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Introduction

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THE LAST DECADE of the second millennium was especially characterized by multiple and devastating violent conflicts along apparent religious and ethnic lines. This book seeks to expand the understanding of the fundamental underpinnings of inter- and intragroup conflict through a comparative interdisciplinary and interregional analytical approach that proves the existence of common causal denominators in the outbreak of violent conflicts across the globe. The existence of common causal factors, independent of group identity, undermine the often held assumption that violent conflict can be solely explained away on identity incompatibility between groups. It is the book's contention that the understanding of the fundamental roots of violent conflict is directly related to our ability to manage, resolve, and prevent conflicts.

Any analysis that seeks to understand the relationship between group identity and violent conflict must begin with an attempt at clarifying the concept of group identity. In trying to define national or ethnic identity, scholars tend to focus on identity either as an end in itself or as a means to an end, but hardly ever on both. Those who focus on identity as an end tend to explain collective identity in

terms of assumed racial/genetic characteristics or presumed cultural/linguistic uniqueness. Usually this line of thinking is associated with Johann Gottfried von Herder and his description of German nationalism.¹ An example of a more explicit and more contemporary work is that of Clifford Geertz, who emphasizes the concept of “primordial attachments,” based on “given” independent variables such as “immediate contiguity and kin connection” and “being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices.”² Anthony D. Smith also leans toward this interpretation by emphasizing the mythological origins of a group as the most important differentiating element of that group’s ethnic or national identity.³ The general thrust in this line of thinking is that culture-based identity must be retained and preserved and that its subscribers will and do take pride in its uniqueness.

The criticism often leveled against this school of thought is the same as Aristotle’s criticism of the Platonic forms. Engaging in discovering the forms pleases the senses and the intellect a great deal, but what practical benefits does one derive from it? What are the practical applications of the forms? Is there a tangible practical benefit in philosophizing for the sake of philosophizing? Similarly, other than being proud of one’s collective identity, what are the tangible benefits of this identity and do people really try to preserve it regardless of the cost associated with the effort of preservation? If collective identity is conceived only as an end, this would certainly contradict the concept of humans being rational and purposeful creatures. In his *National Identity*, Anthony D. Smith never even speculates as to what would happen to the identity of a group if that group actually came to realize that the mythological bases of its uniqueness are just that: mythological. Does the group then stop being the group and dissolve into oblivion? If not, then there must be other reasons that keep the group in existence.

The above realization provides the conceptual basis of the second school of thought, which views identity as a means to a specific end. Among many, the most prominent representatives of this school are Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, and Karl Deutsch.

In general terms, they tend to view collective identity as the instrument by which institutions, such as a state or a national state, become legitimate in the eyes of its citizens and the world, or a group of citizens (or potential citizens) becomes sovereign over a specific territory (the right to national self-determination). Again, collective identity in this context becomes the means by which certain institutions become or attempt to become legitimate. The creating of collective identity therefore is attributed to a process in which the role of the individual is strictly passive—collective identity is imposed on the group by realities beyond the individual's realm, such as systemic economic and political ones. Examples of this sort of manufactured identity vary across the spectrum, from the purely Marxist point of view, in which economic goals and relations define identity, to a more subtle Deutschian view that communication patterns create identity in the framework of progress. Gellner points out that “at the base of the modern social order stands not the executioner but the professor. Not the guillotine, but the (aptly named) *doctorat d'etat* is the main tool and symbol of state power.”⁴

Explicit in Gellner's view is the notion that the institutions that control education and its content control collective identity. Since education in modern times is the function of the state, whoever is in control of the state controls education and, by extension, collective identity. In this context, collective identity serves specific purposes within the context of modernization,⁵ which brought into the forefront such dilemmas as political legitimacy, centralization of political power, mass political participation, institutionalization of power sharing and distribution of resources, and self- and group awareness through education. In the fast-paced, unpredictable environment of modernity, identity became a remedy for the above dilemmas. In summary, the implication here is that the group and the group's identity are not produced by nature but by the social environment for specific social purposes.

