THE NATURE OF WARFARE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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Contents

Summary

The article begins with a discussion of a major characteristic of the post-Cold War era: the incidence of violent, *identity*-based [often ethnic] conflicts in various parts of Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and elsewhere (e.g., Africa), signaling a major shift in warfare away from the *inter*state to *intra*state level (with references to the work of Martin van Creveld, K.J. Holsti, Ted Robert Gurr, Peter Wallensteen and others).This is followed by a discussion of the views of scholars associated with the Democratic Peace school -- e.g., Francis Fukuyama, John Mueller, Max Singer and Aaron Wildavsky -- who argue that, with advancing democracy and free markets throughout the world, the *Westphalian model of warfare* (e.g., major wars *between* major states) is on the decline.

A major flaw in these arguments is that a *spillover potential* inheres in violent intrastate conflict; i.e., *intra*state conflict can spillover to the *inter*state level. This is followed by a discussion of the author's *spillover typology* to help account for this hypothesized cross-level transference:

[a]   *Functional Spillover* (e.g., Slobodan Milosevic's machinations to remain in power in former Yugoslavia);
[b]   *External Intervention*:
▪   [a] on Behalf of Ethnic Kin (e.g., Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations"); and

- ▪ [b] Humanitarian Intervention (e.g., NATO's air war against Serbia over Kosovo with repercussions for the entire region and East-West relations); and

[c]   *Multiplier-Effect Systemic Contagion* (e.g., genocidal warfare in former Yugoslavia encouraging the same in the former Soviet Union [Chechnya]).

The main point here is that there is a need for the international community to respond to *intra*state conflicts before they escalate [spillover] to the *inter*state level.

The paper concludes with further thoughts on the design and implementation of preventive diplomacy and peacebuilding systems in post-Cold War Europe.

1. Introduction

The ending of the Cold War has become associated, not with the advent of a new era -- a collaborative "New World Order" -- but with the outbreak of violent conflict in various parts of Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and elsewhere. It has been almost as if a certain "conflict equilibrium" must be maintained worldwide: when conflict at one level subsides, it picks up elsewhere.

Many of these conflicts existed before as well as during the Cold War but, in the latter case, were latent and prevented from being expressed by the suppressive power of the state. Many of these conflicts were, and still are, of an *ethnic* nature, where members of various linguistic, religious, and/or racial groups have attempted to prevail against, and at the expense of, each other, e.g., in former Yugoslavia, where some of the most virulent of these conflicts have occurred.

Although these conflicts include other dimensions in addition to the ethnic one -- e.g., political, economic, environmental -- they are referred to here as ethnic conflicts because members of certain groups have been assaulted, killed or otherwise "removed" from certain areas and symbols of their cultural identity destroyed by members of other groups, in large part because of their involuntary membership in those groups: they are killed and their villages and cities leveled, not because of what they have done, but because of who they are. "Ethnic cleansing" is, among other things, a sign that genocide, while not on the scale of the Nazi Holocaust, has nevertheless returned to Europe -- an epiphenomenon of the ending of the Cold War, the collapse of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union itself; in effect, the collapse of systems which had previously kept violent ethnic conflict in check.

2. Wars and Rumors of War

The resurrection of violent ethnic conflict in post-Cold War Europe reflects a global trend already underway during the Cold War: the progressive increase in *domestic* major armed conflicts as a proportion of *total* (domestic and foreign) major armed conflicts worldwide. According to figures reported by Peter Wallensteen and others (see Table 1), not only was the number of domestic much larger than the number of foreign major armed conflicts between 1986 (one year following Mikhail Gorbachev's assumption of power in the former Soviet Union) and 1991 (the year in which the wars

in former Yugoslavia began), but the number of domestic as a proportion of total (domestic and foreign) major armed conflicts increased during that period.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Dom Con	32	32	33	33	36	33
ForC on	5	7	6	3	2	2
Dom %Tot Conf	86.5%	82%	84.6%	91.7%	94.7%	94.3%

*From: *State of World Conflict Report 1991-1992*, pp. 16-18.

Table 1: Domestic as a Proportion of Total Major Armed Conflicts Worldwide, 1986-1991

Wallensteen's figures are compatible with conclusions reached by Ted Robert Gurr (1993) in his study of 233 minority groups at risk of oppression in 93 countries, e.g.:
(1) "Since the end of the Cold War, conflicts between communal groups and states have come to be recognized as the major challenge to domestic and international security in most parts of the world" (p. 314);
(2) "Every form of ethnopolitical conflict has increased sharply since the 1950s" (p. 316); and
(3) "Ethnonationalist civil wars are the most protracted deadly conflicts of the late twentieth century" (p. 319).
Clearly, despite some improvements in the status of minorities and reductions in major armed conflicts worldwide during the period 1989-1999 (see Gurr, 2000; Gurr, et al., 2000; and Sollenberg, 1996), ethnic-based violent conflict *within* states seems to be one discernible wave of the post-Cold War future -- among the "low intensity conflicts" that, for Martin van Creveld (1991), are replacing conventional interstate war (also see Holsti, 1996). Former UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, reflecting the first of the above conclusions cited from Gurr's (1993) study, warned that "ethnic conflict poses as great a danger to common world security as did the Cold War" (cited in Preston, 1993).

