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Abstract   In the former Soviet states of Central Asia, Afghanistan and its neighboring countries, and the in the Great Lakes region of Africa, conflicts have been organized around cultural identities. These identities, however, are not sub-national but transnational. They have linked groups within a state to trans-border networks that have participated in both contemporary global markets and warfare, as elements of regional conflict formations. The latter involve both non-state actors and states engaged in asymmetrical or covert warfare. Since identities constitute transnational networks, as well as sub-state collectivities, the set of policies to reduce conflict among identity groups and promote peaceful cultural diversity has to include regional and global as well as national policies.

Introduction

In the study of contemporary war and violent conflict, the identities that sometimes mobilize people are often treated as 'sub-national.' This classification fits with the description of much of contemporary war as 'civil' or 'intra-state.' Many if not most of these wars, however, form parts of networks of conflict in regions linked to global markets and strategy. The identity networks that sometimes provide social capital and symbols for mobilization are similarly transnational. These identities do not cause conflicts, but the social capital they can mobilize structures conflict. A comparison of Central Asia and Central Africa shows similar processes at work in two regions undergoing post-colonial struggles over state formation and relations to the global economy.

These transnational networks challenge models of conflict prevention or transformation based primarily upon strengthening national states and polities. These networks constitute strategies to cope with the economic challenges of landlocked regions that require access to markets and power resources. Even within a state-based system, formal regional cooperation

in the economic, political, security, and cultural fields is likely to be necessary to provide people with stable livelihoods that do not depend on subverting formal political institutions.

The context

In the early 1990s the breakup of the Soviet Union created five newly independent states in Central Asia and led to the collapse of both the Soviet-supported government and state in Afghanistan.[1] These processes resembled the break-up of colonial empires on other continents, notably Africa. Violent conflicts affected parts of post-Soviet Central Asia, especially those areas linked to the ongoing violence in Afghanistan. These linkages included the mobilization of transnational cultural identities, both ethnic and religious. The linkage of contiguous conflicts within a regional conflict formation resembled processes in Africa's Great Lakes region, where the most extensive political violence of the 1990s occurred.

While the spread and escalation of conflict through the construction and mobilization of transnational identities was common to Central Africa and Central Asia, the specific patterns of identity conflict differed both between and within the regions. Rwanda and Burundi differed from most post-colonial countries in emerging from colonialism with a harshly hierarchical division between two major groups: a dominant Tutsi minority and a Hutu majority. In Burundi, the Tutsis remained dominant through military regimes, interspersed by power-sharing arrangements in 1993 and again in 2004. In Rwanda, a Hutu-power 'revolution' placed a populist regime in power from 1959 to 1994. While these identities built on elements of pre-colonial social structure, the Belgian colonial regime made these identities alone politically relevant, made them far more rigid and unequal, and identified them with categories of European racialist theory, in which the Tutsis were considered closer to white and racially superior to the Hutus. This racialist ideology eventually legitimated genocide both in Europe, where it was developed, and in Africa, where it was implanted — although the ideology alone does not explain the genocides (Prunier, 1995; Lermachand, 1996; Des Forges, 1999; Mamdani, 2001).

The Great Lakes probably exceeds even Afghanistan in the pervasiveness of political violence. But the persistence and threat of conflict has determined much of the political evolution of both regions. The episodes of violence derive from inter-related processes at the local, national, regional, and global levels connected by a variety of networks, leading some to call this type of war 'network war' (Duffield, 2001). Mobilized cultural identities have played important roles in some of these networks, but the identities most relevant to conflict have not always corresponded to theories of ethnic or cultural determinism.

In Central Asia, the main lines of conflict have typically not played out between separate ethnic groups. Those identities were often fractured

among more tightly-knit local solidarity groups. Nor did civilizationalist ideologies underlie the antagonism: political Islam became effective only when organized around local identities, and few if any clashes opposed the Islamic indigenous peoples to the Russian-speaking peoples of Christian background in Central Asia (Roy, 1997). The major conflict that now determines the fate of the region, between the United States and al-Qaida, owes its origins less to the politics of the region itself than to the increasing globalization of conflicts.

In Central Africa, the distinction between Hutus and Tutsis is largely political rather than cultural (ethnic). Mamdani (1996) argues that these identities were originally categories of political status in relation to chieftancies rather than ethno-cultural groups, although they have now taken on some of the qualities of the latter. The mobilization of these identities has been largely the consequence of, rather than the cause of, state policies and political conflict. These processes illustrate the extent to which culture is constructed through politics, rather than the reverse.

Identity and power

All six states in Central Asia have titular nationalities; that is, they are named after ethnic groups and were established as 'homelands' of those ethnic groups. The relation of the titular nationality to the republics and their successor states, however, is much more complex than simple ethnic domination.