Although the latter school of thought seems to be more popular than the former, it nonetheless suffers from certain inconsistencies. The tendency of the second school has been to use identity and the environment interchangeably or overlapping one another. If we take

the analogy of a chameleon, this school of thought seems to argue that the immediate environment (the color of the rock or the color of the tree) transfers its characteristics to the chameleon rather than the chameleon assuming different colors, instinctively or otherwise. To take the analogy one step further, in this school's thinking, the chameleon's essence is reduced to its appearance, whichever one an observer witnesses at a specific time and under specific circumstances. Subsequently, there are as many definitions of collective identity as there are authors. For example: John Breuilly defines nationalism as a political ideology; Ernest Gellner, as a sentiment and "a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent"; Benedict Anderson, as the act of imagining a community; and Eric Hobsbawm, as an invented tradition (the color of the chameleon is an invention). It is this reality that has prompted Walker Connor to argue that "a nation is a nation, is a state, is an ethnic group, is a . . ." ⁶

The above analysis delineates the general differences between the two schools of thought, which often are referred to, respectively, as primordialists and modernists, ethnonationalists and civic nationalists, or even nationalizers and Europeanizers. ⁷ As different as the two schools appear to be, they can still be the subjects of a single criticism. Whether they examine collective identity either as a means or as an end, they tend to examine collective identity in isolation from other collective identities, which might coexist or be in mutual conflict in the minds of individuals making up a group. They treat collective identity as if it is a monolith when in reality it contains elements of both schools of thought. For the proponents of civil nationalism, this oversight amounts to the situation in which they criticize the advocates of ethnic nationalism of irrational myth making and self-deception (it is unnatural for a chameleon to claim to have a single primordial and favorite color). For that reason, they end up suggesting a change of perception from ethnic nationalism to civic nationalism. In this regard, the modernists' recommendation for conflict resolution or prevention for ethnic conflicts rests entirely with convincing elites and peoples to change their primordial perceptions of collective identity.

To the primordialists, however, the above suggestion appears to be contradictory on two accounts. It seems that in their analytical approach the civic nationalists argue that it is the social and economic environment that dictates collective identity, but in their prescriptive approach they seem to argue that elites and people are the ones that really matter. This is especially intriguing in those cases in which decision making seeks to contain ethnic nationalism through economic sanctions, which tend to undermine economic development and political change (Serbian ethnic nationalism and Western economic sanctions in the 1990s come to mind here). On the second account, ethnic nationalists can make a case by arguing that groups or states claiming to be basing their identity on civic nationalism are in reality basing their identity on ethnic nationalism. The United States, for example, was developed as a state on the basis of an Anglo-Saxon ethnic identity—Mediterranean refugees, fleeing violence in Asia Minor in the 1920s, were refused entrance to the United States on the basis that they did not meet ethnic qualifications. The same could apply to Great Britain and the English or to France and the French, and certainly Germany and the Germans. In this climate of argumentation between the two schools of thought, the ongoing debate about what is ethnic and what is national identity and how they relate to conflict becomes part of the problem rather than part of the solution. This lack of clarity certainly corrupted policy in the case of Somalia, Rwanda, and Yugoslavia: the Somali conflict was considered malleable due to a perceived ethnic homogeneity of the Somalis; the Rwandan case, most intractable due to a perceived ethnic heterogeneity of the Rwandans; and the Yugoslav case, most confused due to the impossibility to fit into any specific category for any specific period of time.

