igbo obstinacy. Through these constructions, “Ibo”, an anglicised colonial form of Igbo, became in general terms an anagram of “I Before Others”—the supreme form of rebellion, individualism, clannishness and ethnicity.

In contrast, the “war of survival” highlights the self-sustaining Igbo ethnic reaction against annihilation. For the Igbo, the Hausa-Fulani have been the main aggressors in the war. The Igbo continue to define all the other ethnic groups as guilty of committing aggression, or
sullied by their association and complicity with the Hausa-Fulani aggressors. It is for this reason that Awolowo, a Yoruba and wartime Commissioner for Finance, implicates all the Yorubas as supporters of the Hausa-Fulani. Because the Igbo faced great hostilities, they introduced the notion that all parts of the country were their enemies.

The teaching of pupils at Orieamaenyi Community School, Umuahia, Abia, from March 1967 onwards to acknowledge and identify forces working against their ethnic group (Uchendu 2007: 396) present early instances of constructions of the war as a tale of ethnic survival.

Like in all ethnic constructions, narratives of the war have varied in accordance with cultural and political circumstances of the group telling the story. The narratives lead them to cast each other in adversarial roles. This has also led them to habits of selective perception in which only negative interactions are remembered.

**Articulations of genocide: Ethnic brutalities and dehumanisation**

To this day, the death of ethnic members remains the overarching framework within which many stories of the war are reconstructed. A widely shared impression among Hausa-Fulani and Igbo groups is that they are struggling to recover from the killings of their kith and kin during the war. The two groups recall and narrate deaths of their members so as to construct and confirm the image of a people facing subjugation or genocide.

For the Hausa-Fulani, the killing of a number of their political leaders, including the Premier of the Northern region and the Prime Minister of the country in the 1966 coup, came to represent a tremendous sign of Igbo intentions to ‘re-colonise’ the North. While the coup directly and indirectly led to the ensuing war, the Northern region looks at it from the perspective of an array of ethnic meanings.

The pattern of ethnic killings read into the event was a major narrative motif for the Northern region's perception of their emergence as a periphery vis-à-vis an increasingly dominant Eastern region. Narrated particularly as an Igbo conspiracy to subordinate the Hausa-Fulani controlled Northern region, the Igbo became targets of indiscriminate killings in the region.

The massacre of Igbo in the Northern region left them insecure. On the basis of this, it was plausible for them to accentuate the killings as an act of genocide against them. As rail was the major means of transport during the war, trains were stopped at stations in the North, and fleeing Igbo dragged out and killed.

The Igbo also recall the 7th October 1967 mass murder at Asaba, which reinforces the general story of Igbo slaughter in other Nigerian places even after the war. To a considerable extent, the Asaba massacre, also known as “the killing fields of Ogbeosowa”, has come to represent the threats of genocide the Igbo faced and may still potentially face according to this narrative.
The story is that the Hausa-Fulani dominated federal troops rounded up the people at Isheagu and Okpanam villages. The troops claimed that they were “liberating Asaba” from the Biafran occupation. The large crowd were kept until evening and then asked to go back to their homes but as they moved, the troops opened fire and killed all of them, including children (Okocha 1994).

The dominant message of these stories draws parallels with the modern contexts and concepts of premeditated murder (and extrajudicial killing)—and to recognise and condemn the ethnic brutalities and dehumanisations that have escaped justice. These stories depict deep ethnic sufferings, and tend to build a climate of moral outrage as they circulate. Both groups recoil from the killings by the other (but downplay or deny any killing of the other by themselves) and portray each other through the lens of oppression, victimisation and injustice.

Each group still narrates its loss of ethnic members with attitudes of revenge that is coupled with a residual sense of political and cultural antagonisms. Stories of each group are conjoined with messages of anger, which cause them to retreat into defensiveness of their own ethnic actions and inactions. The view of each group ultimately boils down to ignoring the view of the other group and the voices each group hear of the other are exclusively those who despise and reject them.

*Cultural triumphalism: Ideas of ethnic greatness and collective self-valorisation*

In times of violence, ethnic stories are often coloured by visions of successes. Ethnic technological achievements are appealing and military, economic and political achievements create a sense of contentment and superiority. The stories each group tell are deeply intertwined with a politics of cultural triumphalism. The Igbo describe themselves as ‘Jews’, which has been used to articulate them as bearers of “highest scientific and entrepreneurial wisdom.”

For instance, ‘Biafra’ in all Igbo imaginations is a source of glorious preservation and sustenance through statehood. Biafra is visualised as a beacon of development and true African independence. Technological improvisations such as the use of coconut milk as brake-fluids, the local manufacturing of guns and bombs—and Ogbunigwe (killer in groups), production of engine oil from a mixture of grease and diesel, and the building of airport towers, radio and television transmitters, and motor engines from scraps, which helped Biafra to sustain the war, and so on—turned Biafra into a land of technological and economic opportunities.

It does not require much argument to show the necessity for technological improvisations during a war of secession accompanied with economic scarcity. Igbo technological success during the war depicts Biafra as a great power that must be admired as an example to emulate. In effect, the memory of Biafra becomes indestructible in the Igbo mind, which
causes other groups into defensiveness. In other words, while these accomplishments were
admired in time of relative peace, they constitute sources of indignation from the standpoint
of other groups during times of political crisis.

The Hausa-Fulani believe that the war presented an opportunity to resume their ‘continued
conquest to the sea’, which colonialism interrupted. For them, the conflict was a rare
opportunity to bring all Nigerian groups under a more comprehensive political system and
morally civilisational force. The Hausa-Fulani pride themselves as possessing the “most
developed political mind”, which they justify by invoking the successes of the Sokoto
caliphate, jihad conquests and successive military governments.

The 19th century jihad of northern Nigeria is often played up as an example the civil war
should have copied. The period was such an esteemed ethnic past that the war relished the
prospect of continuing the Hausa-Fulani conquest. In particular, that period in the more
distant past conveys the dominant image among the other groups of the Hausa-Fulani as a
group that can overrun the entire country.

For this reason, the challenge of the Nigerian civil war was seen as the missed opportunity to
extend the frontiers of Islam across the nation. The failure to use the war to bring all the
Nigerian peoples under Islamic rule is, if anything, a minor setback that can be rectified with
time. This perception provides a major narrative motif for understanding the significance of
Muslim and Christian conflicts in northern Nigeria.

While the Igbo look to commercial exploits and the Biafran wartime ingenuities and the
Hausa-Fulani see the caliphate and jihad as glorious pasts, the Yoruba accentuate their
ethnic values of the war in their acquisition of Western education. The Yoruba believe that
they did not support any of the two main groups in the war—the Hausa-Fulani and Igbo.
They claim to have maintained a middle ground throughout the war, which they attribute to
their natural wisdom acquired through education. They are the first group to receive Western
education and this gave them the commanding heights of Nigeria’s bureaucratic services.
This is often invoked to construct a group endowed with the “highest administrative
intellect.”

A great number of the Yoruba remember the war not for the destruction of lives and
property but rather for the greater opportunities offered for Yoruba nationalism. The fall of
the Igbo group from the pecking order of positions and privileges following their defeat,
shaped an enhanced Yoruba selfhood and self-consciousness within a context of acute
ethno-political dynamism and assertive cultural self-confidence.

With the impression that the Hausa-Fulani are uneducated, the Yoruba came to envisage
themselves as endowed with the single task of shaping post-war Nigeria. As they see it to this
day, their education and bureaucratic skills have provided good fortunes for their own ethnic
group, offering them prosperity and comfort.
It is interesting to note that these ethnic ideas and (self-)perceptions are endowed with rich meanings and provide a mythic political space to describe, characterise and thereby construct political conflicts in post-war Nigeria. The nature of the ideas is such that they constitute fertile soils for the reception and regeneration of old heroic ethnic tales as well as the generation of new stories.

For the in-group, ethnic valorisations are awakened to mobilise members. But for the out-groups, the valorisations lose much of their appeal as they are turned into myths directed against them that fester conflicts. For instance, there are myths that argue that what underlies the Igbo claims to be ‘Jews’ is their nature as unscrupulous traders. In this view, the greatest desire of the Igbo is to re-found Biafra in order to take absolute control of all economic and bureaucratic positions in the country.

A myth about the Yoruba is that they will impose Yoruba language as Nigeria’s *lingua franca* and to ban Islam in the North, just as the mirroring myth about the Hausa-Fulani plan to impose Islam on the whole country (Diamond 1983 (1988): 43). These myths are circulated to rigidify ethnic perceptions of each other. On the basis of these superficial myths, it becomes possible for even chance political events to be projected as deliberate ethnic acts.

**Memories of hatred: Amnesty, abandoned properties and post-war fiscal policies**

In conflict, groups often ask why they are hated so much. This question, for the Igbo, is explicable in terms of a skewed amnesty of Gowon’s post-war government. Tagged, “no victor, no vanquished in a war of brothers”, the amnesty also included a policy known as 3R’s—Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconciliation.

But in spite of the amnesty rhetoric, there was mass dismissal, forced discharge and/or retirement without benefits of middle and high ranking Igbo officers in the military and police (Madiebo 1980). Some other Igbo officers were re-absorbed with loss of service seniority (i.e. demoted to a lower rank).

There was also a mass purge of Igbo civilian technocrats and bureaucrats from the federal public service in August 1970. In response to these actions, the Igbo reconstituted the amnesty as “no victor, no vanquished but losers” as it became a guided affirmation of vengeance against them (Ihunna 2002: 236-243; Ojukwu 2002: 245-356). In effect, the amnesty was a pretext for the political subjugation and social marginalisation of the Igbo.

While the dominant attitude of the Igbo to the 1970 amnesty conveys the idea that it was increasingly a policy of political relegation, the Hausa-Fulani interprets the policy as a sign of political magnanimity. Indeed, many Hausa-Fulani regard the Igbo as ingrates for refusing to believe that the policy arrested truly violent recriminations that would have followed in the aftermath of the war. On the basis that such recriminations were avoided, many Hausa-Fulani interpret the treatment of the Igbo as a confirmation of the ‘winner takes the spoils’ thesis. The thesis is often played up to reinforce a spectre of fear of Igbo resurgence of self-
determination against which the Igbo must acquit i.e. refrain, distance and disavow themselves in order to be reintegrated.

In effect, the Igbo is portrayed through the lens of deep distrust, to such an extent that many end up constructing the idea that that the Igbo ‘should remain defeated for at least a hundred years.’ Many who hold this view frequently express the idea to keep the Igbo at bay from sensitive administrative and national security posts. This has led to misguided domestic policies and unwritten rules that the Presidency of the country, for instance, should be ‘off limits’ to the Igbo.

All these ideas indicate that the domination of the amnesty discourse in popular thinking sees the groups as falling back on metaphors of the last major outbreak of violence. This discourse channels respective Igbo feelings of despair and injustice and Hausa-Fulani perceptions of Igbo ingratitude and latent secessionism into acts of militancy and destructive behaviours of one against the other.

Like the story of amnesty, the issue of lands, oil jetties, houses and other properties left behind by the displaced Igbo during the war in several parts of the country, reveals strong psychological and cultural dynamics in the narratives about ethnic conflicts in the country. The properties were declared as “abandoned and then repossessed by federal and state governments and some were sold to indigenes of the states where they are located” (Aka 2005: 41-68). This gave the properties the ethnic character of dispossession and repossession, which has led to historical images of victimisation.

For the dispossessed Igbo, these disposessions signified political injustices, economic suffering and provided the most basic material for traumatic memories and storytelling. For repossessed groups, the redistributed goods and properties were considered as spoils of war.

Five years after the war, the government of Gen. Mohammed (1975-1976) granted state governments fourteen million naira to pay five years of rent arrears to certified owners in an effort to sidestep the political and moral hazards of the issue (Njoku 2004: 79-101). However, this gesture did not resolve the pains that have been inscribed in the mind and feelings of the dispossessed victims because “the continued possession by the government of buildings belonging to those on the other side in that war has ensured that memories of the 30-month war perpetually linger like pains of an open, festering sore” (Daily Sun 2009).

