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CEMENTING DIVISIONS?
An assessment of the impact of international interventions and peace-building policies on ethnic identities and divisions

Rob Aitken

This article analyses the ethnic implications of peace-building policies and institutional design in recent international interventions. International interventions and peace-building efforts emphasize the importance of reconciliation and representative government. However, based on evidence derived primarily from the interventions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Afghanistan and Iraq, it is argued here that policies pursued by international agencies to achieve an end to violence and rebuild institutions have had the unintended consequence of reinforcing ethnic identities and cementing ethnic divisions. Ethnicity is a dynamic identity whose salience and meaning can change over time. 'Ethnic conflicts' are conflicts which have become highly ethnicized; ethnicity has not only been politicized but has also become the predominant political identity rather than one of many crosscutting identities. Despite the dynamic character of ethnicity, international peace-building policy-makers have too often assumed the existence of discrete groups with relatively fixed ethnic identities. Institutional designs intended to promote representative government and manage ethnic conflict have institutionalized ethnicity as a key resource in political competition. International interventions have thus continued and extended processes of ethnicization that take place in ethnic mobilization and conflicts. In conclusion, the article examines alternative approaches that might minimize the risk of institutionalizing and perpetuating ethnic politics in post-conflict situations.

can these recommendations be empirically tested; were there cases which applied these recommendations; did they indeed perform "better" than traditional arrangements?

Introduction

Recent international interventions and peace processes have emphasized peace-building and reconciliation, yet ethnic divisions do not seem to have been reduced in post-conflict situations. Afghanistan has become increasingly ethnicized since the 2001 invasion (Simonsen, 2004a, pp. 711–713). British, US and Iraqi officials acknowledge that Iraq is descending into a civil war largely defined on ethnic lines (BBC, 2006; DNI, 2007a,b; Hussein & Hirst, 2006). In Kosovo, tensions continue to exist between Kosovar Albanians and the much-reduced Serb minority population and politics remains highly ethnicized (Simonsen, 2004b, pp. 297–299). The positions of the political leaders of Serbs and Albanians remain diametrically opposed on international proposals on the future status of Kosovo. Bosnia-Herzegovina remains effectively divided into ethnic territories, despite some success in promoting the return of refugees, and voting remains largely drawn on

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ethnic lines. Although for the first time, following the 1 October 2006 elections, none of the three seats in the Presidency is held by the ethnonationalist parties that led the 1992–1995 conflict, leaders of the Republika Srpska have repeatedly threatened a referendum on secession (OSCE, 2006; The Bosnian Institute, 2006). Ethnic division have been maintained or strengthened despite international interventions and post-conflict peace-building programmes.

It could be argued that these outcomes are the inevitable result of ethnic conflict. Some political commentators and academics have called for the partitioning of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Iraq on ethnic/sectarian lines from the outset as the only viable solution to the conflict (see, for example: Mearsheimer, 1993; Mearsheimer & Pape, 1993 on Bosnia-Herzegovina and for Iraq Gelb, 2003; Peters, 2003). From this perspective conflicts between ethnic groups are almost inevitable and can best be addressed by separating the parties involved through the creation of new ethnic states (Kaufman, 1996, pp. 136–139). For these advocates of partition, efforts to maintain the territorial integrity of these states and achieve reconciliation are misguided and doomed to failure.

This article argues that continued ethnic divisions are not inevitable but that the policies pursued in international interventions and peace processes have contributed to the maintenance and institutionalization of ethnic divisions in post-conflict situations. Ethnicity is a dynamic identity whose salience and meaning changes over time. Conflicts heighten the salience of ethnicity and portray the resulting division as eternal and enduring. Peace processes and international interventions have too frequently accepted the claim that ethnic identities are relatively fixed and form the basis of stable political identities. International policy-makers involved in peace processes and international interventions have framed post-conflict societies as ethnically divided societies. In seeking to promote representative and democratic institutions based on an understanding of the post-conflict situation as an ethnically divided society, ethnic identities have been institutionalized as the basis of political representation. I argue that institutional design based on an ethnic model of the society rewards ethnic mobilization and creates the basis for continued ethnic politics.