Conceptualizing Group Identity

This section will attempt to undermine the tendency to view collective identity as a means or only as an end. It will establish a correlation between the individual's natural propensity to identify with

something and the environmental stimuli that interact with human factors to produce multiple and multidimensional identities. This section will also argue that although the propensity to identify has been a permanent feature of human existence, the scope and content of identity has always been in flux and never a constant feature of an individual or a group. This notion will explain the inability to define and codify identity, thus signifying the need to shift the research focus to the purposes served by a specific identity rather than its nature. Thus it is the contention of this section that group identity can be better understood through the functional utilities it provides to its subscribers and which utilities are molded by time and space (where time correlates to knowledge and understanding, and space correlates to resources), and projected to a given political realm, which then filters and facilitates the manifestation of the identity. By clarifying the purpose and functions of identity, analysts will be able to calibrate the relation between identity and conflict, develop a more reliable diagnostic method about conflict causation, and produce more effective political and economic responses to dealing with conflict. For example, it is perplexing to be constantly exposed to the notion that certain conflicts are based on ancient hatred or that certain conflicts are based on religious differences. The conflict in Northern Ireland can be illustrative of this tendency. More often than not, and as Walker Connor demonstrates in this volume, this particular conflict is referred to as a religious one. In reality, all parties to the conflict are of the same religion. Religiously, therefore, they are more similar than they are different. In such cases, the questions that need to be asked and answered are, What causes the participants in such a conflict to produce religious differences? and Why do they then focus on the few differences rather than the vast similarities?

An instrumental analysis of an identity can begin with a reference to the second book of the *Republic*, where Plato begins his quest to define justice. He connects justice to one of three categories into which all things can be classified. He points out that there are things that people wish to possess for their own sake and not for any effects that might be entailed in them. There are things that people desire for both their own sake and for subsequent benefits that they will accrue.

And, there are things that are not by themselves desired, but are sought out only for the benefits they will accrue. Accordingly, Plato concludes that justice belongs to the second and fairest category, which a human seeks both for its own sake and for its beneficial consequences—while justice is considered to be a noble thing in itself, its practice also guarantees happiness to its practitioner.

What Plato said about justice can also be said of identity. Just as people value themselves or others for being just and take pride in being just, they also value having a social identity and taking pride in that identity. In this regard, identity can be viewed as an end only. But identity is also valued for the benefits it is thought to bring to its bearer. Often a person presumed to have no identity or negative identity (which is not actually possible since everyone has an identity) is ignored or considered a liability. On the other hand, a person considered to have an identity is either respected or despised (or feared), depending on the content of that person's identity. In this regard, identity can be thought of as a means to an end. This means identity is used toward winning recognition and acceptance from others. Subsequently, a social identity is both an end and a means to an end.

A metaphor taken from the world of chameleons again can be instrumental in conceptualizing which ends a social identity serves. Since it cannot become invisible, the chameleon must content itself with a qualified or limited ability to evade predators and stay alive while searching for the sources that will sustain existence. In its attempt to stay alive, the chameleon changes its color to avoid detection by predators. Color changing then becomes a defense mechanism in the pursuit of security (avoidance of bodily harm or death). In this regard, security or existence is an end in itself, while the defense mechanism based on color changing is the means to that end.

As far as existence goes, what applies to chameleons also applies to humans—the difference being that whereas the chameleon relies on color changing for defense, humans rely on numbers or on social structures. But just as the chameleon relies on a specific color at a specific time and place for defense, humans, at specific times and places, rely on specific social structures for defense against threats to individual existence. Although a particular society can be viewed as

an end (since we all take pleasure in gossiping, the act of socializing is, in a sense, clearly pleasurable in itself), in reality a society is far more of a means to an end than just an end. Primarily then, a social structure can be viewed as the individual's shelter against threats to life. A social structure for a human being is what a school of fish is to a fish or a flock of birds is to a bird. Therefore, existence, which is an end in itself, dictates that humans live in social structures and adopt themselves to them just as a chameleon manifests colors to blend into a given environment. Identifying, then, with a social structure becomes a natural extension of human needs and desires, whether these are cognitive or instinctive. In this regard, a social identity is like clothing. Just as the natural and social environment dictates the need, availability, and properties of the garment(s), the natural and social environment also dictates the need, spectrum, and property characteristics of identity(ies)—in addition to the fact that people take pride in their clothing. This realization means that in the context of time and space, needs can be prioritized in terms of importance, and that the degree to which they can be satisfied relates to the availability of structures, tools, and tactics. The dependence of need satisfaction on structures, tools, and tactics manifests itself in terms of identity; see Paula Worby's chapter in this volume regarding identity manifestations among refugees of the Guatemalan civil war.