In addition to the stories of amnesty and abandoned properties, there is also the story of post-war federal fiscal measures, monetary and nationalisation policies that act to shape past and present conflicts in the country. Narrators of this story are attuned to the pretentious rehabilitation of the Igbo through payments of twenty Nigerian Pounds to every Igbo person. This policy included the banking and monetary regulation, which had two critical components that did stoke ethnic tensions in the country.
One, it froze accounts held by the Igbo in Nigerian banks, and second, it converted twenty Nigerian Pounds as equivalent to whatever amount held in Biafran Pounds. The two components of this measure further increased Igbo poverty and destitution and forced many Igbo-owned businesses to close. While this left the Igbo defensive and insecure, non-Igbo groups felt arrogant and insensitive or rather behaved arrogantly and insensitively.

Elements of unequal political and economic relationships in post-war Nigeria are also evoked and represented by the inherently oppressive Nigerian Enterprise Promotion (Indigenisation) Decree. The decree nationalised foreign-owned companies and sold to Nigerian ones. It was implemented in April 1974, when the Igbo were rendered virtually destitute and so could not compete in the tendering for these companies.

These policies are seen as bureaucratic and administratively enforced violence against the Igbo. But these are policies for which Awolowo and his Yoruba group are blamed for. As I have mentioned earlier, some stories depict the Yoruba responsible as conspirators in the Hausa-Fulani plan for Igbo extermination during and even after the war.

It is narrated that Awolowo provided the Hausa-Fulani led-government with a set of manipulative policies with profound implications for the further victimising and dehumanising of the Igbo. These include stories of his alleged sabotage I mentioned earlier and his post-war monetary and fiscal policies.

One other story is that Awolowo implemented a project of starvation as a weapon of war. It is said that he declared that “hunger is an instrument of war” and advised the government to block relief materials to the desperate Igbo during the war. His conspiracy entered the consciousness of a great many Igbo as irrefutable proof of innate Yoruba hostilities against the Igbo. This has provided the materials for sensationalistic, polarised and highly antagonistic Igbo/Yoruba politics and the structure of relations between them. It was also one of the reasons for the hostilities to Awolowo during his 1979 presidential campaign in Aba, when his aircraft was pelted with stones and refused permission to land.

While the economic and political disempowerment often manifests a sense of learned i.e. internalised sense of powerlessness among the Igbo group, it constituted a pattern of political opportunism for other groups. Memories of amnesty, abandoned properties and fiscal policies unfold as instances of symbolic ethnic confrontation, which reveal a mutually antagonistic repository of meanings. The stories do not just form images, but images of such profound significance that they represent the dominant narrative frames for conflict.

The critical nature of ethnic politics was unprecedented during the civil war, as stories continue to give active or passive ethnic supports (Obafemi 1992). Nigeria continues to grapple with the effects of the war as the events have fossilised into everyday stories, which generate vernacular ethnic knowledge about the other and sustain stereotypical beliefs about the latter.
Recent Events in the Frames of the Nigerian War

Recent events in the country bring stories that exhibit stereotypical frames of the civil war. The violence that followed the 2011 presidential elections has been trumpeted as a strangely ominous reminder of the last war. There can be seen many parallels between the events that led to the 1967-1970 war and the 2011 electoral violence that people can draw to shape various parameters of the present ethnic tensions.

Several incidents like the 1964 general electoral violence and allegations of rigging that led to the civil war have been likened to comparable incidents during the 2011 election. The killing of members of other ethnic groups in the 2011 elections has been presented as capable of triggering retaliatory responses that can escalate into a civil war, just as the 1964 killings contributed to the civil war in 1967.

Due to the parallel interpretations of these events, President Goodluck Jonathan in his response to the violence harked back to the bloody events that set off the civil war: “if anything at all, these acts of mayhem are sad reminders of the events which plunged our country into 30 months of an unfortunate civil war” (The Guardian, 21 April 2011). The comparable message potential inherent in these parallels, implicates that the civil war stories are a central aspect of the social construction and categorisation of current conflicts in the country.

As another illustration, people have routinely narrated the course of communal violence raging in the politically volatile Muslim northern region through the civil war lens. The legacies of the war, which cultivated and exploited the stabbings and hackings of ethnic members; the burning of churches, mosques and homes; and even the imagery of poorly clad mothers crying beside the dead bodies of their children killed while in compulsory national youth service in the North, all indicate that the present violence and the civil war has much in common.

For example, in the ethno-religious violence of 2000 to 2001 induced by introduction of Shari’a (Islamic law) and the perennial feuds in Jos, people elect to portray the sheer number of the dead and the displacement of tens of thousands of people in striking scenes reminiscent of the events that began in May 1966. As it was then, ethnic members fled back to their ethnic homelands. Thus, people analyse current violence by resorting to simplistic and primitive imageries of the war.

The images of the civil war reproduced or compared to those in current conflicts derive from a priori assumptions than form stereotypical connections with events on the ground. More often, the diversity of interpretations of violence and political events in the present are contrasting interpretations abstracted from civil war discourses.

For instance, the civil war stories hugely resurged during the political struggles against the repressive military regimes of General Babangida following the annulment of the June 12
1993 Presidential elections and the more brutal government of General Abacha that succeeded it.

One interesting perspective of the annulment is its parallel ethnic meaning regarding the 1966 killings of Northern political leaders. Northern leaders were killed on orders of the coup plotters dominated by Igbo officers, and the election was won by a Yoruba and cancelled by the Hausa-Fulani oligarchy through its dominant control of the army. It is quite easy to read kindred ethnic meanings into the two events.

The weight of the two events cannot be the same, since one involved a number of deaths, though, the winner of the election, Chief Abiola died in prison. However, the annulment of the 1993 election and the imprisonment, harassment and forceful exile of Yoruba political leaders was adjudged in ethnic terms as resembling the killings of Northern political leaders in 1966.

Interpretations of Hausa-Fulani subjugation were given for the killings of Northern leaders, and the same perspective of Yoruba ethno-regional marginalisation was given to the 1993 annulment. The phraseology in the stories of the two events has a kindred and simplifying interpretation of complex ethnic agendas, while the meanings hark back to avowed ethno-regional intents by other groups to rule the country at the expense of one's own group.

One other interesting reference of those interpreting the annulment to the civil war events, was that the Yoruba's angry response to the annulment was extrapolated to the Western regional crisis of 1964 in the Western region. Particular narrative elements were re-constructed and elevated to the status of catch-phrases for the Yoruba response. For instance, “wild, wild west”, that oft-repeated characterisation of the Yoruba, was deployed to serve as a reminder of the state of anomie in the Western region during 1964.

There are other factors like the exploration of mineral resources, which also reinforce the resurgence of popular civil war stories in Nigeria's current ethnic conflicts. The perception of the war by people living in the Niger Delta has been based on the imagined, presumed causes and dynamics of oil politics. In the 1990s, when ethnic rivalries were resurging, many groups and individuals recalled how the civil war was fought as a struggle for oil rents under the mask of ideology (Tell 1994).

At the time, Niger Delta communities re-articulated the war as a fight among the three major ethnic groups for control of the oil rather than a fight for territorial sovereignty or ethnic survival (Giwa 1985: 10). This re-articulation of the war in the context of present ethnic competition has acquired particular importance in the Niger Delta, as the local communities mobilise against “re-colonisation” by the three largest groups on one front and by oil companies and the Nigerian government on the other.

This has provided Niger Delta communities constructions of foundational myths and dramatic images of “communities at risk.” The Ijaw community, for instance, has compared the lack of concerns from the centre to the hazardous effects of oil exploration to reconstruct
existing identity cleavages so as to elevate the warrior aspect of Ijaw culture. The self-designation of Mujahid Dokubo, a leader of one of the many Ijaw militia groups, as ‘Amakri’ incarnate—an Ijaw historical figure and liberator—is one example.

Resurgent civil war stories are partly connected to the radical formation of ethno-political cultural organisations and militias in the late 1990s. Each ethnic group has formed a cultural organisation: Igbo—Ohaneze; Yoruba—Afenifere; Hausa-Fulani—Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF); and Niger Delta—South-South People's Assembly (SSPA). Formations of these organisations rely on residual frames of reference originating from the civil war, and are actively reformulating discursive practices to describe new modes of ethnic politics. For instance, the Ohaneze celebrates an annual Remembrance Day on the 29th of September. The day is an essential cultural and political moment to reflect on the Igbo ethnic heroes of the war. It should also be pointed that out these ethnic organisations also receive overt or covert ethnic-militia supports—thus Yoruba's Afenifere has Oodua People's Congress (OPC); the Ohaneze has the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB); the Hausa-Fulani's ACF has the Arewa People's Congress (APC); and the Niger Delta's SSPA has amongst others the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND).

The militias manifest the militarisation of ethnic politics and culture. With the militias, each group can retreat to aggressive models of ethnic competition and violent release of pent-up social tensions. The politicisation of ethnicity through these ethnic organisations and militias is marked by the use of ethnic stories, images, aggressive chants and armed displays.

Conclusion: Changing Language of Ethnic Politics

This study has examined how Nigerian groups use their stories to compete for dominance or lament their supposed or actual victimisation. Dominant stories emerge from the competing ethnic representations, which are characterised by the discursive redefinition of past conflicts.

The stories do not only generate particular ‘truths’ and interests, but also continue to inform the kinds of social knowledge circulating within each of the groups. In the stories, social information stereotyping is pushed to the point where they become so lodged in political perceptions that they psychologically provide the impetus for hostilities.

However, I do not argue that stories automatically, unavoidably lead to ethnic conflicts but that they generate an environment that radically reconstruct and reconstitute the frameworks of violence— and potentially justify a future recourse to violence. It is through the circulatory social meanings and symbolisms that the stories generate affective ethnic politics and a normative environment for mobilising ethnic members in which it has become possible for hatreds to fester and intergenerational conflicts to be instituted.
Each of the groups generated a discursive reconstitution of the conflicts they are or have been involved in. The discourses reconstructed structures of polarised ethnic politics, identities and interests in the country. They also created legitimised and authoritative political claims that should be undermined through moderating counter-narratives if we are to disrupt the potency of an antagonistic and (self-)destructive discourse in reproducing violence.

The question, then, is whether the stories of violence can be changed. There have been some discursive tactics aimed at changing the language of violence. For instance, Malkki (1989) and Lemarchand (1994) have discussed the complex layers of myths and histories that enable ethnic intellectuals to construct worldviews that would countenance, indeed justify mass killings. Ethnic stories as they are circulated in the country are especially dangerous for their regular and widespread appearance as a normal practice.

In their deployment in social contexts, people begin to live in fear again and the country becomes a repository of wanton violence. The stories have broader implications. As Fair (1994: 38) argues, through the process of signification in stories, utterances, events, places, actions and inactions take on particular meanings and so creates spaces and opportunities for renewed confrontation and violence.

The patterns of political portrayal of conflicts in stories create spaces of ethnic fear about the distant other. This propagates a constellation of knowledge and ethno-political consciousness that damages efforts to promote multi-ethnic understanding. It is true that people are active in constructing meanings in the face of ethnic inundation, but political events including simple explanations of threats are largely a function of the language used to described them (Edelman 1971: 65).

By narrating current violence and making it subscribe to a ready-made discourses of the civil war, people construct a social reality in a manner that plays on ethno-political and religious differences and misunderstandings. What this calls for is the disruption of the discourse of violence and zero-sum politics conveyed through ethnic terms and images.

This alternative discourse is an act of multiplying the stories, so that they do not have any qualified attachment to just a single group or solely construct counter myths that undermine hegemonic ethnic tendencies and dominant political effects—though that must be done as well.

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The author retains the right to submit a renewed, modified and improved version of the article —also in light of the published and unpublished comments of the critical response—to this or another journal in the foreseeable future.
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Review of “Indirect Incitement to Violence”

(Critical Response to Chuz'maria bekee-Eberendu’s “Indirect Incitement to Violence: An Analysis of Stories of Nigerian Ethnic Conflicts”)

The author’s analysis of ‘war stories’ and other narratives of the Nigerian Civil War and other conflicts in Nigeria is incisive, thought-provoking and obviously relevant to anyone engaged in conflict research and conflict resolution.

However, the author could have been more elaborate and precise about the names and backgrounds of major figures, and about the circumstances and contexts of major events. Such elaborations and clarifications would have helped the reader unfamiliar with the country, culture and region in question to better, and more easily, grasp the nature and significance of actors, events and the narratives involved.