The Ethnic Framing of Conflict

International policy-makers have accepted or imposed an ethnic framing of conflicts and divided societies. There have been persistent calls from political commentators and policy institutes for the partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Iraq on ethno-sectarian lines.[1] The partitionists' position rests on the argument that the divisions between the ethnic groups are so deep that they cannot live together. The argument that people cannot live together is one frequently used by ethnonationalists to justify conflict and secession, which rests on the existence of discrete ethnic groups with a history of antagonism. This argument has on occasions been accepted by international actors (see for instance the comments by President Clinton on 'Larry King Live' about Bosnia, Office of the Press Secretary, 1995). However, the main goal of international policy towards recent conflicts has been the maintenance of the territorial integrity of states involved rather than their partition on ethnic lines. Nevertheless, the US and other international policy-makers have

shared the same basic assumptions as the advocates of partition – that discrete ethnic groups exist and ethnicity is the basis of relatively fixed political identities (Campbell, 1999, pp. 416–418).

The international community problematized Bosnian-Herzegovina in ethnic terms, even before the outbreak of the armed conflict. The earliest proposals to solve the Bosnian 'problem', the Cutiliero Statement of Principles in 1991, advocated the cantonization of Bosnia-Herzegovina on ethnic lines (Campbell, 1999, pp. 403–408; Klemencic, 1994, p. 37). Once the conflict broke out it was framed by the international community as an ethnic civil war, rather than a rebellion against the democratically elected government or foreign aggression by Serbia. An arms embargo was imposed and attempts made to seek an ethnic solution through cantonization or confederal and consociational arrangements. Bosnia's partition into separate ethnic entities, finally formalized as the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Dayton Agreement, was only inevitable because of this ethnic framing of the problem at the start of the conflict (Campbell, 1999, pp. 417, 423). Alternative ways of framing the problem were available and might have opened the possibility of alternative solutions. The assumption that the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina was an ethnic civil war led to international inaction and a policy of an arms embargo that facilitated mass ethnic cleansing and genocide.

The international community problematized Bosnia in terms of a particular understanding of identity. Bosnia-Herzegovina was understood 'as a place where political identity was fixed in terms of ethnic exclusivity and requires territorial space to match' (Campbell, 1999, p. 417). The international community more often than not assumed Bosnia was 'a seamless ethnically ordered world of Croats, Muslims and Serbs, in which no other conceptions of identity have political import, and where group relations cannot be other than mutually exclusive and conflictual' (Campbell, 1999, p. 418). The ethnic understanding of Bosnia-Herzegovina by international policy-makers contributed to the emergence of an ethnic political system after the conflict.

Afghanistan has also been understood by some diplomats and commentators as an ethnically divided society. At the time of the 2001 invasion western diplomats, such as German foreign minister Joschka Fischer, promoted a federal solution for Afghanistan (Starr, 2001). Both territorial and non-territorial ethnic federalism have been advocated for Afghanistan as 'a political formula to reconcile diverse cultural, regional, and other interests with those of a single, larger political community' (Tremlay, 2005, p. 212). Given the fragmentation of Afghanistan at the time, with most of the country effectively controlled by a variety of warlords, this approach is understandable. However, it depends on an understanding of Afghanistan as an ethnically divided society and of warlords as ethnic leaders, as they are portrayed in the West.

In Iraq, international policy debates focused on whether there should be an ethnic or non-ethnic basis to federalism and power-sharing.[2] The debate about whether there should be an ethnic basis to power-sharing in Baghdad was largely rendered irrelevant by the decision of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) headed by Paul Bremer to appoint an Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) consisting of 13 Arab Shiites, five Arab Sunnis, five Kurds, a Christian and a Turkoman in July 2003. The composition of the IGC reflected the supposed demography of Iraq (Dawisha, 2005, p. 727). This decision confirmed ethnic and

sectarian identities as the basis of political representation in Iraq and has been continued by subsequent governments.