Just as needs and desires can be haphazardly prioritized, so can social identities. As humans go, different social structures provide different degrees of security against threats to existence. Hence, individuals primarily identify with those societal structures that appear to provide greater degrees of security and identify less with those that provide lower degrees of security. Since people tend to identify more with social structures that provide greater degrees of security and identify less with those that provide lesser degrees of security, social structures can also be prioritized. The availability of social structures varies from time to time and from place to place depending on the availability or feasibility of those tools and tactics that go into creating and maintaining social structures. Different times and resources allow the production or abandonment (or both) of different tools and tactics people deploy in pursuing the universal ends of humans, such as physical security

(health included), economic security (maintaining a sustainable degree of affordability and well-being), individual accomplishment, social recognition, and contribution and usefulness, along with enjoying life's simple pleasures.

An attempt to prioritize needs within a political realm can be borrowed from Hedley Bull's approach. Keeping in mind that a society is more of a means to an end and not just an end, it is useful to note that in his *Anarchical Society*, Bull writes that "all societies seek to ensure that life will be in some measure secure against violence resulting in death or bodily harm."⁸ This means that the primary and elementary goal (end) of any human being, and therefore of a social structure or a society, is the physical security of the society's individual members. Without the existence of relative security (a general perception that existence is conditionally guaranteed), an individual cannot be as mindful of the other primary, and certainly secondary, goals. This concept can be illustrated by the fact that when one is confronted by the dilemma of surrendering one's life or one's possessions, one clearly prefers to dispense of one's possessions, unless the surrendering of possessions means absolute physical insecurity.

By extension, the identity related to the need for physical security is clearly the most important primary identity, which means that an individual develops loyalty to the social structure that provides him or her with physical security. A primary and elementary collective identity, thus, can be conceptualized in terms of its shape and in terms of its substance. A collective identity's shape is associated with the characteristics of various social structures. It manifests itself in terms of individuals identifying with family, clan, tribe, nation, humanity, or neighborhood, village, city, state, or even the globe. Thus both the shape and the characteristics of the social structure are dependent on time and space—different times and different spaces produce different structures or different structural characteristics. On the other hand, the substance of any identity is based on the reality that individual security can only be attained in a societal setting in which the security of one individual depends on the association with others. Since there can be no society with one person, there can be no security for the individual who stands alone.

The above realization means that the substance of the most important primary collective identity is communicative along horizontal and vertical lines (between individuals and between generations), metaphysically (toward the dead and the yet to be born), as well as existentially and spatially (between human existence and the environment). This demonstrates that collective identity is not only multiple but multidimensional as well. It needs to be analyzed, conceived, and prioritized on two different levels (the individual and the group) in two dimensions (the physical and the metaphysical) and in two parameters (time and space). Recognizing the existence of identity at different levels, at different dimensions, and at different times and places will help in prioritizing between simultaneously existing identities within the same individual and the same group and, of course, between different groups. Sophocles has presented the best example demonstrating this reality in his tragedy *Antigone*, where the multiple and multidimensional aspects of identity come into an irreconcilable focus.

By conceptualizing collective identity along the lines above, one will be able to make sensible comparisons between similar manifestations of identity at different spaces and times; to distinguish between a collective identity's shape and its substance (patriotism and nationalism?), and to avoid falling into the fallacy of comparing the shape and substance of different identity manifestation, when in essence one is actually comparing different times and places. This leads to the position in which one can distinguish between dominant collective identities and subdominant ones, thus demonstrating that through time and space dominant identities can become subdominant and vice-versa. For example, a feudal identity might give priority to regionalism, patriotism, or nepotism, while an imperial identity might give priority to a national identity, which in turn might give way to a supranational identity, which eventually might become a national identity in a different context.