- Anonymous

NB: do you have any comments on Eberendu's article and/or the critical response? Please send these to info@ethnogeopolitics.org, or through the contact form at www.ethnogeopolitics.org. Some of the comments on this and any other contribution, we may publish as Critical Responses (maximum 3,000 words) in the next issue(s) of the journal. Extensive critical responses with own source references may be published as full-fledged, separate articles. Please supply your name, contact details, academic and/or other professional titles and affiliations, as well as your specialisms and any major publications.
(Announcement)

My new Cartoons and other Illustrations    Caspar ten Dam

In recent years, I am (once more) producing cartoons and other illustrations for customers and clients. I am also experimenting with new cartoons such as the one about the “[Terrorism] Expert”, some examples of which have been reproduced in some recent issues of this journal. Shown below is a sheet of my experimental, wordless cartoon story “The Encounter”. See for these and other cartoons www.ctdamconsultancy.com and https://stripkunst.wordpress.com.

In any private, small-scale use of these cartoons and illustrations, my authorship (“Copyright C. ten Dam”) must stay visible in reproductions. For any commercial, large-scale use, my prior permission is required.
The Price: The End of Iraqi and Syrian Woes and the Vanishing of ISIS

Fadi Elhusseini

When entangled elements make it hard to reach sound analyses, conspiracy theories appear to be a good tool to explain the unexplained. This applies perfectly to the situation in the Middle East. Many observers are not yet ready to cede their *de facto* approach, albeit every single regional development shows the clear marks of a crucial role by foreign powers (either super or regional), not only in what has been taking place, but for a debacle that has been erupting in the region for decades, perhaps centuries. Such indicators lead to a strong understanding that dramatic changes might be within striking distance.

For a start, the unity of the Arabs cannot be benign for foreign powers who have interests in the region. If the Arabs were united, they would be a power that would not let others use them or have imperialist dreams in such a geostrategically important region. Iran's growing role in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon is the starkest example of how division, failed-state scenarios and weak governments are nothing but a steppingstone for other powers to sneak in, penetrate and then dominate.

This hypothesis is not limited to the old definition of powers in the form of states; it also includes those novel trans-border actors such as terrorist groups. That said, it should not be surprising to see Al-Qaeda—and then Daesh (so-called ‘Islamic State’)—appear and flourish in Iraq, following the chaos resulting from the US invasion and occupation. The same concept of chaos and failed-state-scenario applies to Afghanistan, Syria, Libya and Yemen.

History is a good starting point to ascertain how major powers intervened in this region in order to secure their own strategic interests. The examples are numerous, but perhaps the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement was the most evident case of major powers agreeing to divide the Arab world into competing states. Although the Arabs have never lived in one single state, they have lived in particularly large, interconnected regions such as the Levant covering what is now Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and occupied Palestine and the kingdom of Egypt and Sudan (now divided into two states).

Foreign intervention and the fragmentation of the Arabs took a sharper line with the United States' occupation of Iraq. This occupation not only meant the fall of a state, a president and a dictatorship, or even an end to the Arab nationalism that Saddam Hussein was one of the last Arab leaders to embrace; it also meant a geopolitical earthquake in the whole regional order, with a far-reaching change in the balance of power that prevailed in the Middle East at large.

Intriguingly, the collapse of Saddam's regime meant that Iraq would become prey to Iran. It also meant the stirring up of sectarian strife between the majority of Iraqis who are Shia.
living for decades under a Sunni ruler, and the minority of Sunnis who were privileged under the Ba'ath regime of Saddam. This ignited the separatist tendencies of the Kurds in the north. The possible repercussions should have been worthy of much more consideration before the US occupied and then withdrew from Iraq.

History aside, these developments take us to the emergence (or creation by certain powers, if we want to be honest) of a new regional actor known as Daesh (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria). This so-called “Islamic State” presents a bizarre manifestation of an extremely radical interpretation of “Sunni Islam”.

Noteworthy in this context is that Daesh did not exist before the US occupation of Iraq and its roots can be traced to Al-Qaeda affiliated Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi in 2004. In response to the chasm of mistrust between the various sects and the immense danger that this group posed, the other sects became more anxious to protect themselves, and at times retaliate. As a result, the role of sectarian militias increased and, to add insult to injury, the separatist tendencies have been justified more than at any time in the past. The calls by Iraqi Kurds for independence have resonated in other countries and encouraged the Kurds in Syria and Turkey to follow suit; we are likely to see another such call from Kurds in Iran sooner or later.

Apparently, like their predecessors in the Sykes-Picot era, the superpowers have found that re-fragmenting and re-dividing the region further would better serve their strategic interests. The Kurdish element is critical in the Middle East regional equation, particularly because the separatist tendencies by Kurds in one country have led to others in neighbouring states. In a surprising move, the US has put its strategic relationship with Turkey at stake with the Trump Administration striking a novel partnership deal with a number of Kurdish groups in Syria.

Walid Faris, who served as Middle East affairs adviser during the Trump election campaign, told Al-Sharq Al-Awsat London-based newspaper on March 22, 2017 that Damascus fully acknowledges that the US Administration would not allow the Syrian/Assad regime to move its forces to the east of Syria, neither toward Al-Hasaka nor toward the anti-Daesh combat zones. This, according to Faris, explains why the US dispatched additional US Marines to north-east Syria. In other words, Washington is yearning to become the backbone of the forces that will advance and liberate the swathes of territory controlled by Daesh, the areas over which Washington would not allow the Syrian/Assad regime to regain control.

The latest movements in the field lead to a similar conclusion. In fact, with the mounting presence of major powers in the Syrian conflict, these developments show that the role of other actors (militias like Hezbollah, Daesh and Al-Nusra, or states like Iran and Turkey) will come to an end. In other words, such transformations (especially the growing role of the Russian forces) may usher in the end of the Iranian presence in Syria. The departure of the
other militias appears to be just around the corner, at least in areas controlled by the Syrian regime. The deployment of the Russian forces near the Lebanese border is a case in point, where Hezbollah's role has ended, mainly after achieving a demographic change and consolidating a sectarian structure for the various regions inside Syria.

Similarly, the remarkable presence of the US and growing numbers of its troops on the ground has led to parallel scenarios within Sunni areas (currently occupied by Daesh) or Kurdish zones. It looks as if an agreement was reached between the two major powers Russia and the US to divide Syria into spheres of influence based on sectarian or ethnic parameters.

As Syria was previously an exclusively Russian domain, the significant role and interests of Iran were not always well-received in Moscow. Dividing Syria between Moscow and Washington and eliminating the role of other actors appears to be a win-win situation for the Americans and the Russians. Lest there be any misunderstanding about this outcome, since the outbreak of Arab revolts in 2011, Syria and Bashar Al-Assad himself were not the sole cards held by Russia in the Middle East.

Moscow has been developing strategic relations and forging broader interests in several other Middle East states, including Israel, Egypt and even Turkey. On the other hand, it is obvious that the new US Administration has a clearer vision on what can be done in Syria, when compared to the Obama Administration.

In this context, Dr Faris says that despite the political quarrels, a meeting between US President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin could happen soon. Their publicly agreed-upon solution in Syria passes through one gate: the withdrawal of all foreign armed forces and militias, namely Hezbollah, the Iraqi militias, Al-Basdaran, Al-Qaeda, Daesh, Al-Nusra and all of those who reached Syria with the assistance of the Iranian regime. Faris adds that Washington and its NATO allies on the one hand and Russia and its international allies such as China on the other can agree on this solution.

Furthermore, all of those parties also agree that the first stage that can lead to a solution in Syria begins with the "disappearance" of Daesh. Following this, a moderate Arab Sunni authority must assume power in the areas currently controlled by the militants.

The logic behind such a step is that if Daesh is replaced by the Syrian regime—like what is happening in Iraq—this may create a sectarian problem in those areas. Hence, according to Faris, the role of a number of moderate Sunni Arab countries would be important because there is a need for an alliance on the ground, as the US is not ready for a major troop deployment.

We might argue that Syria is thus heading toward a tripartite division: a Russian sphere of influence, wherein the Syrian regime and its Alawi (Shia) Arab sect lives; a US sphere of influence, with the Sunni Arab opposition and its groups; and another US sphere of influence, for the Kurds. Needless to say, we can easily see a mirror image in Iraq, which is
mired with sectarian and ethnic traps and a horde of uncertainties, and its divisions are clearer than ever before.

As such, it would not be outlandish to see the end of the Syrian war soon and in a similar way the disappearance of Daesh, especially after it has almost fulfilled its sinister mandate and purpose for which it was established; that is, the cementing of regional sectarian strife. Daesh cannot have any future in the agreed-upon scenario and thus its disappearance becomes inevitable.

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Main Article

Conflict Patterns Revisited: Trends, Frequencies, Types and Brutalities in both Ethnic and Non-Ethnic Conflicts

Caspar ten Dam

Explanatory note: This article is an updated, expanded and improved version of the article by the same author that appeared in the Autumn 2015 issue of this journal titled 'Looking at Conflict Patterns: Declining Frequencies yet Persistent Brutalities in both Ethnic and Non-Ethnic Conflicts' (Vol 3, No.2, pp.9-23), partially in response to the two Critical Responses i.e. open peer-reviews in the same issue (Ibid, pp.24-25).

Introduction

What brutalises rebels? What makes them cruel, or makes them do things that we consider cruel and immoral? That is a primary question of my research on rebels and rebellion, i.e. the "violent opposition to the ruler, government regime[,] or state for any personal, collective or ideological purpose" (Ten Dam 2015a: 6 (quote)). Arguably, rebels or insurgents are the most important and dominant kind of armed non-state actors. After all, without rebels, no rebellions. The question of brutalisation—which can be put to all kinds of armed actors—is of prime importance to the field of conflict studies in general and to the "emerging multidisciplinary field” of ethnogeopolitics (Rezvani 2013a: 4) in particular.1

Actually, most conflicts appear to be internal, insurgent, ethnic and separatist in nature, and one wishes to prevent or curtail the suffering involved. A secondary yet crucial question precedes the primary one: do rebels brutalise all the time, increasingly so, or at all? And if so, to what quantifiable degrees? At first glance the answer to that seems affirmative—indeed, rather obvious. Reputations of armed opposition groups plummeted following the end of the Cold War.

The ideals of a 'people's war' propounded by Ché Guevara, Mao Tse-tung and Frantz Fanon lost appeal among the young, and gained ridicule when people observed the atrocities in places ranging from Afghanistan to Sierra Leone, from Colombia to Congo. So-called 'freedom fighters' brought little liberation but plenty of savagery and crime; Ché, Mao and Fanon held no sway among them.

The remaining ideologues, according to many observers, appear to be Islamic terrorists who show little regard to human life. Their violence is the more frightening, because of their so-called catastrophic terrorism i.e. violence intended to kill as many people (civilians) as possible. This trend arose in the early 1980s, superseding a classical terrorism intended to gain media attention and its objectives with as few casualties as possible (Van Leeuwen,
Indeed, it seems as if “even the old guerrilla struggles have grown more awful. Increasingly, “the rebel—Irish or Arab, urban or rural—has appeared cruel, a new barbarian. ... The romantic rebel is dead and gone” (Bell 1998: 4). In order to determine whether that bleak assessment is true, and if so, why it has come about, one needs to ask the following questions:

1. Has the ‘decent’ liberation fighter, who behaves honourably towards combatants and non-combatants alike and commits no war crimes or any other atrocities, become extinct? Has it ever existed?
2. Many studies observe the ‘degeneration’ of the freedom fighter into a criminal, bandit or terrorist. Is this observation correct?
3. Have these studies focused too much on ‘new’ conflicts, overlooking the commonalities with Cold War and pre-Cold War conflicts?
4. Why do regulations such as The Hague and Geneva conventions seem to have so little impact? Do local values and customs deviate so much from international law? Or do premature and unfair condemnations of rebels as ‘terrorists’ and ‘bandits’ lie at the root of their later brutalisation, as they have nothing to lose by violating basic norms?
5. Can we determine what constitutes a ‘just revolt’, given that there may be different ‘just war’ notions in different cultures?
6. Do motivations like anger about pain, humiliation and injustice or greed for power, prestige and riches not just spawn rebellions per se, but also terrorism, banditry, and other (war) crimes by rebels?
7. Apart from motivations, do the pressures and horrors of battle brutalise rebels—and any other kinds of combatants for that matter?
8. Do all kinds of combatants exhibit similar kinds and degrees of brutality and brutalisation (if any)? Or does the type, status and circumstance of the armed actor in question at least partially determine his or her resort to brutalities i.e. violations of local and/or norms of violence (if any)? We should focus on the nature and behaviour of rebels and other non-state actors, as they are part of most conflicts today; but in the end we also need to analyse the nature and behaviour of soldiers and other state and semi-state actors like paramilitaries.