The persistent raising by international actors of ethnic federalism and even partition in Iraq and Afghanistan reflects an ethnic framing of social divisions, representation and legitimacy in these societies. Iraq and Afghanistan have been understood in terms of a paradigm of 'minority group rights' in which ethnic groups are seen as the only legitimate political groupings (Roy, 2004, p. 176). However, political loyalties in both Afghanistan and Iraq are based on networks and local solidarity groups – extended family, village, clan and tribe (Baram, 2005, pp. 5–6; Dawisha, 1999, pp. 562–567; Roy, 1995, pp. 21–22, 2004, p. 175). These networks and groups are not interested in issues of autonomy, federalism or territory but in gaining a share of power and maintaining political balance at the centre (Roy, 2004, p. 175).

The ethnic framing of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq and Afghanistan by international actors rests on the assumption that ethnic groups are discrete cultural groups, and that ethnicity forms the basis of stable political identities. However, the intensity of ethnic identity and the meaning and definition of ethnic categories is variable, particularly in conflict situations.

Ethnicization and Conflict

Conflict raises the salience of ethnicity through mobilization and violence along ethnic lines. The increased prominence of ethnicity reduces the salience of other identities and differences which may have been the basis of social relationships between people in different ethnic categories or of cross-cutting cleavages between people within an ethnic category. In the process, ethnicity is transformed from one identity among many into the primary political identity. However, the process of ethnicization in conflict situations involves not just an increased salience of pre-existing ethnic identities, it also transforms the meaning and definition of ethnic groups and in some cases brings them into being.

Local and religious identities can be politicized and transformed into broader ethnic and national identities. This occurred in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the run-up to and during the 1992–1995 conflict. The category 'Muslim' had long existed in Bosnia-Herzegovina but did not generally mean an ethnic or national group. In rural areas at least, there was a strong sense of local religious community, *nacije*, based on religious background, though not necessarily practice. People tended to marry within their *nacije* and hence family celebrations and marriages brought together the local religious community. So although people worked with, and were friends with, their neighbours from other religious backgrounds, kinship and family celebrations created a local community life as *nacije* (Bringa, 1995, pp. 65–84).

A Muslim social or even political identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina had not been incompatible with a Yugoslav or Croat or Serb national identity through much of the twentieth century. A sense of a distinct social and political identity emerged amongst Muslim elites in Bosnia from the early twentieth century but this sense of Muslim or Bosniac (also termed *Bošnjak* or Bosniak) identity often combined with a Serb or Croat national identity (Banac, 1984). These multiple identities continued in Yugoslavia under

Tito. As Irwin (1984, p. 449) puts it, 'Instances of authentic Muslim political dissent, i.e., activities resulting from an Islamic rather than a Croatian or Serbian orientation of Muslims were infrequent'. The sense of belonging to a Muslim or Bosniac political ethnic or national community only became real for many Muslims during the war when they could be killed for the *nacije* they belonged to or the nationality on their identity card.

Maček (2001) demonstrates through an analysis of the accounts of Sarajevans, that in Sarajevo at the start of the Bosnian conflict there was initially a strong resistance to the new nationalist discourses and a defence of a multi national Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, a gradual acceptance of the rules of war, defined as an ethnic civil war, meant that people came to accept the logic that their own security depended on solidarity with the national group and members of other groups posed a security threat (Maček, 2001, p. 208). Major cities, and particularly Sarajevo, had long had an identity as cosmopolitan urban centres. The initial defence of a multinational Sarajevo by those that joined the Bosnian army was gradually transformed into a defence of the Muslim/Bosniac nation (Maček, 2001, pp. 207–209). In this process people's sense of identity broadened as they identified with the national collective. Individuals had to make personal choices about the side they were on, the unit they fought with and so on, but they were also dependent on the collective blessing of their choices, thereby linking the individual and the collective.