Sub-Saharan African states, mostly established as colonial administrative units over non-contiguous overseas empires, generally do not have titular nationalities. The closest equivalent, the 'Bantustans' of apartheid South Africa, show in their name that they were imposed by non-Africans who adopted Soviet terminology to refer to a colonialist practice they tried to legitimate by nationalist doctrine. Rwanda and Burundi, unlike most African states, descended from similarly located and named pre-colonial kingdoms.

Afghanistan may be the land of the Afghans, and 'Afghans' may have originally denoted 'Pashtuns,' but all of these terms are contested. The resurgence of Afghan national identity in the post-Taliban period has coincided with an insistence by members of all ethnic groups that 'Afghan' is a non-ethnic term, denoting citizens of Afghanistan, as Afghanistan's 2004 constitution states. The process of political change, leading to the election of Hamid Karzai as president, as well as changes in the security forces, have reasserted Pashtun predominance.

The Pashtun character of the Afghan state never attained the pervasiveness of a Soviet-style nationalities policy. The titular ethnic group did not constitute a clear majority.[2] Power was always exercised by a small, kinship-based group, and none of the Afghan regimes made ethno-nationalism into a full-blown state ideology. Unlike in the Balkans, religion linked groups across ethnic divides, rather than reinforcing and sacralizing

such differences. Ethnic politics developed more as conspiratorial factionalism rather than mass populism. Ethnic politics in Afghanistan remains a pervasive practice, rather than an ideology.

In the Soviet system non-ethnic Soviet citizenship coexisted with legally recognized ethno-national identity. The entire population was registered with the state, and each individual was identified as a member of a single 'nationality.' Membership in the titular nationality of a republic or territory provided certain advantages in education and employment within the institutions controlled by that administrative unit. At the same time, the republics were not states but territorial divisions of the USSR, on whose territories the all-Union ministries and entities based in Moscow had the most power and offered superior opportunities for career advancement in many fields. A Russian-speaking[3] all-Union elite based in the Communist party and state apparatus dominated the all-Soviet institutions in the republics and competed in each one with the local 'national' elite. Russian-speaking minorities settled primarily in the capital cities of the Central Asian republics, as employees of these all-Union entities, including both the security organs and the industrial apparatus, which was closely connected to the defense system (Rakowska-Harmstone, 1970).

This Russian-speaking population now feels excluded from state power, as the political elites of the newly independent states and the national languages are almost exclusively derived from the titular nationalities. Yet this population has not been involved in mass violent conflict in any independent Central Asian state. The Russian speakers who did not re-migrate to their titular state found they could continue to work professionally, owing to the cultural and educational Russification of the political and cultural elites in every Central Asian state during the Soviet period.

The groups involved in 'ethnic conflict' in this region are predominantly Muslim in heritage. Throughout the region, the main sources of conflict are over access to the relatively scarce resources of power and wealth. Identity politics plays both instrumental and affective roles in this struggle, and it should not be dismissed solely as a crude invention of manipulative elites, but it is very far from constituting a satisfactory explanation for the patterns of conflict or for presenting a coherent road map of how to overcome them.

Ethnic identity is not always the strongest political identity. Smaller solidarity groups based on locality, kinship, or a combination of the two remain at the core of political action (Roy, 1996, 1997; Rubin, 1998). The indigenous ethnic groups of this entire area have maintained strongly patriarchal and patrilineal family structures. In societies with such kinship structures, kinship-based relations such as clan or tribe are often very powerful. Even relations organized around formal institutions, such as government institutions or political parties, tend to be reinforced through marriages among families of political allies, creating kinship bonds that

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often supercede the formal relations. In the elites of communist and post-communist societies of Central Asia, such 'clan' structures have been organized around the territorial units of administration and production (Rubin, 1998, pp. 143–148). In Afghanistan they have grown up around militia leadership and other forms of power. Such groupings are usually more important and effective than whole ethnic groups. The solidarity of such units is not rooted in cultural difference, since their closest competitors share the same culture. Such units are also largely devoid of ideological meaning, but they are effective units of solidarity and control of resources. Even if they do not include most members of an ethnic group, however, they can effectively exclude all members of other ethnic groups, giving rise to an ethnic reaction to sub-ethnic behavior.

The use of kinship-based patronage networks as structures to control power or resources is common to many societies. Such smaller groups often use broader ethnic appeals to legitimate their narrow grip on power. A similar pattern exists in Rwanda and Burundi. The Hutu elite of the Habyarimana regime (the Akazu, or household) came almost entirely from the northwest province of Gisenyi, underpinned by a kinship-patronage network organized around Habyarimana's wife. The Tutsi military elite of Burundi comes largely from the province of Bururi, as do most of the Hutus in the military, from clans with links of patronage with the Bururi Tutsis. Struggle among different clans or regional groupings within the Hutu and Tutsi groups provide part of the back story of the conflicts in those two countries.