The chameleon and many sea creatures can change colors. Humans can change identities based on the purpose(s) each of them serves. It is not an automatic process. Rather it is the result of a pro-

longed and deliberate communicative process in which the individual makes a series of conscious decisions. No individual will willingly abandon an ethnic identity as long as that identity serves certain purposes for that individual and its group. Similarly, no force is capable of infusing a certain degree of civic identity to an individual if the individual does not see a certain purpose in adopting that identity. Thus it is not easy to get people to go along with replacing their loyalty to a state with loyalty to an empire, or loyalty to a local community with loyalty to a national community—with the reverse being the case as well.

In trying to prioritize manifestations of collective identity, one can begin by separating individual manifestations at the level of an individual's domain, and group identity manifestations at the social domain. As the above analysis regarding security indicates, an individual's social identity manifestations supersede individual manifestations. This is not because the group is considered more important than the individual, but because individuals invest their existence in group existence. Thus individual existence relies primarily on group existence, where the group is the investment individuals make in order to safeguard the sanctity of individual existence. This relationship is predictable enough so as to state that the greater the threat to individual existence, the higher the individual's identity with a group and the more the individual becomes willing to undertake risks on behalf of the group (in economic terms this is like protecting one's investments). This concept not only explains the existence of gangs in inner cities in the United States, where policing is weak, but also group identity in the Balkans, where security institutions are also weak. When individual and group physical security is relatively high, individual identity manifestations tend to be more pronounced. This explains such common stereotypes and comparisons as those pertaining to American individualism versus European or Japanese socialism, or American civic nationalism against Balkan ethnic nationalism. In reality the difference between the two identities is a difference in degree of group security resulting from the existence of strong policing and military institutions in the United States along

with the absence of direct external threats, but increasingly weakening or disappearing ones in what used to be Yugoslavia—in other words, differences in time and space.

The reality that individual existence relies on group security also manifests itself in relation to the security of past and future generations. Sacrifices by individuals in the past command respect and reverence and obligates individuals of the present generation to preserve a degree of security for future generations. In this context, identity transcends time and generation gaps (often this sense of obligation is metaphorically referred to as collective memory or common historical experience). Individuals who are assumed to have sacrificed themselves for group security (in essence they sacrifice themselves to the sanctity of individual existence) become modal personalities, which in turn demand respect and recognition—that they did not die in vain. Here again, the lower that degree of individual and group security, the more respected the hero personalities become. The opposite clearly applies as well. On the other hand, when the waging of war becomes potentially detrimental to the sanctity of individual security, war heroes cease being modal personalities and attention then shifts to antiwar heroes or pacifists. This notion is illustrated best by public attitudes regarding the Vietnam War. On the other hand, struggles for political liberation, which also requires self-sacrifice, is among other causes justified on the rationalization that the sacrifice will allow future generations to live in peace. American involvement in World War I was in part portrayed as an investment necessary to end all wars. On the other side of the equation in the notion analyzed here are traitors and cowards, who are commonly despised.

Concern for individual and group security—for past, present, and future generations—achieves metaphysical connotations in the extent to which the sanctity of individual existence transcends a believed boundary separating the living and the dead. Socrates, who is little known for having repeatedly fought to defend Athens in war, is a well-known historical personality who opted for death in order to maintain his spiritual integrity and, presumably, existence. Also little known is the fact that once he refused an order by the tyrannical and oligarchic authorities of Athens to arrest a member of the democratic

opposition. Among other things, his example clearly illustrates that the metaphysical qualities of identity, connected to security, manifest themselves in religious terms. Thus individuals tend to identify with religious beliefs or spiritual security structures the same way they identify with social security structures. Parallel to a social identity an individual maintains a spiritual identity and, as a result, the individual is constantly struggling to reconcile the two—physical needs and spiritual needs are not always compatible and threats to one are not necessarily threats to the other.