The first three first research questions are about whether and how much brutalisation, i.e. increasing resort to violence that violates local and/or international norms—that I hold are ultimately based on conscience, empathy and honour (Ten Dam 2014: 8-9)—occurs. The next four questions are about why and how brutalisation occurs for so far it does occur, and the
last one is about whether it occurs similarly or differently among all kinds of combatants, even though my present research focus is on insurgents.

A good way to answer these questions is by testing, through different yet complementary research methods (thick description, semi-quantitative tabulation and interpretation of data, quantitative analysis of data through full-fledged statistics, etc.), a Brutalisation theory I have developed myself, by incorporating what I consider to be the best concepts available in cultural anthropology, military psychology and other disciplines (see Ten Dam 2010: 335-343; 2011: 237-241; 2012: 226-232; 2015c: 579-611).

The theory is thus made up of the variables violence-values (my composite term) on proper and improper violence; conflict-inducing motivations, in particular grievances, avarices, interests and ideologies, that bring about i.e. cause or trigger the conflict; combat-stresses like fear, fatigue and rage resulting from or leading to traumas (and hypothetically to brutalities as well); and conflict-induced motivations, in particular grievances, avarices, interest and ideologies, that happen by, through and during the conflict.3

The theory thus assumes rebels—or other armed non-state and state actors—to increasingly violate local and/or international norms, in a cycle of escalating and worsening violence. As a first preliminary test of this theory, I have compared separatist rebellions by Chechens and Albanians, particularly in Chechnya (1994-1996, 1999-present) and Kosovo (1997-1999), and their historical causes and antecedents (Ten Dam 2010, 2011, 2012, 2015b).

Incidentally, elsewhere (Ten Dam 2015a) I already have argued how best to define any phenomena through a tripartite distinction between action, actor and motive or human drive. The consequent conceptualisations (see Appendix in Ten Dam 2015a: 13-18) I apply in my own research on brutalisation and other phenomena.

Conflict Patterns: Implications for Ethnogeopolitics and Beyond

One might ask how typical, representative and otherwise relevant the Russo-Chechen and Serbo-Albanian conflicts actually are, in the broader context of armed struggles and other forms of political violence in the past, present and (foreseeable) future. The first thing one should note is the remarkable given that both qualitative and quantitative studies—like the one by the Center for Systemic Peace (CSP) (e.g. Marshall & Cole 2014: esp. 11-13, Figure 5)4—have generally found an overall decrease in internal (ethnic) conflicts after 1990, despite the often-cited notion of post-Cold War instability (Gurr 2000: 52).

Figure I shown further below shows such a finding from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), though the generally downward trend is a highly fluctuating one, with a notably high rise in 2014: the latter year saw 40 armed conflicts including eleven wars with “at least 1,000 battle-related deaths in one calendar year” (Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 537)—a rise of six conflicts including five wars from 2013.
The UCDP’s researchers are alarmed about this “uneven, yet clearly visible, upward trend” in recent years, not just in the number of conflicts: 2014 saw 101,400 fatalities (UCDP’s best estimate), the “highest number of battle-related deaths in the post-1989 period” due to the “escalation of several conflicts” and the highly destructive conflict in Syria (Ibid: 536 (quotes), 539 (estimate of fatalities)).

Incidentally only their more recent reports provide and present figures on “trends in battle-related deaths since 1989” irrespective of the number of conflicts (Themnér & Wallensteen 2014: 541). Their fatality estimates (Ibid: 542, note 7) as shown in Figures IIa and especially IIb present an intriguing yet worrying increase in combat-related fatalities, accompanied by an undeniable increase in the number of armed conflicts, mainly due to “events in the Middle East” (Ibid: 544) like the Syrian War.

Crucially, these new trends may signify continuing brutalities or even increasing levels of brutalisation. Yet “compared to the large-scale violence of the 20th century, the number of fatalities caused by armed conflicts in 2014 is relatively low” (Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 536). Moreover, the overall downward trend of political violence—indeed of any type of private and public violence, whether counted as number of incidents or number of fatalities, across the last decades, centuries and even millennia, as convincingly shown by scholars like Steven Pinker (2011, 2012) (and Joshua S. Goldstein (2011)—even reverses the accumulation of old, unresolved, continuing armed conflicts since the Second World War (WWII). Yet these downward trends do not diminish the relevance of ethnogeopolitical research in general and the author’s Brutalisation research in particular, for the following eight reasons:

1. Rebels and internal conflicts are predominant. According to the UCDP, there have been 548 conflict dyads (pairs of warring parties) in 254 armed conflicts (144 wars) active in 155 locations since the Second World War, and 144 armed conflicts (47 wars) between 1989 and 2013, many of these protracted or continuing after 1990 (Themnér & Wallensteen 2014: 541, 542). Yet rebels are still the predominant armed non-state actors, and intrastate conflicts have far outnumbered interstate conflicts for decades if not longer. Indeed, interstate conflicts “have become .. increasingly rare .. since the early 1990s, .. especially since 2004” (Themnér & Wallensteen 2011: 528).

Nowadays wars and lower-level conflicts between states are practically non-existent, though external state involvement in intrastate conflicts remain significant: thus 39 of the 40 conflicts active in 2014 (i.e. apart from the India-Pakistan conflict) were “fought within states, but 13 of them—or 33%—were internationalized in the sense that one or more [foreign] states contributed troops to one or both sides” (Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 537). As noted in an earlier UCDP report, “the number of internationalized intrastate conflicts continued to be at a high level” since 2012 (Themnér & Wallensteen 2013: 509).
In sum, conventional wars between states have been rare since WWII and particularly since the end of the Cold War. Actually intrastate wars “always have outnumbered interstate wars” (M.L.R. Smith 2003: 34).

One could even argue that since the dawn of human history, most intrastate wars (and ‘lesser’ conflicts) have been rebellions against the incumbent regime, and that most rebellions have been separatist ones seeking independence or some form of self-rule for one’s own community however conceived. Seen from that perspective, the Chechen and Albanian cases are quite typical. Certainly “insurgency and its tactics are as old as warfare itself” (Sewall et al. 2007: 2, § 1-2).

There “always has been intercommunal strife”; indeed, intrastate wars probably will continue to outnumber interstate wars, even if the latter are “off-season” due to American hegemony and may return with a vengeance once “great-power rivals feel able to challenge” that hegemony (Gray 2005: 19, 22 (quotes)).

2. Quantitative global conflict studies show a remarkable increase in both the number and intensity of conflicts during 1979-1989, arguably constituting the last period of the Cold War (e.g. Marshall & Gurr 2005: 11, Figure 3.1), a significant if temporary peak in violence that requires further elucidation and research.

3. Many or most conflict datasets overlook sorts of violence that apparently are on the increase in most recent years beyond the number of armed conflicts, like the number of violent incidents in Africa by different actors as tabulated by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) Project (see Figure III).

Also the number of battled-related deaths since 1989 appears to rise overall, especially since 2011 (see Figures IIa and especially IIb, which shows the rise even more markedly), with also very high peaks in 1991 and 1999 mainly due to “the bloody conflicts fought in Ethiopia” and the interstate Ethiopian-Eritrean War respectively (Themnér & Wallensteen 2014: 542(quote)-543).

Particularly both war- and peacetime terrorism might be on the rise. Thus the US State Department estimated that between 1995 and 2000 alone, so even before ‘9-11’, global terrorist violence killed and wounded 19,422 people—78% of the terrorist-related fatalities and injured from 1968 to 1989 altogether (Chalk 2002: 12 (& note 2)). More recently, the Center for Systemic Peace (CSP) estimated that High Casualty Terrorist Bombings (HCTB) i.e. “bombings by non-state actors resulting in fifteen or more deaths” have “increased dramatically since the 9/11/01 attacks” (Marshall & Cole 2014: 15, 16 (quotes))—though HCTB attacks still pale both in frequency and scale in comparison to other forms of “political or criminal violence” (Ibid: 16).
4. The author’s own definitions of identity and violence (see Ten Dam 2015c: 13-18, Appendix; Ten Dam & Polanski 2015: 227-232, Appendix B) could best be used in the author’s own Brutalisation research and arguably in other kinds of violence research as well. Most datasets, including the UCDP’s, heavily rely on J. David Singer & Melvin Small’s classic definition of war as any sustained military conflict resulting in at least one-thousand battle-deaths per year (later expanded to at least 1,000 battle-related deaths per year).¹¹

UCDP’s definition of (minor) armed conflict has been widely adopted as well, as “a contested incompatibility that concern government or territory or both, where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a calendar year” (Themnér & Wallensteen 2014: 541, note 1; Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 536, note 1).¹²

However, such definitions “ignore the relative amount of fatalities .. when compared to the entire population. A thousand casualties in China signify a much ‘smaller’ conflict than a thousand casualties in Liechtenstein” (Ten Dam 1997: 7). Most war or conflict definitions also presume that all parties must possess a minimum of organisation. This leaves out violence against (practically) unarmed, unprotected or otherwise defenceless civilians in places without organised resistance.

Thus the UCDP excludes from its overall armed-conflict datasets all cases of non-state conflict or (instances of) violence with combatant and non-combatant casualties due to fighting between non-state groups only, and cases of one-sided violence with direct and deliberate attacks against civilians. It also only counts civilian casualties as ‘battle-related deaths’ that are the result of unintentional if careless and disproportionate ‘collateral damage’ from combat between opposing parties so as “to make sure that no one-sided violence” is “coded as part of the armed conflict” (Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 540 (quote), 549).¹³

Some other yet unfortunately discontinued datasets like PIOOM’s count “indirect conflict-related deaths” caused by “hunger, diseases, and exhaustion” as well (Jongman 1995: 16 (2nd quote), 17 (1st quote)).¹⁴ Since recently the UCDP does provide, for the first time, overall datasets on organized violence that include (separate, distinguishable datasets on) non-state conflicts and one-sided violence as well, next to those of state-based conflicts i.e. armed conflicts between “two governments” (interstate) or “a government and a rebel organization” (intrastate) for the period 1989-2014 (Melander 2015: 2 (incl. quotes); see Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 549, note 25). Indeed, its new data “show that also the other two types of violence ... —conflict between non-state actors and violence targeting civilians— increased substantially in 2014” as shown Figures IVa and IVb.¹⁵

The latter figures show how much difference the inclusion or exclusion of one major genocide like the one in Rwanda in 1994 makes for the entire post-Cold War period.
Only the exclusion of this genocide from the dataset makes state-based conflict the most lethal actor-type of conflict during this period. But even its inclusion would not make this period the most violent one since WWII.

Data on large-scale massacres (genocides and/or politicides) by the Center for Systemic Peace (Marshall et al. 2015, 2016; see Melander 2015: 8, Figure 8) show that “during the Cold War there were at least five .. truly massive genocides” that makes the violence in the 1998-2014 period including the Rwanda Genocide and the “present carnage in the form of one-sided violence in parts of the Middle East and Africa” pale in comparison” (Melander 2015: 9).

However, one may question UDCP’s decision to reserve the armed-conflict concept to state-based conflicts only, in contrast to the author’s definition of armed conflict as “violent confrontation between two or more armed actors” be they state, semi-state or non-state (see Appendix in Ten Dam 2015c: 13-18). Be that as it may, overall conflict data should collate and present purely non-state conflicts in e.g. weakened, collapsed or utterly vanished states as well—and all instances of violence between non-state actors (and casualties caused by them) in or during the other (kinds of) conflicts.