Identity and conflict

Since the independence of Central Asia, there have been, roughly speaking, three major sets of violent conflicts in the region: the constantly changing war in and around Afghanistan; the civil war in Tajikistan; and the Islamist rebellion against the government of Uzbekistan. The three are closely linked, involve some of the same actors, and are part of a common regional conflict formation.

The Great Lakes region refers to Rwanda, Burundi, and the neighboring areas that have become involved in the conflicts there, largely through their linkage to the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (former Zaire). The polarized violent conflicts between Hutu and Tutsi-led movements in Rwanda and Burundi have triggered and escalated others, including the more amorphous conflicts that developed in Zaire. The conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi revolved around control of political power by Hutu or Tutsi political elites. After the Rwandan genocide (1994), and the establishment of Rwandan Hutu-power and genocidaire military bases in Eastern Zaire, the conflict spread and eventually engulfed the whole DRC and the surrounding area. As in Central Asia, conflicts seemingly originating in national or sub-national dynamics spread across

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borders to link up in a regional conflict formation. Also as in Central Asia, militias regionalized their activities, seeking to control valuable resources, and participating in the fights of allied groups in neighboring countries.

A remarkable characteristic of the conflict in Afghanistan was the rapidity with which it changed in 1992 from an apparently bipolar conflict between the USSR-backed communist regime and the Islamic mujahidin supported by the United States, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia to a multi-polar ethnic conflict. Like a controlled experiment, this shift illuminated which elements of the structure of conflict were constant and which elements varied with external factors. The structures that did not change were the units of solidarity based on clan, kinship, and region. These militias stayed together in the same form.

What changed abruptly were the alliances among them and the cause for which they were allegedly fighting. Former communists allied with former mujahidin along primarily ethnic lines. In the course of the years 1992–1996, every one of the four major contending militias was at various times both an ally and an opponent of each other militia. The rise of the Taliban finally drove them all back together, temporarily, just before all were defeated by the new movement. The Taliban, in turn, while presenting themselves as a purely Islamic movement, were dominated by Deobandi mullahs from Qandahar trained in the same madrasas (Rashid, 2001). The war with the Taliban thus turned into a kind of ethnic conflict between a Pashtun-led and non-Pashtun led force, and both sides made use of ethnic appeals from time to time.

Within former Soviet Central Asia, the poor fit between a model of 'ethnic' conflict and the actual types of conflict is even more evident. The Ferghana riots of 1989 started with and were publicized as attacks by Uzbeks against a small group known as Meskhetian Turks. Uzbeks in Ferghana, however, mainly remember these events as consisting of demonstrations for the sovereignty of Uzbekistan, which were suppressed violently by Soviet troops. There has been little, if any, violence against those Meskhetian Turks who remained in Uzbekistan (Armstrong, 2002).

Similarly, the 'Osh events' in southern Kyrgyzstan in 1990, which saw violent clashes and hundreds of brutal killings between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz (Tishkov, 1997; Nunn *et al.*, 1999, pp. 106; Schoeberlein, 2002), and the riots in Tajikistan, set off by a rumor that Armenian refugees were receiving scarce housing, were cases of mobs of the titular nationality attacking ethnic scapegoats as the tension over sovereignty of the republics rose. These incidents had no real sequel after independence, and many in the region today attribute them in part to manipulation by Soviet forces trying to discredit the movements for sovereignty. In 2005, ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz of southern Kyrgyzstan led the protest movement against President Askar Akaev, associated with an elite from Narin in Northern Kyrgyzstan. Regional, not ethnic, cleavages were more decisive.

There are several ethnic issues in post-Soviet Central Asia today, yet none of them has sparked mass violence since independence. The civil war

in Tajikistan pitted a Tajik group (the so-called Islamo-democratic alliance) against a Tajik-led coalition including Uzbeks and Russians. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan consisted of a movement led by Uzbeks from the Ferghana Valley, with followers from some other groups as well, fighting against several states mainly in order to attack the regime in Tashkent from bases in Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Hizb-ut-Tahrir, the underground Islamist party that the Uzbekistan government accuses of responsibility for the Andijan events of May 2005, is a largely Uzbek group opposing an Uzbek government. Ethnic and sub-ethnic (or regional) identities played a role in mobilization for these conflicts, but ethnic issues *per se* (and certainly not cultural diversity or a clash of civilizations) played little role.