In urban cosmopolitan Sarajevo people in defence of their families were forced to choose sides and identify with the nationalist discourse in order to make any rational sense of their fear and the choices they had made (Maček, 2001, pp. 207–209). In rural Bosnia-Herzegovina during the conflict the intimate bonds of rural community life (see Bringa, 1995) were projected onto a larger political identity by the effects of the break-up of Yugoslavia and the war. However, even during the conflict, personal experiences of war and social relations could bring to the fore the inconsistencies of this discourse of 'national defence and unity in whose name they were fighting' (Maček, 2001, p. 214). Disillusionment with the war and the national cause could bring transformations of what were salient identities and 'others':

> . . . the 'we'-group identification changed from 'we-Muslims must protect ourselves from Serbs' to 'we-educated middle class Sarajevans' or 'we-who do not want to carry weapons'. As those who were officially defined as 'others' once again became perceived privately as one of 'us', the division into warring sides became blurred, and the official legitimation of the national causes and explanations of war harder to sustain. (Maček, 2001, p. 218)

However, the outbreak of violence legitimized by ethnonationalist discourses undeniably transformed existing familial, local and religious identities into identification with a broader imagined community of the Bosniac nation. Nevertheless, the dominance of these new national identities is not irreversible and in some cases identities shifted even during the conflict.

Conflicts can not only transform the salience and meaning of existing categories but can also facilitate the emergence of new ethnic identities. In Afghanistan, ethno-linguistic categories emerged as socially and politically significant identities during and after the anti-Soviet war. Networks based on kinship or client/patron relations and not a territorial

unit or ethnic group are the bases of identity in Afghanistan. This basic unit of identity, the *qawm*, is defined as '. . . any segment of society bound by solidarity . . .' and may be based on extended family, clan, occupational group, village, and so on (Roy, 1995, p. 22). The *qawm* that a person identifies with depends on the particular situation:

> . . . in a Pashtun village the qawm of a tribesman is his clan when speaking to his fellow tribesmen, his tribe in relation to other tribesmen, the Pashtun ethnic group in relation to other groups. But there is not necessarily symmetry between different qawms. In the same Pashtun village, a craftsman not belonging to the tribe will call qawm his occupational group. (Roy, 1995, p. 22)

Language was not a primary criterion in defining identities before the conflict in Afghanistan, though the linguistic ethnonyms that now prevail were used by anthropologists and journalists.

The process of ethnicization of Afghanistan has its roots in the war against the Soviets, though it had begun in the 1960s and 1970s with attempts to modernize the state. The war pushed people to identify with larger groups for a number of reasons. Migration to refugee camps brought people from different villages and regions together. In this context they often needed to identify with larger groups than their *qawm* or even region to have any political influence. The adoption of linguistic ethnonyms to define these larger groups was not accidental as these were terms already used by anthropologists and journalists (Roy, 1995, pp. 105–107). The impetus for ethnicization was the emergence of a new system of warlord patronage politics. International funding for the war, and later the proceeds from the international trafficking of drugs, allowed the new warlord elites – the *mujahidin* commanders – to use patron–client relations to maintain their support through the distribution of weapons and humanitarian supplies. The client bases of the commanders were regionally defined but the commanders and their followers became increasingly identified with large ethnic groups, Pashtun, Tadjik, Hazara, Uzbek and so on (Roy, 1995, p. 122).

The war in Afghanistan began as an ideological conflict, an Islamic jihad against communism, but by the 1990s it had become a struggle for power between warlords increasingly identified with ethnic groups. In the period since the 2001 invasion, Afghan politics has become increasingly defined in ethnic terms (Simonsen, 2004a, pp. 711–713). However, the political loyalty of most people remains largely based on networks and local solidarity groups – extended family, village, clan and tribe (Roy, 2004, p. 178).

Ethnic identities are not fixed identities as ethnonationalist discourses imply. The salience of ethnicity can increase, particularly in conflicts. Nor is ethnicity always a political identity. Instead, identities can be politicized in new ways, and the meaning of the category can be transformed, especially by conflicts, displacement and migration. This opens, at least theoretically, the possibility that the salience of ethnicity might decline after a conflict. This dynamic approach to ethnicity has implications for international intervention and peace-making policy, and stands in contrast to traditional approaches in interventions and peace processes which assume ethnicity is a relatively fixed political identity.