Even though the author’s definitions of war and armed conflict also presume that “at least one party is able to resist another's use of overt military force” (Most & Starr 1983: 140), the broadest conflict or rather violence datasets ought to include cases of one-sided, uncontested violence against powerless people unable to arm and defend themselves—both in ‘wartime’ and ‘peacetime’ however conceived.

There may be fewer yet more brutal(ised) instances of violence. It may well be true that the “obsolescence of major war is just one of many historical declines of violence” (Pinker 2011: 309) apparently accompanied by “humane developments such as the abolition of slavery, despotism, and cruel punishments” (Pinker 2012: xxvi (quote) & his note 3). Still, one needs to verify these apparent trends of debrutalisation (own term) or increasing respect of existing norms and humanisation (ibid) towards ‘higher’ norms, by falsifying the Brutalisation theory. Actually, the overall decline of violence may be as valid as, and coincide with, the brutalisation dynamics in the remaining, ever fewer instances of armed conflict and other forms of violence.

The author’s two-case study (Chechnya and Kosovo) in his overall Brutalisation research project explores unfamiliar terrain. Scholars rarely study Eurasian insurgencies compared with those in Africa, the America’s and South-East Asia. Table I below showing numbers of Google search-engine hits in 2016 for these (sub-)regions seems to largely corroborate this—though some search terms concerning these...
regions, like ‘South(-)Eastern Europe’, get rather high numbers of hits on ‘Google NL’ search.\textsuperscript{19}

Arguably, Eurasian Muslim non-state actors are least researched of all, despite their apparently crucial role in the break-ups of the Soviet and Yugoslav federations. Also, Kosovo and Chechnya share the “experience of colonialism” and “problems of building new institutions” in the Third World (Horowitz 2000: 18).\textsuperscript{20} Actually, it would be “wise and indeed urgent to compare the histories, deprivations and current fragilities of post-colonial countries in the (former) Third World and those of post-communist countries in the (former) Second World”.\textsuperscript{21}

Studying secessions may enhance understanding of the breakups of Communist federations, though the core aim of my ongoing research to understand rebel degenerations rather than state disintegrations. Both rightwing Totalitarianists (M. Malia, Z. Brezinski) and leftwing Modernisationists (J. Hough, A. Dallin, R. Suny) did not foresee Gorbachev’s liberating yet destabilising \textit{perestroika, glasnost} and \textit{demokratzia} policies. Once the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia disintegrated, they claimed that these events were bound to happen: liberalisations deligitimised the Communist system and legitimised separatism (Totalitarianists), or cultural-socio-economic developments increased national consciousness (Modernisationists).

Yet “these structural characteristics cannot account by themselves for the collapse of the USSR in retrospect, as they have been used to emphasize the stability of the system as well” (Ten Dam 1993: 5; Lipset & Bence 1994). More likely the “breakdown of socialist system was not inevitable” (Szelényi & Szelényi 1994: 212 (quote)-218). Even Modernisationists applying “resource mobilization theories” that challenged “relative deprivation” (Mason 1992: 108) cannot explain persistent secessionism in ‘non-sovereign’ territories that had few chances to gain international recognition, like Chechnya and Kosovo (Walker 2003: 3-4,12,164-168 & chapter 4).\textsuperscript{22}

As I describe more extensively in the review essay presented in the journal’s current issue, multiple interrelated factors can explain secessionist ethno-territorial conflicts—arguably the most frequent type of armed conflict for decades or even since the dawn of human history (see reason 1)—like Chechnya’s independence struggle against Russia’s might.

These factors include grievances of severe deprivations in the past and demographical size and dominance of the initiating (rebelling) party (Rezvani 2013b: esp. 227-249 (Chechnya); Rezvani 2014 (on Chechnya); Rezvani 2015). Yet Babak Rezvani stresses that such factors only make any conflict truly likely, in a time of interethnic tensions and state fragmentation, when the ethnicities concerned live next to each other in
concentrated pockets (mosaic configuration) within ethno-politically constructed territories: “in addition to their demographic dominance in their autonomous homeland, the burden of trauma caused by their genocidal deportation [in 1944] as well as a certain peculiarity of the Caucasus—probably its mosaic type of ethno-geographic configuration—are crucial factors, which in combination can explain the Chechen conflict” (Rezvani 2013b: 249; see also Rezvani 2014: 886).

One’s focus on non-state violence should not neglect state violence. Even if “civil war has been a far greater scourge than interstate war” (Fearon & Laitin 2003: 75) with at least sixteen million combatant and non-combatant deaths since WWII, state terrorism has killed and hurt far more defenceless people (unarmed civilians, disarmed combatants, etc.) than any non-state terrorism. States often overreact to planned insurrections and spontaneous revolts, and even more often initiate violence unprovoked by any violence from ‘their’ citizens. In the twentieth century states have killed, through both wars and peacetime repressions, over a hundred million people, mainly defenceless civilians—at least ten times the number of people rebels have been able to kill (Chirot 1994: esp. 7,9).

![Figure I   Number of Armed Conflicts by Type, 1946–2014](image)

**Figure I   Number of Armed Conflicts by Type, 1946–2014**


Figure IIa  Battle-related Deaths by Type of Estimate, 1989–2012

Source: Themnér (Harbom) & Peter Wallensteen, ‘Armed Conflict, 1946–2013’ Journal of Peace Research Vol.51 No.4, July 2014, p.544, Figure 2 (note: “total estimate for battle-related deaths in 2013 is not included since no reliable battle deaths estimate data for Syria could be provided”).

Figure IIb  Battle-related Deaths by Type of Estimate, 1989–2014

Figure III

Agents of Violence by Total Conflict Involvement, Africa, 1997-2014


NB: if not detectible in colour in Figure III: highest line at 2014 = Political Militias; next-highest line = Government Forces; third line = Rebel Forces; fourth line = Communal Militias; next-lowest line = External Forces; lowest line = Rioters. For definitions, see Clionadh Raleigh, & Caitriona Dowd, Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook 2015 University of Sussex (formerly at PRIO), 2015, pp.4-7: www.acleddata.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/ACLED_Codebook_2015.pdf.
Figure IVa   Yearly fatalities in organized violence (1989-2014) including the Rwandan Genocide

Figure IVb   Yearly fatalities in organized violence (1989-2014) excluding the Rwandan Genocide

Source: Erik Melander, *Organized Violence in the World 2015—An assessment by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program* Uppsala, Sweden: Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), Uppsala University, Sweden UCDP Paper No. 9, 2015, p.3, Figure 2 & p.4, Figure 3; [www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/61/61335_1brochure2.pdf](http://www.pcr.uu.se/digitalAssets/61/61335_1brochure2.pdf).
Table 1  Number of Google hits for search terms on regional conflict studies 2016*

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<th>Search terms</th>
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<th>Google Scholar – advanced scholar search (Accessed 22-08-2016)</th>
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</table>

*: see for an earlier 2009 version of this table [http://sites.google.com/site/tristansolutions/google-hits-for-region-conflict-studies](http://sites.google.com/site/tristansolutions/google-hits-for-region-conflict-studies) (reproduced in Ten Dam 2015c:18, Table I), which among other things show more differences between the basic (middle column) and advanced (right column) Google Scholar hits than in the 2016 version.

**: ‘conflict studies’ was added to the name/designation of each region.

***: general search on ‘Google NL’ ([www.google.nl](http://www.google.nl)) also included newspaper articles, research institutes, etc. (the 2009 version used the ‘Google UK’ search engine, as I was in Belfast at the time—see further note *).

Conclusion: Notes of Caution

Regarding the conflict trends described, assessed and summarised above, one needs to make two cautionary notes, particularly to those involved in the field of ethnogeopolitics, but also to any scholars who may tend to overrate the universal application of their discipline or the general validity of their preferred theory or research approach: 1) ethnic conflicts may be predominant, but not all conflicts are ethnic in nature; and 2) not all conflicts are caused by majorities suppressing minorities.

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First, one should not presume that all internal conflicts, or even all conflicts per se, are ethnic in character depending on one's definition of ethnicity—as for instance Donald Horowitz appears to do in his otherwise excellent research. Horowitz presumes that ethnic conflict has acquired an “ubiquitous character” due to Decolonisation and the “dismemberment of empires and large states”, concluding that the “permeative character of ethnic affiliations” determines the nature of practically all conflicts (Horowitz 2000: 5,4,7 (quotes)).

Yet one should envisage and expect to encounter non-ethnic, civic conflicts, and allow the generic term ‘conflict’ to include such phenomena, however rare these may be. Actually, non-ethnic conflicts appear to be quite frequent, even if the ethnic intrastate conflict still is the dominant type.

Moreover, I do not deem it wise to loosely apply or interchange characterising, adjective terms and concepts like ‘ethnic’ and ‘national’, even if these do seem to refer to kindred, interrelated or overlapping phenomena. Consequently, I conceptualise patriotism and nationalism as loyalties and identities that may or may not be based on ethnicity i.e. any group with an “actual or perceived common ancestry” (Ten Dam 2014: 6; see further Ten Dam 2015a: 6,14).

Generally, I deplore the cavalier and over-generalised use of so many concepts, like ‘identity’ and ‘ modernity’ (see Ten Dam 2010: 335-340), not just the concept of ‘ethnicity’ or the composite term ‘ethnic conflict’. Alas, “Although the technical meanings of the terms “ethnic,” “ethnoreligious,” “communal,” and “national” are not identical, it is becoming an increasingly standard shorthand to refer to the whole field as the study of “ethnic conflict” ” (Licklider & Bloom 2007: 1, note 3). Therefore, conflicts per se may refer to other contrary, perhaps even irreconcilable, interests than mutually antagonistic identity claims by actual and (self-)perceived ethnicities—like redistributive demands by certain socio-economic classes which cut across ethnic cleavages.

Second, one should neither presume that all internal conflicts are ethnic in character, nor assume that invariably majorities suppress minorities—as Ted Robert Gurr’s Minorities at Risk (MAR) Project 28 seems to suggest. Conflicts can be “initiated .. by minorities against majorities, or by minorities against other minorities” (Tishkov 2004: 9), and often “representatives of minorities dominate and suppress “others” ” (Ibid).

Indeed, in many cases numerical minorities suppress numerical majorities; think of South-Africa under Apartheid, or contemporary Sudan essentially ruled by three Arab tribes constituting just five percent of its population—now a higher percentage but still constituting a small minority in Sudan since the definite breakaway and independence of South Sudan in 2011.

Thus the MAR project’s designating of ‘minority elite’ for Sudan as being “No: Northern majority dominates” (Marshall & Gurr 2005: 60, Table 8.2) is misleading or at least confusing. Labels are arbitrary, unless their definitions are clarified and their frameworks specified: thus
Kosovar Albanians are (or were) a numerical 'minority' in Serbia, but constitute a numerical 'majority' in Kosovo. The same can be said of the Chechens in and beyond Chechnya.

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Endnotes

1. There is “no general consensus on the definitions of geopolitics and ethnopolitics, and hence ethnogeopolitics also cannot be easily or non-controversially defined” (Rezvani 2013a: 4). Still, while geopolitics in the broader sense is “focused on military strategy, economics and natural resources, but also on culture”, traditional geopolitics is focused on “states and global regimes” only while ethnogeopolitics looks at all these factors at “the level of peoples” (Ibid.: 4 (quotes)). NB: the earlier article contains the same references to “Rezvani 2013” (Ten Dam 2015c: 9 & note 1), but unfortunately the source in question—Rezvani’s Editorial of the journal’s maiden issue—is absent from its Bibliography (Ibid: 21). This oversight has been corrected in the current article.

2. I thank Prof. Adrian Guelke for helping me to formulate these first probing questions during the early phase of my PhD research at Queen’s University Belfast in 2005-2006. I added the eight research question in later years, when I studied the literature on combat-stress (see Ten Dam 2012, 2015b).

3. From 2005 till early 2014, the Brutalisation theory, with some modifications, has been described as “a cycle of violence involving four main variables: "values" on "good" and "bad" violence (variable 1); grievances leading to armed conflict (variable 2); combat stress leading to atrocities (variable 3); and new conflict grievances emanating from such atrocities (variable 4), spawning counter-atrocities and eventually hardening or debasing the original violence-values (the cycle returns to the first variable)” (Ten Dam 2010: 332). Since then, the theory’s variables have been widened and reformulated, so as to more equally represent different motivations as explanations of brutal behaviour.