Next to identifying with a social and spiritual entity, individuals will identify with the environment on which the social entity relies for both physical security (the environment might be providing natural defenses against security threats), and economic security, which is intertwined with the group's physical security. Here again, the greater the degree of security provided to an individual by the environment, the higher the degree to which the individual tends to identify with the environment. Since security is not absolute but relative, individuals tend to identify with the broadest environment possible. Identifying with the river, the sea, the mountain, or the valley comes before identifying with the canoe, the boat, the cabin, or the field. Identities at this level target a wide spectrum: from a child's favorite hiding spot (one of a child's manifestations of patriotism), to the earth as a whole (earth images from space have changed the way people feel about their identity with the environment). The determining factor in establishing the scope of environmental identity is provided by time—the greater the ability to organize more efficient and more secure social units, the larger the scope of environmental identity by the individual. An example of this is individual identity with a country whose geographical scope varies from time to time.

Moving down the priority list of needs, collective identity can be connected to subsocial and subterritorial units that also provide important functions to secondary needs of human existence. Here individuals identify with employment organizations and structures or whatever individuals will end up doing to generate their living. Thus we end up with economic functional identities such as castes, clubs, occupational associations, class identity, or party affiliation. The

intensity of identity manifestations at this level is analogous to the value of rewards perceived by the individual. An identity at this level can be easily transferable based on the availability of employment opportunities, advancement, self-fulfillment, and functional recognition. Along these lines, individuals identify with the educational practices or institution, which they may have relied on to acquire the skills or knowledge to enhance their existence and human potential. Educational experiences are directly connected to the form of individual identity mentioned earlier in the analysis. Education, whether it is formal or informal, traditional or modern, is the key link between the shape and substance of identity—it helps people prioritize social structure through an evaluation of the security functions they provide. In conclusion, while the substance of collective identity is always constant, the shape is not.

Functional Dependence and Change

It is argued so far that identity can be conceptualized in its multiple and multidimensional manifestations in terms of the purposes it serves for an individual. Human identity is connected to human needs and human needs are connected to functions designed to satisfy them. Identity, thus, can be understood through its functional base. Once the practicality of a function is proven through trial and error, individuals tend to adopt it. Unless an individual or a group perceives no alternative but change, there is always a great reluctance to abandon established functions. This is mainly due to an omnipresent uncertainty about the effectiveness and efficiency of untried functions and about the perceived ability by the would-be practitioners to perform these functions. Drastic and abrupt shifts in time and space (political change) produce the need for social adaptation. In turn, political change is characterized by insecurity due to competition between functions associated with security opportunities and functions associated with security risks. Unregulated competition between functions—for example, those related to security risks and those related to security opportunities—produces conflict be-

tween individuals connected with the respective functions. A number of similarly affected individuals (a social force) will organize themselves into a political force poised to promote or defend certain functions. The larger the magnitude and scope by which individuals are affected by abrupt and drastic political change, the larger will be those affected, and the larger will be the scope of opportunities and risks. Failure or inability to reconcile risks and opportunities results in the failure to address the security concerns of groups at the earliest possible stage of their development. This failure invariably results in devastating consequences. Individuals and groups gradually and systematically see their security structures being steadily undermined until all they are left with is a psychological inclination toward a social structure (shape) that is no longer functional. At such a point, collective identity is reduced to its substance and is treated exclusively as an end—to be defended at all costs and by all means. As violent, large-scale conflict erupts, its psychological dimension becomes most difficult to comprehend and confusion and stubbornness undermine logic. Violence becomes the instrument of the strategy by which the termination of the conflict is sought through forced identity modification—each of the embattled groups becomes involved in a mutually futile attempt to modify the other side's perception. This approach—along with the attempt by outsiders to also change identity perceptions as a way of managing and possibly resolving the conflict—often reinforces each group's tendency to perceive identity as an end only.