Peace-building

The aim of peace-building is 'to create the conditions necessary for a sustainable peace in war-torn societies' (Annan, 1999, paragraph 101). In order to achieve sustainable peace at least two main goals are usually pursued by international actors. First, sustainable peace requires an end to hostilities, or at least a significant reduction in the level of violence. A cessation of hostilities may be achieved through a negotiated peace process or in some instances international actors have attempted to impose ends to conflicts through military interventions. Secondly, peace-building is a political process which involves efforts to create stable political institutions (Kumar, 2001, pp. 183–184). The basic assumption is that stable political institutions will enable tensions to be managed, prevent a return to violence and create the conditions for sustainable peace. The stability of political institutions rests on the acceptance by the population of the legitimacy of the system. In contemporary peace-making political legitimacy is conceived of in terms of representative government (Roy, 2004, pp. 167–169). The argument of this article is that where international policy-makers involved in peace-building have accepted or imposed an ethnic framing of the conflict and society both peace processes and institution-building are likely to maintain or strengthen ethnic politics. In these conditions, peace processes are likely to privilege ethnonationalist actors, while institution-building is likely to institutionalize ethnic politics.

Where conflicts are understood as ethnic conflicts, peace processes may reinforce the ethnic definition of the problem and legitimize ethnonationalists as ethnic representatives. The primary goal of peace processes is to achieve a cessation of hostilities. Peace processes involve the key protagonists engaging more or less willingly in negotiations about the central issues in dispute (Darby & Mac Ginty, 2000, pp. 7–8). In order to achieve the goal of an end to violence, the key protagonists almost always include the armed parties – both government and paramilitaries. Privileging the armed actors may exclude other social actors from negotiations. If the conflict is framed as an ethnic conflict the armed parties are legitimated in the process as representatives of their ethnic group. Furthermore the demands of these parties for security and a share of power are likely to be phrased in ethnic terms, as a demand for ethnic power-sharing.

In Aceh, Indonesia, the conflict transformation agency, the Henri Dunont Centre (HDC – later renamed the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue), in attempting to find a way to reduce violence in Aceh and promote a long-term solution for the province, conceived of the problem as one of secessionary conflict (Connolly, 2005). Problematized in this way the issue in Aceh was the ethnonationalist aspirations of the Acehnese and whether those could be accommodated within Indonesia. The solution therefore involved negotiations between the Indonesian Government and the rebel Free Aceh Movement (GAM) to achieve a cessation of hostilities and a political solution based on autonomy for Aceh. This view of the Acehnese problem downplayed the views of local NGOs and human rights groups who emphasized that the root cause of violence was decades of repression by the Indonesian military (author interviews in Aceh 2000).

The peace process mediated by the HDC, by pursuing negotiations between the Indonesian military and GAM had two important effects. First it legitimized GAM as the

spokesperson of the Acehnese, since they were the only Acehnese included in negotiations, and in the process marginalized existing civil society organizations, some of which had greater legitimacy as representatives of the Acehnese. Secondly, the negotiations defined the conflict as an ethnic one between Acehnese and Indonesians, rather than a conflict between the people in Aceh and a repressive military. In defence of the HDC it can be argued that their priority was to reduce, and hopefully end, the violence. In attempting to do so they had no option other than to engage with the military and the GAM to do this. However, pursuing negotiations between the armed parties as effectively the only strand of the peace process had the effect of confirming the definition of the conflict as an ethnic secessionary conflict – a definition that was in the interests of both the military and GAM since it justified the military's presence in Aceh and legitimized GAM as the representatives of the Acehnese people.

In Bosnia the international community, even before the outbreak of the armed conflict, problematized Bosnian-Herzegovina in ethnic terms. Once the conflict broke out it was framed by the international community as an ethnic civil war, rather than a rebellion against an elected government or foreign aggression by Serbia. The International Community's efforts to find a solution to the violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina were shaped by their understanding of the conflict as an ethnic civil war and therefore the need to respond to the ethnonationalist aspirations of the armed parties. These included not just the Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat nationalist leaderships, but also the governments of Serbia and Croatia. Urban intellectuals and middle classes who opposed the ethnicization of Bosnia-Herzegovina were sidelined in the process of the conflict but also excluded from peace negotiations.