4. Monty G. Marshall’s. & Benjamin R. Cole’s Global Report 2014 is the most recent one freely available at www.systemicpeace.org/globalreport.html (acc. 18 August 2016). Unlike UCDP’s straightforward if simplified counts of number of armed conflicts (see Figure I in the text), the CSP applies a more advanced yet more complicated and thereby contestable 10-point-scale measure of magnitude of “each “major episode of political violence” (armed conflict) including (a weighing of) “numbers of combatants and casualties, affected area, dislocated population, and extent of infrastructure damage” (Marshall & Cole 2014: 12, note 7).

5. In 2015, the UCDP reports 567 conflict dyads (pairs of warring parties) in 259 armed conflicts active in 159 locations since 1946 (Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 537), but Petterson & Wallensteen do neither clearly indicate the number of major armed conflicts or wars during 1946-2014, nor the number of armed conflicts (both minor armed conflicts and wars) between 1989 and 2014. One cannot simply add the conflicts for each year (Ibid: 538, Table I), as many or most of the same conflicts continue into the next year.

6. In 2014, UCDP reported that all 33 conflicts in 2013 were “fought within states, but nine of them—or 27%—were internationalized in the sense that one or more states contributed troops to one or both sides” (Themnér & Wallensteen 2014: 542). In 2015, it added one additional active conflict for both 2013 and 2014, an internal conflict in Myanmar (Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 537, note 2).
earlier UCDP reports, no breakdowns on numbers of extrasystemic conflicts between state and outside non-state group(s), and intrastate, international(ised) intrastate and interstate conflicts, are given for e.g. 1946-2010/2011 and 1989-2010/2011 (Themnér & Wallensteen 2011, 2012); nor are these easily available at www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/datasets/.

7. Preceding UCDP reports (e.g. Harbom & Wallensteen 2007; Harbom, Melander & Wallensteen 2008) also have noticed the low numbers of interstate conflicts and relatively high numbers of ‘internationalised intrastate’ conflicts in which at least one of the warring parties (government or opposition) “receive military support in the form of troops from another government” (Harbom & Wallensteen 2009: 577, 578 (Table II, note b: quote )).

8. Colin S. Gray recognises that most armed conflicts have been, and probably will be, internal; he just warns against the overconfident assertion that (major) interstate wars are becoming forever extinct.

9. Perhaps the 1999 peak of battle related deaths is also due to the Kosovo War, but then other high-intensity conflicts with even more casualties such the American occupation of Iraq from 2003 onwards, should have provided even higher numbers and peaks of battle-related deaths.

10. CSP’s definition of terrorism (if any) appears to involve “killing and maiming mainly non-combatants” (Marshall & Cole 2014: 15), but also appears to include other violence by “non-state actors” (Ibid) as well, such as violence against combatants and exclusively political and military targets (barracks, government buildings etc.). The first aspect closely concords with my definition of terrorism, the latter two do not (see Ten Dam 2015c: 13-18, Appendix; Ten Dam & Polanski 2015: 227-232, Appendix B).


12. The UCDP distinguishes between minor armed conflicts of “at least 25 battle-related deaths in a year but fewer than 1,000” and wars of at least 1,000 battle-related deaths in a year (see Themnér & Wallensteen 2014: 553; Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 549), whereby “major armed conflict” implicitly appears to be an alternative composite term for war. One of the qualitative elements of UCDP’s overall armed-conflict definition (including that of war) is the existence of declared and incompatible goals between the opposing parties, termed incompatibility, the “stated (in writing or verbally) generally incompatible positions” (Ibid; Ibid).

13. Combat, battle or warfare includes “traditional battlefield fighting, guerrilla activities (e.g. hit-and-run attacks/ambushes) and all kinds of bombardments” (Pettersson & Wallensteen 2015: 549).

14. During the time I worked for PIOOM between 1998 and 2002 and ever since, I have hardly ever encountered any conflict dataset that matches or even approaches the breadth, nuance and precision of PIOOM’s dataset(s) compiled by Alex Schmid and Berto Jongman.


16. Erik Melander states that his Figure 8 “shows the number of genocides and politicides with at least 1,000 victims as reported by the Center for Systemic Peace” in countries with intrastate conflict (Melander 2015: 8)—but does not indicate whether the Figure is a direct reproduction of one made by the Center for Systematic Peace.

17. Armed conflict is “also referred to as “state-based conflict”, as opposed to “non-state conflict”, in which none of the warring parties is a government”; www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/definitions/ (last acc. 15-08-2016).
18. Pinker already noted some of the “downward trends” (Pinker 2012: xxvi (quote) & his note 3) of violence like homicide in his earlier works (Pinker 1998: 518-519; Pinker 2002: 166-169,320,330-336; the page references seem to fit with the editions shown in the Bibliography).

19. There are some notable differences between the Google hits as shown in Table I and those shown in an earlier 2009 version (Ten Dam 2015c: i8, Table I). Thus hits on region terms within Eurasia generally are much higher in 2016 than in 2009 (e.g. ‘North Caucasus’ Google Scholar: 21,500 in 2009, 68,800 in 2016). But so are those of most other regions outside Eurasia, which continue to show much higher numbers. These increases may be simply (partially) due to the amassing of sources and thus search-engine hits over the subsequent years.

20. Horowitz focuses “on Asia and Africa” (Horowitz 2000: xvii), as ethnicity is supposedly “less urgent in the West” (Ibid: 18)—despite the noted “fragmentation of two .. Eurasian pseudofederations” (Ibid: xi).


23. The UCDP considers the defined, categorised and coded type of “extrasystemic armed conflict” dormant or defunct, as “the last such conflict ended in 1974” (Petterson & Wallensteen 2015: 549, note 26). But one may question UCDP’s decision not to consider and count as ‘extrasystemic’ conflicts armed confrontations between globally oriented non-state groups like Al-Qaeda and IS/IS Daesh, and recognised states outside the latter’s territories.

24. Notably “Themnér & Wallensteen (2014) refrained from reporting fatality estimates for the conflict in Syria, due to problems stemming from a combination of ‘issue crowding’ and ‘issue fatigue’. However, in 2014 the UN published a report on fatality estimates, and the SOHR (Syrian Observatory for Human Rights) provided more detailed breakdowns of their summary figures” (Petterson & Wallensteen 2015: 540).


26. Horowitz does not come up with an explicit, universal definition of ethnic conflict, though he circumscribes ethnicity as group identity differentiated “by color, language, religion, or some other attribute of common origin” (Horowitz 2000: 17-18,41). Still, Horowitz seems to suggest that practically all internal conflicts are ethnic in nature. Though he allows for other types of ethnic conflict, like “ethnically based military coups” (Ibid: xvi), he practically equates it with rebellion.


28. Since 2014, an additional “All Minorities at Risk (AMAR) project addresses selection bias concerns identified in the MAR database. AMAR builds on MAR but uses a new set of selection criteria – based on the concept of “socially relevant” ethnic groups, rather than [exclusively] groups that are “at risk” “ (www.mar.umd.edu/; last accessed: 22-08-2016).

29. Even if any of the “284 politically-active ethnic groups” tracked from “1945 to the present” represent majorities as in numbers of people in a certain country or region, the project’s title—‘Minorities at Risk’—suggests otherwise (www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/about.asp) last accessed: 22-08-2016). Even when looking at definitional criteria of groups constituting a minority at risk (MAR), it remains unclear if and to what extent a numerical criterion is being applied (not even criteria 1 and 2 make this sufficiently clear): thus criterion 4 states that these “include advantaged
minorities like the Sunni Arabs of Iraq .., but exclude advantaged majorities” (www.cidcm.umd.edu/ mar/definition.asp; last acc. 22-08-2016). Then what about disadvantaged majorities? Are these latter groups really excluded from the data? Then one gets a lopsided picture, which neglects numerical majorities that are or may be at risk of marginalisation, discrimination and worse.

References—Bibliography


Marshall, Monty G. & Ted Robert Gurr,  *Peace and Conflict 2005—A Global Survey of Armed Conflicts, Self-Determination Movements, and Democracy*  Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM) College Park, Maryland (MD) USA: University of Maryland, 1 June 2005. This appears to be the last CIDCM report; see [www.systemicpeace.org/cspvirtuallibrary.html](http://www.systemicpeace.org/cspvirtuallibrary.html) (last acc. 18 August 2016).


___________ (‘2013b’), *Ethno-Territorial Conflict and Coexistence in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Fereydan* Amsterdam: Vossiuspers UvA–Amsterdam University Press, 2013.


NB: do you have any comments on Caspar ten Dam's article? Please send these to info@ethnogeopolitics.org, or through the contact form at www.ethnogeopolitics.org.
Dorsey's Column

Saudi-Iranian Rivalry fuels Potential Nuclear Arms Race

James M. Dorsey

Saudi Arabia is developing nuclear energy and potentially a nuclear weapons capability.

The Saudi focus on these nuclear capabilities serves various of the kingdom's goals: diversification of its economy, reduction of its dependence on fossil fuels, countering a potential future Iranian nuclear capability, and enhancing efforts to ensure that Saudi Arabia rather than Iran emerges as the Middle East's long-term, dominant power.

Cooperation on nuclear energy was one of fourteen agreements worth US $65 billion signed during the visit to China by Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud in March 2017. The agreement concerns a feasibility study for the construction of high-temperature gas-cooled (HTGR) nuclear power plants in the kingdom, as well as cooperation in intellectual property and the development of a domestic industrial supply chain for HTGRs built in Saudi Arabia.

The agreement was one of a number of nuclear-related understandings concluded with China in recent years. Saudi Arabia has signed similar agreements with France, the United States, Pakistan, Russia, South Korea and Argentina.

To advance its program, involving the construction of sixteen reactors by 2030 at a cost of US $100 billion, Saudi Arabia established the King Abdullah Atomic and Renewable Energy City devoted to research and application of nuclear technology.

Saudi cooperation with nuclear power Pakistan has long been a source of speculation about the kingdom's nuclear and strategic ambitions. Pakistan's former ambassador to the United States, Husain Haqqani, asserts that Saudi Arabia's close ties to the Pakistani military and intelligence services during the anti-Soviet jihad (holy war) in Afghanistan in the 1980s gave the kingdom arms' length access to his country's nuclear capabilities.

“By the 1980s, the Saudi ambassador was a regular guest of A. Q. Khan” or Abdul Qadeer Khan, the controversial nuclear physicist and metallurgical engineer who fathered Pakistan's atomic bomb, Mr. Haqqani said in a recent interview.

Retired Pakistani Major General Feroz Hassan Khan, the author of a semi-official history of Pakistan's nuclear program, has no doubt about the Saudi kingdom's interest and intentions.

“Saudi Arabia provided generous financial support to Pakistan that enabled the nuclear program to continue, especially when the country was under sanctions,” Mr. Hassan Khan said in a separate interview. Mr. Khan was referring to US sanctions imposed in 1998 because of Pakistan's development of a nuclear weapons capability. He noted that at a time of economic crisis, Pakistan was with Saudi help able “to pay premium prices for expensive technologies.”
The Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) said in a recently published report that it had uncovered evidence that future Pakistani “assistance would not involve Pakistan supplying Saudi Arabia with a full nuclear weapon or weapons; however, Pakistan may assist in other important ways, such as supplying sensitive equipment, materials, and know-how used in enrichment or reprocessing (Burkhard et al. 2017: 5).” The report said it was unclear whether “Pakistan and Saudi Arabia may be cooperating on sensitive nuclear technologies in Pakistan. In an extreme case, Saudi Arabia may be financing, or will finance, an unsafeguarded uranium enrichment facility in Pakistan for later use, either in a civil or military program” (Ibid: 5).

The report concluded that the 2015 international agreement dubbed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to curb Iran’s nuclear program had “not eliminated the kingdom’s desire for nuclear weapons capabilities and even nuclear weapons... There is little reason to doubt that Saudi Arabia will more actively seek nuclear weapons capabilities, motivated by its concerns about the ending of the JCPOA’s major nuclear limitations starting after year 10 of the deal or sooner if the deal fails,” the report said (Burkhard et al. 2017: 5).