The civil war in Tajikistan exhibited a dual character: it was a clash of both ideologies and regional clans. One side consisted of groups formerly allied with Soviet power (from Leninabad, Kulab, and Hissar), and the other side were Gharmis and Pamiris, who wished to reconfigure state power in Tajikistan in a more nationalist direction. The nationalist group included both 'democrats' and 'Islamists,' but what united them was a form of Tajik ethno-nationalism. The Tajikistan conflict demonstrated how local factors (access to land, houses, and water among clans in the southwest), national factors (the shift from Soviet rule to a new Tajik nation-state), regional factors (Russian–Uzbek–Iranian rivalry and the ongoing war in Afghanistan), and global factors (the presence of al-Qaida and eventual US interest, worldwide demand for opiates) interacted to create and structure this conflict. Ethnic rivalries, cultural diversity, clashes of civilizations or values all played some role at various levels, but did not determine the conflict's structure or outcome.

The conflicts originating in the Ferghana Valley, where hundreds of people were killed in Andijan, Uzbekistan, on 13 May 2005, also belies the ethno-nationalist frame (Nunn *et al.*, 1999). This event pitched Uzbeks against Uzbeks.[4] The division of Ferghana into the three states of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, combined with the loss of the Soviet centrally administered division of labor, caused some of the most severe economic disruption in Central Asia. Many industrial plants closed, and the cotton producers had to find new markets. The area was overtaken by mass unemployment and a new kind of impoverishment. Crime rose in many of the cities. In all three states, the elite factions or clans associated with Ferghana lost power within the republics, but this combination of economic decline and political marginalization had different conse-quences in each state. The one consequence they have had in common, however, has been the growth of the transnational Islamist group Hizb-ut-Tahrir.

In Uzbekistan, as in all Central Asian countries, the main, although often hidden, political contest takes place among regional 'clans,' all of which are led by members of the titular ethnic group. The social and political decline of the Ferghana Valley in Uzbekistan gave rise to Islamist rather than ethnic protest movements. Unlike in Tajikistan, state power,

supported by revenues from gold, cotton, petroleum, and natural gas, did not collapse — so the major regional elites of Ferghana were not driven, as were Gharmi elites in Tajikistan, to ally with a popular movement like the Islamists. The wars in Tajikistan and Afghanistan provided sanctuary, training, and support for the initially small bands that were repressed and driven out of Uzbekistan. They also were able to supply themselves by developing relations with drug traffickers, a major source of revenue for most armed groups in the area. By 1997 the militants from Uzbekistan began to engage in isolated acts of terrorism in the Ferghana Valley, which led to mass arrests and other repressive policies by the regime. In 1999 and 2000, the militants, reorganized into the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), allied with al-Qaida and the Taliban, and mounted cross-border offensives in Central Asia. These involved armed forces of Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Uzbekistan.

The IMU was decimated in the US counter-attack after September 11 and has been relatively passive since that time. Growth of an Islamist protest movement in Central Asia continued, however, under the apparent leadership of a transnational organization known as Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Liberation Party). This group calls for dissolving the nation-states into an Islamic Caliphate ruled by a very strict interpretation of Shari'a and deporting all non-Muslims.[5] The distance of Hizb-ut-Tahrir's program from practical politics indicates its function as a protest movement of last resort for desperate people. While preaching an ideology that appears traditional, Hizb-ut-Tahrir is a globalized movement using a version of Islam cleansed of local, cultural accretions as a political ideology to counter US and Western hegemony. There are few credible indications linking Hizb-ut-Tahrir to the Andijan events in May 2005, which seemed more closely linked to the repression by the government of local traders affiliated with a purely local Islamic group, the Akramiya (Aizenman, 2005).

The disintegration of the state in Afghanistan created conditions for the regional linkage of conflicts. It allowed militia groups to meet each other and train together, and it provided conditions for trafficking of opium and other types of contraband to finance these efforts. Mobutu's failed state in Zaire also created conditions for the regional linkage of conflicts. While Zaire/DRC could never have been called a state success, during the Cold War Mobutu at least obtained sufficient foreign aid to pay his army and keep patronage networks loyal. By the mid-1990s even these quasi-state functions collapsed. Guerrillas from neighboring states (Angola, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi) made their bases in the DRC and engaged in trafficking of diamonds and other resources to pay for their wars. The 1996 and 1998 wars divided the DRC up among warlords connected to neighboring states, creating an even more tightly linked regional conflict formation than Afghanistan. Hutu and Tutsi increasingly became transnational identities functioning in the context of a regionalized conflict.

Policies of conflict reduction

The avoidance of violent inter-ethnic conflict has been one of the largely unrecognized success stories of the independent Central Asian states (although several have experienced political violence that was not organized along ethnic lines). Overall, the picture of central Asia supports the contention that ethnic diversity lends an ethnic dimension to conflict, but it does not cause or exacerbate it. When states have ethnically diverse populations, then political conflict may be organized on ethnic lines. Which cleavages emerge as politically important depends most notably on the extent to which identity structures unequal access to assets. The absence of ethnic diversity does not reduce the likelihood of political conflict. It only makes it less likely that it will be organized around ethnicity. Hence reducing conflict among ethnic groups in multi-ethnic societies is a sub-problem of the more general task of reducing or managing political conflict.