The international community's peace proposals can be divided into two phases in terms of the territorial and political solutions they envisaged, those based on multiple cantons and those based on ethnic territories. The first proposals from the 1991 Cutiliero plan to the Vance-Owen proposal of January 1993 foresaw a decentralized state divided into a number of cantons. The creation of multiple cantons was intended to avoid the creation of ethnic territories that could form the basis of a future partition of the country. However, the boundaries of these cantons were devised to create an ethnic majority (or at least significant plurality) in each based on mapping the 1991 census figures on ethnic categories onto the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina (see Campbell, 1999, pp. 402–408 and Jansen, 2005, pp. 46–48 on the problems of such ethnic mapping).

After the Vance-Owen proposals the international community altered its principles (Klemencic, 1994, pp. 53–54). Subsequent peace proposals envisaged creating a loose confederation by partitioning of the country into ethnically based mini-states with a weak central government based on ethnic consociational principles. The final settlement achieved at Dayton in negotiations with the governments of Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia and the main ethnonationalist parties in Bosnia-Herzegovina saw the creation of a weak central state and two entities – the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Dayton Agreement could be viewed as a pragmatic solution to the problem of ethnic violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which ended the ethnic cleansing and genocide; responded to the ethnonationalist aspirations of the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and

avoided the secession of parts of the country. However, Bosnia-Herzegovina's partition into separate ethnic entities was only inevitable because of the ethnic framing of the problem at the start of the conflict. Alternative ways of framing the problem might have opened the possibility of alternative solutions (Campbell, 1999, pp. 417, 423). Potential alternative understandings of the conflict were available in the former Yugoslavia. These included understanding it as 'international aggression' against the elected government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also urban understandings of the war as an urban-rural conflict or as a conflict between civilization and barbarism (Maček, 2001, p. 218; Ramet, 1996, pp. 70–87; Sorabji, 1993, pp. 33–35).

The assumption that the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina was an ethnic civil war shaped the types of solutions that the International Community sought. It justified a policy of an arms embargo on the Bosnian government which contributed to the ethnic cleansing and genocide that took place from 1992 to 1995. Peace processes based on this framing of the conflict required the participation of the ethnonationalist armed parties, legitimized as the representatives of their ethnic groups. The structures created in such a peace process inevitably institutionalized ethnicity as the basis of political representation in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Representative Government

Institution-building in post-conflict situations focuses on the creation of stable political institutions. Stability depends on institutions being perceived as legitimate. Legitimacy in recent international interventions appears to have been defined in terms of achieving an elected and representative government. When a divided society is defined as an ethnically divided society, representative government involves the representation of the diverse ethnic groups of society and runs the risk of institutionalizing ethnic politics. In Bosnia-Herzegovina the Dayton peace agreement negotiated with the ethnonationalist parties produced a consociational system of power-sharing based on ethnic representation. Elections were held within a year of the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement to produce a legitimate elected government and offer the hope of an early withdrawal of international forces. However, the early elections were held at a point when ethnonationalist parties and militias still held power on the ground. In a situation of continued insecurity ethnonationalist parties were able to dominate the elections. The holding of early elections to produce a legitimate representative government runs the risk of rewarding armed parties and ethnic politics. Given the ethnicized nature of the conflict and the privileged position of ethnic nationalists in the peace negotiations the creation of a post-conflict government based on ethnic representation is hardly surprising. What is surprising is that in Afghanistan and Iraq the international community imposed a system of ethnic representation. In both cases transitional governments were selected on the basis of ethnic representation.

Where divided societies are framed as ethnically divided societies, representative government, and hence legitimacy, has to be achieved by achieving an ethnic balance of power. The Afghan war was ideological in its inception before descent into a civil war between the Mujahidin commanders and then between the Taliban and the commanders.

Recruitment was primarily clientelistic, based on kinship and regional factors. The conflict divided Afghan society along geographical, religious, ideological and other lines. Yet the international community identified ethnicity as the key dividing factor (Simonsen, 2004a, pp. 711–712).