Rather than embarking on a covert program, the report predicted that Saudi Arabia would, for now, focus on building up its civilian nuclear infrastructure as well as a robust nuclear engineering and scientific workforce. This would allow the kingdom to take command of all aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle at some point in the future. Saudi Arabia has in recent years significantly expanded graduate programs at its five nuclear research centres.

Saudi officials have repeatedly insisted that the kingdom is developing nuclear capabilities for peaceful purposes such as medicine, electricity generation, and desalination of sea water. They said Saudi Arabia is committed to putting its future facilities under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Saudi Arabia pledged to acquire nuclear fuel from international markets in a 2009 memorandum of understanding with the United States. In its report, the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) noted however that the kingdom could fall back on its own uranium deposits and acquire or build uranium enrichment or reprocessing plants of its own if regional tension continued to fester. It quoted a former IAEA inspector as saying Saudi Arabia could opt to do so in five years’ time.

Saudi Arabia's nuclear agency has suggested that various steps of the nuclear fuel cycle, including fuel fabrication, processing and enrichment, would lend themselves to local production. Saudi Arabia has yet to mine or process domestic uranium.

Saudi insistence on compliance with the IAEA and on the peaceful nature of its program is designed to avoid the kind of international castigation Iran has been subjected to. Saudi Arabia is likely to maintain its current position as long as Iran adheres to the 2015 nuclear agreement and US President Donald J. Trump does not act on his campaign promise to tear up the accord. President Trump has toughened US Administration's attitudes towards Iran but has backed away from tinkering with the nuclear agreement—at least for now.
“The current situation suggests that Saudi Arabia now has both a high disincentive to pursue nuclear weapons in the short term and a high motivation to pursue them over the long term,” the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS)’s report said (Burkhard et al. 2017: 39).

Saudi ambitions and the conclusions of the said report put a high premium on efforts by Kuwait and Oman to mediate an understanding between Saudi Arabia and Iran that would dull the sharp edges of the two countries’ rivalry.

Kuwait’s and Oman’s leaders and officials also are likely to persuade President Trump to try to pressure Iran to guarantee that it will not pursue nuclear weapons once the JCPOA expires in a little over a decade. That may prove a tall order given Trump’s warming relations with anti-Iranian Arab autocracies evident in the recent visit to Washington by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi and an earlier visit by Saudi Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

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An earlier version of the article appeared at http[s]://mideastsoccer.blogspot.nl/2017/04/saudi-iranian-rivalry-fuels-potential.html.

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THE TURBULENT WORLD OF MIDDLE EAST SOCCER
JAMES M. DORSEY

James M. Dorsey introduces the reader to the world of Middle Eastern and North African football—an arena where struggles for political control, protest and resistance, self-respect and gender rights are played out. Politics was the midwife of soccer in the region, with many clubs being formed as pro- or anti-colonial platforms and engines of national identity and social justice. This book uncovers the seldom-told story of a game that evokes deep-seated passions.

Football fans are shown to be a major political force and one of the largest civic groups in Egypt after the Muslim Brotherhood: their demands for transparency, social justice, and an end to corruption sparked vicious street battles that left scores dead and thousands wounded. Discontent in Algeria erupts regularly at matches where fans demand the ouster of military leaders. A folk-song crooning national goalkeeper leads protests in Homs, Syria’s third largest city and scene of some of the worst violence perpetrated by Bashar al-Assad’s regime. In a country that bans physical education for girls, Saudi women have established clandestine football clubs and leagues. The book further tells the story of Somali child soldiers turned soccer stars and Iranian women who dress as men to smuggle themselves into stadiums to watch matches.

‘A rare combination of scholar and journalist, James Dorsey offers us a fresh lens through which to look at contemporary events in the Middle East and North Africa. Insightful, provocative, and fun to read, this is a welcome addition to the meagre scholarship on sports and politics in this region.’
— Raanan Rein, Tel Aviv University, author of ‘Fútbol, Fueg, and the Making of Argentina’

‘This might well be the single most important and informative book on the Arab Spring yet written. A must read for anyone who wants to understand the deeper social and cultural processes underlying the uprisings and counter-revolutionary processes that have shaken the region the last five years.’
— Mark Levine, Professor of History at the University of California, Irvine

‘Dorsey masterfully conveys the complex machinations of politics and culture through his analyses of the words and actions of real people expressing their passions about their lives through the medium of “the kicking sport.” Sports fans and political junkies will greatly enjoy and learn from this fascinating book.’
— Louis W. Goodman, School of International Service, American University

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Opinion

Rise of Geert Wilders’ PVV Party in the Netherlands reminds us of the Rise of Extremism in Bosnia

Ab de Buck, Amir Jatić & Fahrudin Alić

Introduction

During the most recent election cycle in the Netherlands, the response was fairly lukewarm to the expected election victory of Geert Wilders’ rightwing-populist Freedom Party (Partij voor de Vrijheid, PVV)—as polls at the time indicated 30 to 35 seats in the Second Chamber of the Dutch parliament after the elections on March 15th, 2017.

This is despite the fact that Wilders’ program does not offer any policies on and solutions for socio-economic problems, and groups in society are being incited against each other. That reminds us of the extreme-nationalist leaders in the former Yugoslavia on the eve of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992: they too had no solutions for the economy, and simply put the blame on other ethnic groups. The Netherlands is not Bosnia, and Wilders is no Karadžić, but any implementation of Wilders’ programme will gravely disrupt Dutch society.

Extreme Nationalism devastated Bosnia

Comparisons are always relative and contestable, but one can also learn from history. We see similarities between the rise of the PVV in the Netherlands and the rise of extreme nationalist parties in Bosnia during the early 1990s. As in the Netherlands, different communities lived in Bosnia peacefully together for years (indeed decades), but nationalist leaders incited them against each other.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina the three main population groups were and are: Bosniaks (Muslims), Serbs (Orthodox Christians) and Croats (Catholics). These groups lived to a large extent apart from each other, but in a peaceful fashion. In the course of many years, there was more and more exchange: in the 1980s one of four marriages was mixed.

The situation changed in the late 1980s when there was political and economic turmoil. The background of that was that Bosnia was part of Yugoslavia. That country was struggling with large debts and fell apart. Then the economy collapsed completely. It led to fear and anxiety.

In that situation nationalist leaders forward came in different republics within Yugoslavia, most prominently Franjo Tudjman in Croatia, Slobodan Milosević in Serbia and Radovan Karadžić in Bosnia. Each of these leaders offered no solutions to the serious economic problems, but simply put the blame on other populations. Karadžić’s ‘solution’ was that Bosnia had to become an ethnically pure Serbian country: the Bosniaks and Croats had to be
removed. That message hit home. His politics eventually led to a terrible war with dramatic consequences: 100,000 people dead, one million people displaced and a torn country.

During the Bosnian war (1992—1995) 40,000 Bosnians fled to the Netherlands. The Netherlands gave them good opportunities to rebuild their lives here. Bosnians have come to regard the Netherlands as a second homeland, and fully participate in Dutch society. According to recent figures from the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) of the Netherlands, 40% of the Bosnian youth are highly educated, a percentage that is higher than the national average. The Netherlands has become their society.

Consequences of the Implementation of Wilders’ Program

However, we see sad parallels between the developments in the Netherlands now and what has happened in Bosnia. There is uncertainty about the economy. Attacks by terrorists with an Islamic background reinforce these feelings of anxiety. In this situation of unrest, many people feel drawn to the simple ‘solutions’ of Wilders.

It is also true of Wilders that he has no substantive program. His program literally fills just one sheet of paper; it promises all kinds of things (pension age back to 65 years, Netherlands out of the EU, closure of borders, etcetera), but lacks any economic foundation. At the same time this tends to turn groups against each other. His first program point is to “de-islamise the Netherlands: ... close all mosques and Islamic schools in this country”. Be aware that this proposal of Wilders is not empty talk: Wilders is tenacious in his aim to remove Islam from the Netherlands.

With his plans Wilders also creates a great gulf towards the Bosnians living in the Netherlands, irrespective of the fact that almost all of them have attained Dutch citizenship many years ago. Also Bosnian mosques will be closed if Wilders comes to power. And he wants to stop immigration from “Islamic” countries; assuming that he also considers Bosnia to be as such, then no Bosnians will be able to emigrate to the Netherlands any longer. While Bosnians are now part of Dutch society, they will soon become outsiders—indeed outcasts—under a ‘Wilderian’ regime.

These are no solutions to the challenges facing our country—to the contrary, they would aggravate current ones and create new ones if they ever come to fruition. Among many Dutch people, the belief appears to have gained ground that current parliamentary elections are “ordinary” ones, and that the PVV is a “normal” party. But the PVV is not a normal party and expounds extreme ideas.

The Netherlands is not Bosnia. The situation now is in many ways different. We have a stable democracy, unemployment is low, the independent rule of law is firmly established. There will be no war here. But implementing Wilders’ plans, if ever implemented, will also bring chaos and polarisation here. In Bosnia people could and did not imagine what would be the consequences of an election victory of extreme nationalists. Let’s not be naive. A victory of
Wilders can also disrupt Dutch society. It is important to offer a counterbalance to this dire specter on March 15th, on election day. If we can draw a lesson from the horrors of the war in Bosnia, it is that extreme nationalism, in whatever shape or form, is highly perilous—indeed potentially lethal.

Postscript

The final results released by the Dutch Electoral Council confirmed on 20 March 2017 that the PVV has taken 20 seats—a gain of five seats, but much less than previous opinion polls indicated with 30-35 seats for the party in total. There is every reason to be relieved about this result. On the other hand, the ‘Wilderian’ form of populism—read: extreme nationalism—is all but dead and buried. Wilders’ PVV and similar parties in the Netherlands may still become the largest party(s) at the next election. And right now the PVV is already the second largest party in the Second Chamber of the Dutch parliament.

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An earlier version of this article can be found on the website of the International Committee for Humanitarian Intervention (www.ichuminterv.org) and in Dutch on the website of the Political Committee ‘Stari Most’ (www.starimost.nl).

21th Srebrenica commemoration in The Hague, the Netherlands, 11 July 2016

Forum of EthnoGeoPolitics Vol.5 No.1 Summer 2017
Now second, revised Dutch edition:

**Military intelligence scandal uncovered in Dutch book**

A general sporting three stars on his uniform, commissioning a private spy to nose around in a commercial company. And this is not just anyone: it’s the general’s own wife. A tribal war within the Dutch Military Intelligence Service, with unsuspecting citizens being victimized. One would expect such a modus operandi in North Korea, not in the Low Countries. However, this is what author Edwin F. Giltay experienced — he vividly describes the saga in *The Cover-up General* (Dutch: *De dooptgenaamaal*).

In his book Mr Giltay depicts the rather transparent conduct of secret service agents infiltrating at the Internet provider where he was assigned. Initially a spook tried to recruit Mr Giltay as a military analyst. At the same time however, she herself was being monitored. At the root of this tug-of-war within the Military Intelligence Service was the infamous film roll of Srebrenica depicting war crimes, which was misdeveloped by the Dutch Armed Forces. The recruiting officer intended to make public the footage on the film wasn’t at all lost – information that would no doubt have undermined the standing of a certain triple-star general.

The *Cover-up General* delineates this espionage scandal fervently. Mr Giltay recounts the absurd consequences in great detail.

In November 2014, *The Cover-up General* was published in Amsterdam. One year after publication – when it was already sold out – the book was banned. A judge prohibited Edwin F. Giltay to reprint, distribute and even promote his book. The censorship verdict was front page news in the Balkans, and met with anger and disbelief everywhere.

However, the verdict was resolutely overturned on 12 April 2016. A second, revised edition of *The Cover-up General* by Blauwe Tigjer Publishing returned on the market in September 2016.

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**Disputatie over de waarheid en het bestaan van het verhaal**

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Edwin Giltay
Epilogue Hans Laroes
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Ban lifted: 12 April 2016
Second, revised edition including eight new chapters published in September 2016 by Blauwe Tigjer
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263 pages

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**www.thecoverupgeneral.com**
Review Essay

Mosaic Ethno-Geographic Configurations and Other Factors accounting for Ethno-Territorial Conflict


Caspar ten Dam

An abbreviated and modified version of this review essay, which exclusively focuses on Rezvani’s 2015 book and elaborates on methodological aspects of his research, will be published in the peer-reviewed journal Nationalism and Ethnic Politics (Routledge) sometime this year.