Post-Soviet Central Asia includes two distinct types of ethnic problems: conflict between Russian-speakers and the titular ethnic group, or that part of it that exercises state power, a potential racial conflict, and conflicts between titular ethnic groups and other Central Asian groups. The Russian speakers, a post-imperial formerly dominant minority, constituted the first open flash point for Central Asian nationalism in the region. In 1986, when Mikhail Gorbachev replaced the Kazakh first secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan with an ethnic Russian from Kazakhstan, violent riots broke out in the streets of Alma Ata (as Almaty was then called). Gorbachev's motive was not overtly ethnic — he was replacing a 'corrupt' official with one more accountable to Moscow. That incident showed how the patronage and clan networks identified by Moscow with corruption formed the basis of an indigenous politics that provided the power base of the elites that took over the independent states. Similarly, the corrupt party bosses of Uzbekistan removed by Brezhnev during the cotton scandal are now retroactively defined as national heroes.

As nationalist movements grew in the Republics, new laws passed in 1987–88 that increased the status of the language of the titular group in the republics provoked fears of marginalization of the Russian speakers. Independence led to an abrupt fall in their status, security, and employment throughout Central Asia. They fled Tajikistan *en masse* during the escalating political tensions leading up to the civil war, although most of the violence was directed by Tajiks against each other. In the other states, as has happened throughout the former Soviet Union, there has been a general tendency of immigration of the titular nationality and emigration of others, including Russian speakers, leading to a gradual shift in population toward the titular nationality. It appears that Kazakhstan now has a Kazakh majority, whereas at independence Kazakhs constituted only about 46% of the population.

Among the issues affecting relations between Russian speakers and the titular nationality have been citizenship, language, education, and state employment policies. Affirmative action for the titular nationality has been an issue cutting across a number of these issue areas.

Unlike the Baltic states, the Central Asian states did not discriminate against Russians or Russian speakers when it came to determining citizenship. Every citizen of the USSR who was legally resident in these states on the date they became independent was entitled to citizenship. Also unlike Baltic states, none of the states imposed any kind of linguistic or other culture-based test for citizenship. Hence, from the beginning, citizenship was defined on a legal, civic basis.

A sizable portion of the Russian-speaking population was reluctant to rely on local citizenship for security and rights, however, and demanded the right to dual citizenship. This was reinforced by the policy of Russia, which allowed Soviet citizens living outside Russia at the time of the Soviet break-up to apply for Russian passports. Bilateral agreements between Russia and the Central Asian states have regulated the issue of treatment of each other's citizens and virtually eliminated the risk of statelessness for the Russian-speaking populations. Turkmenistan and Tajikistan signed agreements on dual citizenship, although Turkmenistan rescinded its agreement, after the November 2002 attempt on the life of President Sapurmurat Niyazov (Turkmenbashi), which he blamed on foreign intelligence services. Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic have signed agreements that simplified citizenship procedures.

Citizenship issues have triggered several of the conflicts in Central Africa. Mamdani (1996, pp. 67) regards them as the essential question. He notes that many African countries developed the colonial practice of indirect rule into a dual citizenship regime, distinguishing political from ethnic citizens — the latter enjoying extended rights, such as land ownership. He argues that exclusion of 'non-indigenous' groups in Uganda from rights to land and participation in local councils triggered the Tutsi re-invasion of Rwanda in 1990. Similarly, the revocation of citizenship from 'non-indigenous' groups (some of whom migrated a century ago) triggered the Banyamulenge revolt in the DRC, leading to the war in 1996.

On the inter-related issues of language, education, and employment, Central Asian states have undertaken a balancing act. The official policies favoring use of the national language in government and education and making it a condition of employment are greatly softened in practice by the fact that the indigenous political and professional elites remain, by and large, more comfortable working in Russian than in their supposed native language. In fact, when language tests are applied politically, it is to the detriment of members of the titular nationality, who are considered more of a political threat than Russian speakers.

The other set of ethnic issues in post-Soviet Central Asia involves relations among Central Asian ethnic groups, mainly between the titular

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nationality and the diaspora of other groups. As mentioned earlier, the major Central Asian ethnic minority in Uzbekistan is the Tajiks, concentrated in Bukhara and Samarqand. Their small numbers and the weakness of Tajikistan has prevented this issue from developing into a major one.

In all other Central Asian states, the main issue is that of the Uzbek minority, which is the largest Central Asian non-titular group in every other state. In Afghanistan, where Uzbeks are relatively less important, this has nonetheless become an issue in the north, where Uzbek and Tajik-led militias long battled for control of vital markets and resources, and where Uzbekistan has had close relations with the Uzbek-led militia (now officially dissolved) of Abdul Rashid Dostum.