3. The Post-Cold War Zeitgeist According to Fukuyama et al

Significant though these trends in conflict and their implications may be, there are those who argue that there really is not much cause for alarm because, for a variety of reasons, the long-term future looks brighter and more promising. Francis Fukuyama (1989), for example, provoked intense debate over a decade ago by pronouncing that, with the ending of the Cold War, liberal democracy had triumphed over Communism and in effect, "History" had come to an end (ibid., p. 4): "What we may be missing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such ... the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."

The "end of history" for Fukuyama also meant, "the growing 'Common Marketization' of international relations, and the diminution of the likelihood of large-scale conflict between states" (ibid., p. 18):

> This does not by any means imply the end of international conflict *per se*. For the world at that point would be divided between a part that was *historical* and a part that was *post-historical*. Conflict between states *still in history*, and between those states and those *at the end of history*, would still be possible. There would still be a high and perhaps rising level of ethnic and nationalist violence, since those are impulses incompletely played out, even in parts of the post-historical world. Palestinians and Kurds, Sikhs and Tamils, Irish Catholics and Walloons, Armenians and Azeris, will continue to have their unresolved grievances. This implies that terrorism and wars of national liberation will continue to be an important item on the international agenda. *But large-scale conflict must involve large states still caught in the grip of history, and they are what appear to be passing from the scene* (emphasis added).

Hence, history may be "dead" or dying for East-West *inter*state relations, but is very much alive at the *intra*state level. Overlapping with, but going beyond, the data presented in Table 1, Wallensteen and Axell (1993, pp. 332-333) report that, for the period 1989-1992, "a total of 82 armed conflicts were recorded ... 35 [of which] were ... wars, resulting in at least 1000 battle-related deaths in a single year. ... *very few of the armed conflicts were "classic" inter-state conflicts.* Only [4 conflicts] pitted two internationally and mutually recognized states against each other" (emphasis added). Regarding the nature of armed conflicts up to the present time, Wallensteen, in a meeting with some 40 UN practitioners and academics at UN headquarters in New York City, reported, on 23 November 1999, that: "... there were 108 armed conflicts between 1989 and 1998, and ... there were more conflicts toward the end of the decade. *The number of inter-state conflicts remained low, and most conflicts were found inside states*" (emphasis added) (ACUNS, 2000).

Fukuyama's argument is a complex one, as he also maintains (1989, p. 18) that "The end of history will be a very sad time" and that "Such nostalgia ... will continue to fuel competition and conflict even in the post-historical world for some time to come." In effect, the constellation of factors making for a reduction of large-scale, ideologically-based conflict between large states will clash with, and perhaps be overwhelmed by, a longing for such conflicts. What this means, quite simply, is that history may not end. But history may not "end" for another reason as well: although ideological tensions between East and West have clearly diminished, Fukuyama seems to have overlooked the *spillover potential* of the ethnic and other conflicts that he admits will continue to occur. This also seems to be a problem with Max Singer and Aaron Wildavsky (1993), who argue that: "In the post-Cold War world, there is no longer a single decisive threat. But there is a new framework to world politics: Its essential feature is that the world is divided between *zones of turmoil and development* and *zones of peace and democracy*" (emphasis added) (Singer, 1993).

Zones of peace and democracy (Fukuyama's *post-historical* world) include Western Europe, North America, Japan, and Australia/New Zealand. The rest of the world comprises zones of turmoil and development (Fukuyama's *historical* world). But by the year 2100, "*the zones of war and turmoil are likely to be much smaller than they are today. ...* In the long run ... these zones of turmoil will be dominated by the spread of wealth, democracy, and peace" (emphasis added) (ibid.).

Singer and Wildavsky's argument is similar to John Mueller's (1989), that major war -- war between developed countries -- is becoming obsolete, in part, because of the spread worldwide of economic prosperity:

> The prospects look rather good for the foreseeable future not only because war has lost its evident appeal but also because substantial agreement has arisen around the twin propositions that prosperity and economic growth should be central national goals and that war is a particularly counterproductive device for achieving these goals. Associated with this are changes in perspectives about how a country achieves status and "power" in the modern world. Increasingly, economic strength is being used as the central measure, replacing military prowess and success in war (p. 219).