NB: citations and other references from each of the books under review are indicated by its year of publication and the relevant page numbers, e.g. ‘(2013: p.1)’, ‘(2015: p.100)’, etcetera. These references are different in format than the other source references in this review essay.

Introduction

Babak Rezvani’s Ethno-Territorial Conflict and Coexistence in the Caucasus, Central Asia and Feraydan (2013) and his Conflict and Peace in Central Eurasia—Towards Explanations and Understandings (2015), an updated, shortened and improved version of the former book (e.g. more clearly presented maps and figures in the latter book), constitute notable, highly relevant additions to the field of conflict studies in particular. Similar to Monica Toft’s Geography of Ethnic Violence (2005), Rezvani also pays attention to the geography of ethnic conflicts, and includes new geographic variables into his analyses.

Rezvani specifically seeks to explain the occurrence of the following eight ethno-territorial conflicts: "the South Ossetian and Abkhazian conflicts in Georgia; the North Ossetian-Ingush conflict over Prigorodny and the Chechens conflicts in Russia; the Armenian-Azeri conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan; the Osh conflict between the Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan; and .. the Tajikistani Civil War" (2013: p. 19 (& p. 169); 2015: p. 9) — the only eight
cases among the distinguished 129 “ethno-territorial encounters” in all three regions selected for comparative analysis (Caucasus, Central Asia and Fereydan in Iran) that turned violent from the late 1980s onwards (2013: p. 169; 2015: p. 134). He also contrast these with the cases i.e. encounters that nearly turned violent or did not turn violent at all; Rezvani seeks to explain the latter non-violent cases as well. Most notably, there have been “no ethno-territorial conflicts” (Ibid 2013; 2015) at all in Iran (barring interethnic tensions), not even in Fereydan, a “region in central Iran in the western part of Ostan–e Esfahan” (2013: p. 17; 2015: p.5) that is just as ethnically, linguistically and religiously diverse as the Caucasus and the Central Asia.

This appears to be mainly due to the fact that, contrary to the Soviet Union and most of its successor states, the “Iranian ostans, the first-order territorial administrative divisions [in Iran], are not based on and demarcated rigidly along ethnic lines” (2013: p. 113; 2015: p. 104). Thus the conflicts discussed in both books include “all ethno-territorial conflicts in the post-Soviet space except that in Moldova” (2015: p. vii).

Factors accounting for Ethno-Territorial Conflict

From the reviewer’s perspective, both of Rezvani’s books convincingly show that at least five interrelated factors—as already mentioned in another review essay on Ilyas Akhmadov’s books on the Chechen independence struggle (Ten Dam 2016: 68-69)—can or do account for secessionist ethno-territorial conflicts:

i) historic grievances, particularly of grave deprivations and injustices like the wholesale deportation of the Chechens in 1944 on orders of Stalin;

ii) the obligation in martial cultures which obliges one to avenge historical wrongs and seek safety from such wrongs in the future through independence;

iii) a rebelling movement representing (or claiming to represent) the biggest indigenous group in the region or contested territory, like the Chechens in the North Caucasus (see also Ten Dam 2010: esp. 333-334,345-349; Ten Dam 2011: esp. 247-252);

iv) the contested territory exhibiting a “so-called mosaic type of ethno-geographic configuration” of “highly homogeneous pockets of ethnic concentration” (2013: p. 15; 2015: p. 3); and

v) a “politicization of ethnicity” (2013: p. 55; 2015: p.43) in a hierarchical-territorial ethno-political system whereby some ethnicities get a higher autonomy, nationality status and/or other privileges in defined territories while other resident ethnicities do not or less so (2013: esp. pp. 116-120; 2015: esp. pp. 107-112).

Above all the absence of this latter factor in Iran accounts, according to Rezvani, for the absence of conflict there, even in highly mosaic Fereydan—in contrast to the Soviet Union which, unlike Iran, introduced, promoted and sustained a divisive and ultimately (self-
destructive ethno-territorial structure that most of its successor states unfortunately inherited (2013 & 2015: esp. Chapter 3).

The combination of all these factors—acting as either necessary or sufficient-making conditions—account for an ethno-territorial internal conflict like the Russo-Chechen wars of the 1990s and beyond, as “there are many cases of ethno-territorial groups in the (post-) Soviet space that enjoy territorial autonomy and a dominant demographic position therein, but nevertheless have not waged a war of independence” (2013: p. 249; see also 2015: p. 220).

Yet Rezvani in effect argues that, at least on the Eurasian continent and in the Caucasus and Central Asia in particular, that the mosaic type of ethno-geographic configuration in a certain circumscribed territory or area, is the most important necessary, conflict-inducing condition (reviewer's term) accounting for the occurrence of ethno-territorial conflicts. He thus concludes that this ‘mosaic’ factor can best explain such conflicts in combination with other, typically sufficient-making, conflict-triggering conditions (reviewer's term), like above all the ‘possession of territorial autonomy’ (2013: p. 327; 2015: p. 301)—especially if it makes and privileges one ethnic group into a ‘titular nation’ at the expense of other ethnicities in the territory, as was fatefully encouraged and enshrined in the “hierarchical ethno-territorial federalism” of the Soviet Union (Ibid 2013; 2015).

In addition to “titular demographic dominance” and demographic “transborder dominance” of one or more of the competing ethnic groups in one or more adjacent territories, also other factors appear to play significant roles, such as "religious difference" and "traumatic peak experience"—though the latter two can be interchanged as additional explanatory factors for the Russo-Chechen wars and other ethno-territorial conflicts within the Russian Federation (2013: p. 327 (quotes); 2015: p. 301 (quotes)).

Rezvani particularly comes to such conclusions after assessing the results of his statistical analysis of altogether nine factors as “explaining conditions” (2013: pp. 281(quote)-282; 2015: pp. 254(quote)-255), in combination with each other and vis-à-vis the occurrence or absence of violent conflict, through a Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) method “based on Boolean algebra and its binary logic” (2013: p. 132; 2015: p. 133) with each ‘yes’ or ‘presence’ coded as 1 and each ‘no’ or ‘absence’ coded as 0.

In sum, Rezvani does acknowledge multiple factors accounting for internal armed conflicts in general and internal ethno-territorial conflicts in particular—especially grievances of severe deprivations in the past and demographical size and dominance of the initiating (rebelling) party (2013: esp. pp. 227-249 (Chechnya); 2015: esp. pp. 197-220 (Chechnya); see further Rezvani 2014 (on Chechnya)).

Therefore it “appears that the conditions of demographic dominance (D) within an autonomous territory (A), as well as transborder dominance (B) could explain the events taking place in Crimea and eastern Ukraine” (2015: pp. vii-viii)—and in other conflict areas as well.
Yet Rezvani stresses that such factors only make any conflict truly likely, in a time of interethnic tensions and state fragmentation, when the ethnicities concerned live next to each other in concentrated pockets (mosaic configuration) within ethno-politically constructed territories: “in addition to their demographic dominance in their autonomous homeland, the burden of trauma caused by their genocidal deportation [in 1944] as well as a certain peculiarity of the Caucasus—probably its mosaic type of ethno-geographic configuration—are crucial factors, which in combination can explain the Chechen conflict” (2013: p. 249; 2015: p. 220 (almost identical); see further Rezvani 2014: 886). In short, he considers Ethno-Geographic Configuration (or rather the mosaic type of it) and Ethno-Political Subordination as (being among) the most dominant factors accounting for ethno-territorial conflict (see for an overview of the main factors Figure 3.7: 2013: p. 120; 2015: p. 111).

Be that as it may, one must also identify the factors-behind-the-factors to explain the course and outcome of conflict, in order to understand for instance “why an ethno-nationalist conflict emerged in Chechnya, and diffused and transformed [to a considerable degree] into a Wahhabi/Salafi religious conflict” (Rezvani 2014: 871 (quote); see further esp. 886, note 57).

Conclusion

Both books by Rezvani are relevant if only because ethno-territorial conflict—above all internal separatist ethno-territorial conflict—arguably constitutes the most frequent type of armed conflict, not just today and over the last few decades, but actually since the dawn of recorded human history (see Ten Dam 2015b).

More to the point, Rezvani’s treatises are offer innovative, informative and thought-provoking observations and analytical approaches—that already have been useful to my own research and analyses (see Ten Dam 2014, 2015a, 2015b)—as these employ unusual yet effective multidisciplinary, cross-cutting methodologies and (consequent) insights taken from political geography, ethnography, geopolitics and other, related fields of study, applying both descriptive and quantitative analyses.

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References—Bibliography (other than the reviewed books)


Stichting Geschiedenis Totalitaire Regimes en hun Slachtoffers  |  Foundation History of Totalitarian Regimes and their Victims

**Foundation History of Totalitarian Regimes and their victims. Why?**

Dictators who control every aspect of public and private life and who suppress and kill people is a fading memory of the distant past and far away. Fortunately, in The Netherlands this situation ended almost seventy years ago. But not everywhere in Europe people were as fortunate. Take for instance the countries of the former communist bloc in Eastern Europe. For them it is only 25 years ago that they got more freedom. Moreover, not yet everywhere. In Belarus people are still imprisoned – or worse – because they refuse to do what dictator Viktor Lukashenko demands. Elsewhere old communists try to fight back.

The foundation ‘History Totalitarian Regimes and Their Victims’ (SGTRS = Stichting Geschiedenis Totalitaire Regimes en hun Slachtoffers) wants to draw attention to this situation. Freedom is not self-evident. One has to fight for it. This can be done with words, arguments and by remembering frightening examples from the past. The SGTRS attempts to do so. In particular it wants to raise the awareness among the youth of the dangers of totalitarian regimes, whether they were left or right, communists or fascist.

The SGTRS cooperates with other like-minded organizations in the ‘Platform of European Memory and Conscience’. The SGTRS is founding member of this Platform; a European umbrella organisation which comprises 48 member organizations (this number is growing) from 13 EU countries and Canada, USA, Iceland, Ukraine and Moldova. It is not by coincidence that most members are from countries in eastern Europe. They still have the most vivid memories of totalitarianism.

In its own country the SGTRS is primarily engaged in the dissemination of reliable information, especially in education. In doing so, it draws upon the information from other members of the Platform. After all, we did not live under communist domination – they did! Or,
to put it differently, the SGTRS is the ambassador of the Platform.

In the short existence of the Platform much has already been achieved. In cooperation with other members the Platform has published a reader, ‘Lest we forget’, for pupils in secondary schools. This reader is a book with stories from people who have suffered under two totalitarian dictatorships: national socialism and communism. The SGTRS has also contributed to this reader. The book has been published in English, German, French and Czech. Translations in other languages are in the pipeline. The SGTRS is planning to bring out a Dutch translation.

Furthermore, the Platform, in cooperation with its partners, has organised a traveling exhibition, called ‘Totalitarianism in Europe’. This exhibition consists of show panels with information about numbers of victims (deportations, mass murders) of the two totalitarian regimes: national socialism and communism. Two panels per country. Thus one can see how many victims these regimes have made. In addition, the Platform, aims at exposing the crimes of communism.

What is the purpose of all this? In our country we strive for real European unity. Of course not an imposed one. The SGTRS is convinced that unity based on interest in each others’ history, the recent European history, and particularly the tragic history of the totalitarian powers, leads to real solidarity. Because without history and remembrance no identity! This does not only apply to individuals, but also to societies. Consequently also for Europe. We therefore applaud the program ‘Europe for Citizens’ which attempts to uncover European history with a view to building a European identity.

SGTRS is active in various European networks which are engaged in revealing recent European history. The Platform is such a network.

Finally, the SGTRS is a NGO with a minimal budget. This implies that it depends on donations from people who sympathize with its objectives and activities. Therefore we welcome donations to our foundation. If you would like to become a regular contributor, please contact us via our website (tab ‘contact’) or mail to sgtrs@sgtrs.nl. We will inform you of our activities by e-mail.

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PM,
SGTRS is primarily active in The Netherlands. That is why the website of SGTRS is only in Dutch. Those who can not read this language, we suggest to visit the website of the Platform of European Memory and Conscience (http://www.pemc.eu/).