Except for northern Kazakhstan, Russian speakers in Central Asia tended to be concentrated in cities and industrial centers. Uzbeks, however, are concentrated in areas bordering on Uzbekistan in all of its neighbors. Uzbeks are proportionately largest in Tajikistan, especially in the north, where they may even predominate in the rural areas, and many of those who are registered as Tajik also speak Uzbek. Uzbekistan, like Russia, has generally not pursued a policy of pan-ethnic irredentism.

Nonetheless, Tashkent has made use of cross-border ties to militias with ethnic Uzbek affiliations in both Tajikistan and Afghanistan when it has felt its interests threatened. It supported joint operations by these militias: one led by Dostum in Afghanistan and another, led by Mahmud Khudaiberdiyev in Tajikistan. Uzbekistan's use of such ethnic militias, however, was pragmatic rather than ideological or nationalist. It used Khudaiberdiyev to exert pressure on Dushanbe — and Moscow — over the presence in Tajikistan of units of the IMU. The Uzbek authorities believed that Russia was aiding this group in order to pressure Uzbekistan, and responded in kind. It used Dostum, and supported his demands for a kind of autonomous region in the north (misleadingly called 'federalism') mainly in order to secure Uzbekistan's border with Afghanistan, as well as neighboring parts of the Tajikistan–Afghanistan border used by the IMU and drug traffickers for infiltration into Uzbekistan (Nunn *et al.*, 1999, pp. 121).

Ethnic relations in southern Kyrgyzstan illustrate that political openness can defuse problems, even if they are not 'solved.' The Uzbeks of that region remember the brutal inter-ethnic riots of 1990. They are cut off from their former institutions of higher education in Uzbekistan. Their schools can no longer use texts published in the neighboring republic, since Uzbekistan, like Turkmenistan, is gradually introducing Latin characters, while Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, with their larger Russian-speaking populations, are maintaining the Cyrillic orthography of Uzbek. They have lost access to relatives, families, and economic partners across the border, even as their government is largely controlled not just by Kyrgyz, but by Kyrgyz from the north. They are suspected by their own government, by Tashkent, and by some of their Kyrgyz neighbors of

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harboring sympathies for the IMU and Hizb-ut-Tahrir; and, indeed, Islamic revival in southern Kyrgyzstan is, to a large extent, an Uzbek affair (Nunn *et al.*, 1999, pp. 101).

The Uzbeks of the districts of Osh and Jalalabad, however, have representatives in parliament, relatively autonomous cultural centers, non-governmental organizations, religious centers, and other outlets for their views and activities. Government officials openly discuss inter-ethnic and social problems, rather than trying to hide them, and describe to visitors all the measures they are taking to deal with them. They welcomed the assistance of the United Nations, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and other international organizations in trying to reduce these tensions and deal with their causes. The result is that this region, which saw the bloodiest ethnic clashes in Central Asia at the end of the Soviet period, which has been twice invaded by guerrillas based in Afghanistan and Tajikistan trying to fight their way to Uzbekistan, and has witnessed several militant anti-government demonstrations in 2002–2003, remained free of mass violence. The main threat to stability appeared to be the growing autocracy of the government in Bishkek, but even when popular protests erupted in the south against allegedly rigged parliamentary elections in March 2005, leaders of the two ethnic groups united along regional and political lines.

In Afghanistan and Tajikistan, inter-group relations largely reflect the breakdown of political power and the quest for security. Since the fall of the Najibullah regime in early 1992, the main ethnic issue in Afghanistan has been, simply, the ethnic (and tribal) identity of the solidarity group that controls the state. Those groups with less or no access to state power feel correspondingly more or less excluded, as the systems based on dynastic succession contained no mechanism for the ethnic circulation of elites. When Najibullah fell in 1992, the capital came under the control of a set of mostly non-Pashtun militias, the strongest of them being the Panjsheri Tajik forces commanded by Ahmad Shah Massoud. After being ousted by the Qandahari Pashtun Taliban (aided by Pashtuns from other regions, Pakistanis, and Arabs) this same group captured the capital again after the Taliban were routed by US bombing in November 2001.

The main ethnic issue in immediate post-Taliban Afghanistan was the control exercised by Panjsheri militias, which excluded Pashtuns, as well as others. Since there was no ethnically or politically neutral security force, whichever force controlled the capital city was seen as being in effective control of the government (ministers' ethnicities notwithstanding). The victorious militias leveraged their physical presence into economic benefit through taking control of land and other assets. They also used the resulting positions in the power structure to control many appointments and patronage assignments around the country. Hence their military presence in the capital translated into a perceived — and partly real — exclusion of most groups from power.