The initial composition of the Afghan Transitional Authority was selected not only to visibly reflect Afghanistan's ethnic diversity, but also to include the main regional warlords, whose maintenance of power has rested largely on their continued possession of arms. However, their inclusion in the government as ethnic representatives has provided them with a convenient legitimating discourse, and provided the basis for further ethnicization as ministers recruit staff on clientelistic lines (Simonsen, 2004a, pp. 712–713). For example, the Ministry of Defence staff and army officers in 2002 were predominantly Tajik, such as the Minister of Defence Mohammad Qasim Fahim. However, while 37 of the 38 Generals appointed by Fahim in February 2002 were Tajik, the reason for these appointments was loyalty to a political faction rather than their ethnic background. Of these 38 Generals, 35 belonged to the *Shura-i Nezar* faction that Fahim belonged to (Giustozzi, 2003, p. 28). This pattern of appointing commanders loyal to his own faction characterized other appointments in 2002 (Giustozzi, 2003, p. 28; Manuel & Singer, 2002, p. 57). The criterion for appointment was not ethnic identity but factional loyalty and Fahim would also appoint officers from closely allied factions such as the predominantly Pashtun *Ittehad-i Islami* (Giustozzi, 2003, p. 26). However, the perception of ethnic discrimination and the genuine predominance of Tajiks in the Ministry of Defence led to resentment by other groups, notably Pashtuns (Giustozzi, 2003, pp. 29–30; Simonsen, 2004a, p. 724).

In Iraq, like Afghanistan, the basis of political loyalty and recruitment had been ties of kinship and patronage. Although Sunni Arabs were heavily overrepresented in the army and civil service, political recruitment under Saddam Hussein was not based on ethnicity as such. Recruitment, particularly to the security organs, was largely on the basis of kinship, clan and tribe (Baram, 2005, pp. 5–6; Dawisha, 1999, pp. 562–567). The core of the regime and particularly the security apparatus was disproportionately recruited from Saddam's home region Tikrit and his own tribe and a few closely allied ones (Baram, 2003, pp. 93–113; Baram, 2005, pp. 5, 19). Coming from a loyal family and tribe was assumed to provide the best guarantee of loyalty to the regime. On employment questionnaires for recruits to the General Security Directorate half the questions related to the employee's family (al-Khafaji, 1994, pp. 23–24). The effect of this tribal and regional bias in recruitment was a predominance of Sunni Arab in the regime although it was not Sunnis as a category who were advantaged but particular kin groups.

The appointment of an Iraqi Governing Council by Paul Bremer on 13 May 2004 on the basis of ethnic and sectarian representation contributed to increased ethnicization and sectarian conflict. This action confirmed ethnicity as the basis of political representation in Iraq, particularly since some of the appointees were exiles with close links in Washington but little claim to represent Iraqi society other than their ethnic and sectarian background. Subsequent governments have continued this practice of the ethnic and sectarian distribution of posts, while the country has spiralled towards civil war along sectarian lines. The disbanding of the Iraqi Army and existing government institutions by the US also left few functioning bases of civil or political organization except the mosques and in

Kurdistan the Kurdish nationalist parties (ICG, 2006, pp. 21–22). Elections in Iraq held in January and then December 2005 used a party list system. The numerous political parties in the country formed electoral coalitions on a largely ethno-sectarian basis to construct lists to contest the elections. Closed list systems encourage the mobilization of communal identities as the easiest form of mobilizing support. The use of this electoral system contributed to the ethnicization of politics as ethno-religious identities became the predominant basis of political organization (ICG, 2006, p. 17).

The ethnic framing of these divided societies by international actors has led to the strengthening of patterns of ethnic politics. Assumptions that stable political systems are based on representative government and, in the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, a misplaced perception that the society was ethnically divided resulted in the appointment of transitional administrations based on ethnic and sectarian criteria. The visible appointment of politicians on the basis of their ethnicity legitimized ethnic and sectarian identities as a basis of political mobilization. Political recruitment on the basis of the patronage networks of politicians has resulted in ethnic imbalances in government ministries and reinforced ethnic politics. This promotion of ethnic politics is largely an unintended consequence of the promotion of 'representative government'. Yet there are institutional designs that actively seek to promote ethnic politics as the best way to manage situations perceived to be ethnic conflicts.