When the above occurs, it appears that groups, formed on a functional platform, are defending or promoting an identity, when in essence they are supposed to be defending or promoting a common function and only by extension the identity associated with that function. Unfortunately, all rational evaluation of security costs, risks, and opportunities tends to become inert in such situations. The best description of such a situation can be found in Thucydides' description of civil war in Corcyra in the *History of the Peloponnesian War*. To understand conflict that enters that extreme psychological state one needs to understand both the characteristics of a group's identity and also the purposes which the identity serves. Similarly, to take action

toward changing an identity is not the same as addressing the causes of a seeming identity conflict. In the first instance, one tries to treat the symptoms. In the second instance, one tries to change the symptoms. Neither is an effective mechanism for reconciling functions through the art of compromising, commonly referred to as politics. The chapters in this volume are illustrative of the reality explained above.

Walker Connor demonstrates the psychological need for security and belonging as it manifests itself in the framework of the state system. He points out that although nation-states (each defined national group having its own state) might be ideal structures for group security, they are not always possible because states and groups do not coincide. For that reason, individuals and groups must reconcile their loyalty to the group with loyalty or disloyalty to the state they live in. He argues that more often than not the two loyalties are compatible and the identities (nationalism and patriotism) can be reconciled. However, governments need to be sensitive to this possibility and be constantly working to reconcile the different loyalties and identities. Connor also provides vivid illustrations of the multidimensional qualities of group identity which transcend time (generations) and space. Thus, he warns scholars and officials that perceptions are part of reality and should take seriously the fact that all national identities contain elements of primordial ties. He concludes by saying that as powerful as the national psychological bond is, it is not always the primary cause for conflict; it tends to become untamed once conflict reaches the level at which people are targeted because of their group identity.

S.A. Giannakos demonstrates the environment's role in group formation and group identity. By using the Balkan region as an example, he demonstrates that static environmental conditions over many centuries created entrenched group identities that manifest themselves in nearly exclusive primordial aspects. As such, they can be utilized as powerful devices for justifying political action regardless of whether these actions are compatible with the security interests of the groups involved in the actions. He also shows that the tendency to explain conflict exclusively in terms of the primordial manifestations of

group identity results in the misdiagnosing of the causes of violent conflict. As a result, applied solutions end up becoming causes. Any accurate diagnosis must take into consideration all dimensions of collective identity.

Paula Worby's chapter on women's identity and political fortunes in conflict-torn Guatemala reveals three important realities about violent conflicts. The first is the degree and scope of devastation that conflict inflicts on all segments of society, regardless of age or gender, but, most significant, to those most vulnerable and least responsible for the outbreak of conflict. The individual pain and suffering remains always unaccountable. The second reality is the demonstration of how political change—unfortunately, that which produces the greatest degree of insecurity—becomes the impetus for politicization and identity construction by combining human potential and political parameters. Worby demonstrates how women in refugee camps took control of their destiny, organized themselves with the help of United Nations organizations, and converted themselves into a political force effectively demanding the recognition by the Guatemalan authorities of both their political and economic rights. Ironically, the third realization is that positive identity changes, when not facilitated or at least accommodated by a reciprocal political and economic change, lead to frustration. Women refugees returning to Guatemala found that their political gains had been sacrificed for the sake of reestablishing a seemingly stable social order that, in terms of gender relations, reduced women to their prewar social subordination.

Steven Miner, writing on religion in the Soviet Union, demonstrates that because of the metaphysical qualities of both national and religious identities, and because of the fact that individuals have multiple and multidimensional identities, a religious identity and a national identity tend to connect when a government (the Soviet government) fails to reconcile itself with the metaphysical, but indispensable, qualities of religious identity. Misplaced policies tend to alienate religious institutions, thus creating or reinforcing disloyalty to the government and loyalty to the opposition (dissenting national and religious movements).