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The control of the central military forces by a single clan translated into a host of political problems, which the United Nations and the Karzai Government confronted through a series of initiatives. The Emergency Loya Jirga, held six months after the inauguration of the interim administration, was supposed to choose a transitional administration that would be more representative and legitimate than its predecessor. While this was marginally the case, it did little, if anything, to address the reality of a power imbalance. As the position of the United States shifted, and, in particular, as the militias were demobilized and as the new security forces trained, equipped and paid by the United States and other foreign powers became more effective, the perception of ethnic exclusion shifted to the traditional one, with non-Pashtun political leaders charging that members of Karzai's government were pursuing a Pashtun ethnic agenda.

The Great Lakes, Rwanda and the DRC present radically different but almost equally difficult tasks of building sustainable peace. The DRC, far more than Afghanistan, is a territory without a political order or history of statehood, dominated by warlords linked to neighboring states and supporting themselves through trafficking. Rwanda is a hierarchically organized authoritarian state where the heritage of genocidal conflict makes identity politics potentially explosive. No other region in the world combines these two extremes in so explosive a manner. The problem, however, has little if anything to do with cultural diversity. Hutus and Tutsis belong to the same culture, which has become dominated by violent conflict. The wars and genocide have stimulated a tremendous amount of cultural and religious turmoil in the region, especially given the complicity or silence of many of the established churches in the genocide. Conversions to both Islam and charismatic sects of Christianity appear to be increasing, in syncretism with autochthonous beliefs about spirit possession. It is often neglected how much conflict can transform culture, perhaps more than culture causes conflicts. Central Africa is becoming religiously even more diverse and fractured, as people search for meaning and support in a situation of nearly unimaginable fear, insecurity, guilt, and fury. The extreme interpretation and implementation of Islam by the Taliban similarly resulted from a reaction to extremes of disorder and violence. It was a response to violent conflict, not the re-emergence of traditional values.

Regional and global conflict factors

Most of the ethnic and other identities mobilized in conflicts in both regions are transnational. Some that did not start as transnational have developed transnational links as a result of the spread of conflict. The refugees from Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Rwanda, and Burundi transformed the political and ethnic landscape of their regions. Hence the issue of identity politics encompasses much more than incorporating diversity within states. Identities can link groups within a state to transborder networks. These networks, through which various resources flow, are the characteristic underpinnings of both the contemporary global

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economy and contemporary warfare. The latter involves both non-state actors and states engaged in asymmetrical or covert warfare. Hence the linkages of identities to networks can potentially create or strengthen collective actors whose linkages create capacities for social action (social capital) that can pose challenges to territorial states by undermining borders and sovereignty. They can also link societies to the global economy and society in beneficial ways, depending on the institutional context and the capacities and incentives of the groups themselves.[6]

Since these trans-border identities can undermine states, they can be useful tools for states intent on destabilizing or pressuring others. Mobilization of networks based on such identities, intentionally or otherwise, has characterized the foreign policy of both global and regional powers in Central Asia and Central Africa. The United States, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia used them to arm the mujahidin against the USSR, and the Soviets increasingly used them to create pro-government militias against the mujahidin. Pakistan used cross-border Pashtun links to support the Taliban, and Rwanda used the Banyamulenge Tutsis in Zaire as the cover for its invasion in 1996.

In some cases, cross-border identities serve efforts to create armed groups that also operate across borders, such as the Taliban, the IMU, or the Rwandan Hutu militias. Other networks involve economic activity, sometimes criminal (the drug trade) or criminalized (smuggling of consumer goods) activity that can generate either black money for illicit activities or capital and institutional frameworks for regional economic cooperation and development.

Cross-border Pashtun trucking interests supported the rise of the Taliban. According to Ahmed Rashid, the traders based in Quetta financed the Taliban's capture of Herat in 1995 in order to ease access to the Iranian border and remove 'Amir' Ismail Khan, as he styled himself, whose tax policies were becoming more burdensome. The 'security' provided by the Taliban was primarily road security, of which the traders were the greatest beneficiary. The control of security provision by a Qandahar-based group also let to the redirection of transit trade toward southwest Afghanistan, which benefited the Taliban's original constituents. Such regional trading networks, of course, could prove very beneficial to the entire region, given adequate security provided by legitimate governments and regional regimes that harmonize customs and visa regulations to facilitate legal trade.

Like other diaspora trading networks (Chinese, Armenians, Jews), some of these networks constitute mechanisms for the accumulation of capital. Diaspora Chinese in Southeast Asia appear to be one of the most dynamic sources of capital for China. A group of Afghan merchants from Dubai has identified least $500 million that they would be willing to invest in Afghanistan, providing the legal regime and security conditions were conducive, and more would certainly be available in the future. Emeralds and other sub-soil resources could finance some of the

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reconstruction of Afghanistan, just as diamonds, coltan, and other minerals could in the DRC.