These are "rational" arguments, that, yes, there will continue to be "a great deal of war and tragedy" (M. Singer, 1993) in the "zones of turmoil," the *historical* world, but, as liberal democracy and free-market prosperity continue to spread worldwide, *ecological imperatives permitting*, the incidence of major war between major powers will diminish. There is some validity to these arguments as well, as indicated by the "intellectual growth industry" of research on the effects worldwide of the spread of democracy (see Kegley and Hermann, 1995, pp. 5-6).

For example, research on the relationship between democracy and war suggests (without a clear explanation) "that democracies' refusal to resolve their conflicts among themselves by the use of force is 'as close as anything we have to an empirical law in international relations' (Levy, 1989[a]: 270)" (Kegley and Hermann, 1995, p. 8). Accordingly, Fukuyama, Singer and Wildavsky, and Mueller may be right in the *long run* (again, ecological imperatives permitting). But what about the wars taking place in the "zones of turmoil" in the short- to middle run? Michael Mandelbaum argued that these would not threaten the "vital interests" of those living in the zones of peace -- that "even though there may be more crises rooted in ethnic conflicts than we've seen in years, in most cases it won't matter to us that much" (cited in Goshko, 1991).

Richard Ullman (1991, pp. 144-145), in apparent agreement with Mandelbaum, Fukuyama, and others, commented: "Violent conflicts will certainly occur. ... [but] they will be sufficiently confined so that they will be very unlikely to escalate across the threshold of war among the major European powers." But, given the "spillover potential" inherent in the ethnic and other *intra*national conflicts occurring in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, they *could* escalate and, in the process, undermine further democratization and reform in those areas, ultimately sabotaging the development of a post-Cold War *peace and security commons*.

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Vasquez, John A. (1993). *The War Puzzle*. [Cambridge Studies in International Relations: 27]. Cambridge (England) and New York: Cambridge University Press. [A major critique of the Correlates-of-War (COW) project, plus contribution in its own right to theory on the "steps to [interstate] war," including the proposition that the prevailing Cold War paradigm, *realism*, encourages rather than discourages *power-politics* behaviors that lead to war: "The fact that political actors in the modern global political system adopt common realist practices like alliance-making, military buildups, balancing of power and *realpolitik* tactics should come as no surprise.... What is crucial to understand is that, against equals, these practices do not produce peace and security, as realists maintain, but increased insecurity, coercion, and entanglement in a process and series of steps that may lead to war."]

Vasquez, John A. (ed.) (2000). *What Do We Know about War?* Lanham (Maryland) and Oxford (England): Rowman & Littlefield. [In this volume dealing with "what is known" about the causes and conditions of interstate warfare, Vasquez brings together major figures in the field to examine the roles played by alliances, arms races, capability, crisis bargaining, interstate rivalries, and territory in increasing the likelihood of war.]

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Biographical Sketch

Dennis J.D. Sandole earned his **BA** (*cum laude*) at Temple University, Philadelphia, in 1967 and his **Ph.D.** at the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, Scotland, in 1979. He is Professor of Conflict Resolution and International Relations, at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR), George Mason University, in Fairfax, Virginia (dsandole@gmu.edu). A founding member of the conflict resolution programs at GMU, he worked closely with Bryant Wedge, the Institute's first director, as well as with John Burton in England and at GMU.

Prof. Sandole has been a *William C. Foster Fellow (Visiting Scholar)* with the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) during which time he worked on the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) negotiations and the negotiations on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs). In that capacity, he served as a member of the U.S. Delegation to the CSBMs negotiations in Vienna, Austria. He has also been a *NATO Research Fellow*, examining the role of the "reinvented" NATO in helping to shape the nature of the peace and security environment of post-Cold War Europe. He has been a *Fulbright Senior Scholar* and, most recently, an *OSCE "Researcher in Residence,"* continuing his research on developing a "new European peace and security system" (NEPSS) within the context of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

As a speaker for the U.S. Information Agency (USIA) and Public Diplomacy programs of the U.S. State Department, Prof. Sandole has lectured for, or otherwise met with, diplomatic and defense, university, think-tank, media, and other audiences, on various aspects of peace and security in Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Macedonia, Spain, Switzerland, and Turkey. In addition, he has lectured on various aspects of conflict resolution at universities and other institutions in Armenia, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and the Russian Federation.

Prof. Sandole's publications deal with generic theory of conflict and conflict resolution; the use of simulation in the analysis of international conflict; application of conflict resolution theory and practice to the ethnic conflicts of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union; and conflict resolution program design (especially for university-based programs in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, Poland, and Turkey).

His publications include *Conflict Management and Problem Solving: Interpersonal to International Applications*, (1987); *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application*, (1993); and *Capturing the Complexity of Conflict: Dealing with Violent Ethnic Conflicts of the Post-Cold War Era* (1999).