Neil MacFarlane and George Khutsishvili's chapter on ethnic con-

flict in Georgia demonstrates the long-term counterproductive effects that Soviet national policies have had on the evolutionary dynamics of politics in the Caucasus region. The chapter shows that Soviet attempts to create, from above, security structures for the people of the Caucasus (like autonomous oblasts and regions, primarily to facilitate Soviet security concerns and control), created regional institutional interests which manifested themselves along ethnic lines when central power weakened in Moscow. Regional elites, which had been willingly co-opted into the Soviet order, were anxious to create their own security structures once the diminishing trend of Soviet authority became a reality. At the same time, subregional elites like those in Abkhazia, sought to utilize their connections with Moscow in order to prevent being co-opted by larger regional elites and political institutions like those of Georgia. Overall, the chapter demonstrates the extent to which ethnic identities are constructed in reaction to political risks and opportunities and in accordance with security concerns.

Muna Ndulo explains the role that governance has on the outbreak of violent conflicts in Africa. He points out that the lack of developed constitutional and institutional political mechanisms, suitable to the particular circumstances confronting the people in Africa, leads to the situation in which people's concerns and problems tend to be ignored, thus leading to repeated intrastate violent conflicts. By extension, Ndulo suggests that good governance would not only ameliorate the negative political and economic predicaments of the continent, but also provide a platform for viable political interaction between different groups forced into one state by historical circumstances associated with colonialism.

Michael Malley's chapter on Indonesia reaffirms the findings of the previous chapters. In addition, it draws attention to the correlation between the political causes of violent intrastate conflicts and the ethnic identity overtones that might come to characterize such conflicts. It is such a correlation that makes these conflicts intractable to rational and systematic analysis. Malley opens the way to the realization that created political disputes can gradually intensify into violent conflicts, which can intertwine with the psychological aspects of group identity, gain their own rationale, and achieve their own momentum. At this stage,

groups tend to target each other's identity, and of course the carriers of that identity, with little logical and calculated thinking about the extent to which their actions are compatible with their political goals. Instead, the elimination of an identity is perceived to be the same as eliminating a problem, even though problems exist apart from identity.

Chetan Kumar examines conflict in South Asia and demonstrates not only the political roots of conflict, but also the tendency for local and regional conflicts to become mutually reinforcing, producing a degree of intractability that makes violent conflicts nearly impossible to resolve and most difficult to manage or prevent from becoming violent interstate conflicts. Kumar's chapter is a stern reminder that it is far easier and less expensive to prevent conflicts from intertwining to intractable levels than to allocate time and resources in trying to manage and resolve them.

Finally, Albrecht Schnabel demonstrates that conflict prevention (an attempt to ameliorate the social, economic, and political conditions that produce violence), albeit most difficult, should receive priority in the agenda of local, regional, and international agents (both governmental and nongovernmental). The various agents that are responsible for dispensing assistance should find ways to cooperate toward developing and administering prevention assistance and resources. The chapter takes into consideration the reality that the fact that something is sensible and desirable but not evidently possible should not deter us from exploring it. The alternative of simply reacting to situations, often too late and with too little, is certainly far more costly to humanity.

Notes

1. See Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* (London: printed for J. Johnson by L. Hansard, 1800).

2. Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: Free Press, 1963); quoted in J. Hutchinson and A. D. Smith, *Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

3. See Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991).

4. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), 34.

5. James Coleman defines modernization as the stage of human development characterized by the following: a degree of self-sustaining growth in the economy; a measure of public participation in the polity; an increment of mobility in the society; and a corresponding transformation in the modal personality of individuals. See James S. Coleman, "Modernization: Political Aspects," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David Sills, 17 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 10: 400.

6. Walker Connor, "A Nation Is a Nation, Is a State, Is an Ethnic Group, Is a . . .," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 1 (4) (1978): 379–88.

7. See Ulf Hedetoft, ed., *Political Symbols, Symbolic Politics: European Identities in Transformation* (Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate Publishing, 1998).

8. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 4–5. On the spectrum of existence, insecurity is at the negative end, denoting imminent termination of existence. At the other end, security signifies a conditional guarantee that existence is safeguarded. In this context, security is always relative. Absolute security, in which existence is unconditionally guaranteed, is not feasible in our time.