Regional, global and national policies

Since identities constitute transnational networks, as well as sub-state collectivities, the set of policies to reduce conflict among identity groups and promote peaceful cultural diversity has to include regional and global as well as national policies. Education is one area where such cooperation can be important. When members of a common language community live in several states, those states can increase the educational opportunity for that community by sharing the cost of higher education and the production of textbooks for elementary and secondary education in at least some fields. The same could be true of other cultural activities, such as publishing, broadcasting, and the arts more generally.

Communities deprived of legitimate economic opportunity because of marginal positions on the borders could benefit from development schemes for cross-border cooperation. Of course, if states feel threatened by their neighbors and the potential for cross-border mobilization they do not control, they will not agree to programs that might strengthen the linkages of the communities across the border.

Regional approaches do not guarantee success. Just as proposals for state structure that seem to have abstract merit, such as federalism or cultural autonomy, may founder on the politics of particular states, so the nostrum of regional cooperation has foundered again and again on the politics of particular regions. Even more than state, 'region' is a fluid concept, and states have strong views about which region they wish to belong to — views that are not always consistent with those of outsiders. A 1997 Security Council resolution endorsed a French proposal for a regional conference on the interlinked problems of the Great Lakes, but some of the states of the region resisted such a meeting, fearing that it would be a vehicle for attempts to impose an outside agenda. Rwanda in particular preferred to join with the economically more viable Anglophone states of the East African Union.

The Lusaka process for addressing the conflict in the DRC constituted an extended set of regional, even continent-wide consultations, which resulted in an agreement that was intended to address both the internal and external causes of war in the DRC. Nonetheless, in the absence of adequate global commitment to monitoring, implementing, and enforcing the agreement, in particular the disarming of so-called 'negative' forces, the agreement may never achieve its stated objectives. If this process succeeds in establishing a degree of political order in the DRC, or if the political developments based on the now-completed Bonn process do likewise in Afghanistan, the cross-border linkages of identity groups that developed during the wars will persist. New regional and global institutions will be needed to assure that these networks become forces

holding regions together and integrating them into global society rather than the protagonists of new rounds of violence.

The post-Bonn agreement for Afghanistan, the 'Afghanistan Compact' to which the international community will subscribe in London at the end of January 2006, provides not only for the basic elements of state building in Afghanistan, but also for a commitment to regional cooperation. Impoverished, landlocked areas like the two regions analyzed here have often become zones of conflict for those seeking resources or transit. Such gaps in international order, which leave whole populations isolated from the benefits of development and security, can no longer be so easily exiled to the margins of consciousness or national interest. Areas that are worth fighting over could also be worth developing. The same identities that mobilized people for conflict can provide networks for commerce and production. Multiple transnational identities may prove to be an advantage rather than a disruption in such a world.

These networks, however, serve human purposes. They provide access to markets and other resources blocked from people by the state system, imposed on these peoples as part of an order they had no part in making. Formal regional cooperation has therefore emerged as an indispensable component of plans for stabilizing and developing Afghanistan in the period after the implementation of the Bonn Agreement. The states of Central Africa have also finally started discussions within the framework of an international conference on peace, development, and security mandated by the Security Council. The inter-state system has not thus far shown itself to be as flexible and adaptable as informal transnational networks, but its ability to adjust to the challenges posed by transnational networks may determine its survival.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 On the breakdown of the Afghan state see Rubin (1995, 2002), Dorronsoro (2000) and Goodson (2001).
2 In the absence of a legal definition of individual membership in ethnic groups, any ethnic (or general) census, or any population registration outside of those living in urban areas or employed by state institutions, no definitive data exist on the ethnic composition of the population.
3 The term 'Russian speaker' in Central Asia generally denotes ethnic groups of non-Central Asian origin, including Russians, Ukrainians, other Slavs, Ashkenazi Jews, Tatars, Germans, and others.

4 Reports on this issue can be found online: www.eurasianet.org and (Human Rights Watch) www.hrw.org.

5 See the website (www.hizb-ut-tahrir.org), which contains sections in Arabic, English, Russian, Turkish, Urdu, German, and Danish, indicating its transnational character.

6 Barnett Rubin, Center on International Cooperation project on Regional Conflict Formations (see http://www.nyu.edu/pages/cic/conflict/conflict_project6.html). Further articles include: Policy Approaches to Regional Conflict Formations (http://www.cic.-nyu.edu/pdf/FINAL2..pdf), Regional Approaches to the Reconstruction of Afghanistan (http://www.cic.nyu.edu/pdf/RCF-Istanbul.pdf), Assessing Change in South Central Asia Regional Conflict Post September 11 (http://www.cic.nyu.edu/pdf/RCF-March%20meeting%20summary.pdf), Regional Conflict Formation and the 'Bantu/Nilotic' Mythology in the Great Lakes (http://www.cic.nyu.edu/pdf/stephenjack-son.pdf), and The Great Lakes RCF (http://www.cic.nyu.edu/pdf/RCF_NAIROBI.pdf).

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