Ethnic Federalism and Consociationalism

One approach in attempting to promote stability in post-conflict situations might 'identify traits by which the population has been divided during the conflict, and make sure each group defined by such traits is proportionally represented in the new state organs. Such variables could be everything from geography to gender to religion' (Simonsen, 2004a, pp. 711–712). From this perspective, in designing political institutions it would be important to assess the impact that the introduction of different forms of democratic institutions is likely to have on these diverse cleavages (Sisk, 1998, p. 160). However, international intervening actors have frequently singled out ethnicity as the predominant division in post-conflict societies (Simonsen, 2004a, p. 712). Ethnic framing of conflicts and divided societies has led policy-makers to promote ethnic federalism and ethnic power-sharing or consociationalism as solutions to conflicts. Both ethnic federalism and ethnic power-sharing assume that ethnicity is the primary political identity and seek to achieve an ethnic balance of power.

The most persuasive arguments for ethnic representation are provided by consociational theorists who, following Arend Lijphart believe that 'consociational democracy is not only the optimal form of democracy for deeply divided societies but also, for the most deeply divided, the only feasible option' (Lijphart, 2002, p. 37). Consociational theory is a group-based theory, which argues that political stability in divided societies is best achieved through guaranteeing the participation and autonomy of significant groups within society. In order to achieve this it recommends power-sharing especially at the executive level; group autonomy on internal affairs especially education and culture; proportional representation of some form in elections; and, a mutual veto for

groups (Lijphart, 2002, pp. 38–39). Proportionality and power-sharing provide guarantees of effective representation and participation in decision-making to all significant groups. Group autonomy and the mutual veto provide the reassurance for groups to participate in deeply divided societies characterized by a lack of trust. Power sharing also requires group elites to work together to govern effectively which is argued to promote the development of consensus and trust amongst the elites. These four ingredients of consociational democracy characterize the political institutions agreed for Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1995 General Framework Agreement at Dayton (Bose, 2002, pp. 216–217).

In Bosnia-Herzegovina the political system designed at Dayton institutionalized ethnicity throughout the political system. The constitution of Bosnia-Herzegovina enumerates Bosniacs, Croats and Serbs as constituent nations of Bosnia-Herzegovina alongside 'Others'. The two entities created by the Dayton Peace Agreement, the Republika Srpska (RS) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), clearly conceived of themselves in ethnic terms. The constitutions of the Federation enumerated only Bosniacs and Croats as constituent peoples, and that of the Republika Srpska spoke of the 'untransferable right of the Serb people to self-determination', until July 2000 when these provisions and the predominance of particular constituent peoples in the entities were ruled unconstitutional (ICG, 2002). Nonetheless, elections to central state institutions in Bosnia-Herzegovina are based on ethnic principles and candidates have to declare their nationality as Bosniac, Croat, Serb or 'Other'. Presidential elections require the election of a Bosniac and a Croat from the Federation and a Serb from the Republika Srpska to the three seats in the Presidency. The effect of the Dayton Peace Accords and the confederal, consociational agreement reached has largely been to cement ethnic divisions and entrench ethnic politics in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Malik, 2000, pp. 345–355). The ethnicization of Bosnia enshrined in the consociational and ethnic federal principles of Dayton has proved hard to undo despite an intensive international reconstruction programme.

Since Dayton, the international community has sought to actively undo the effects of ethnic cleansing. During the Bosnian conflict ethno-nationalist movements attempted to create ethnically homogenous territories through genocide and the forced displacement of people. More than half of the pre-war population of Bosnia-Herzegovina of 4.4 million was displaced. About half of these were displaced within Bosnia-Herzegovina, while the other half became refugees in neighbouring states or further afield (O Tuathail & Dahlman, 2004, pp. 439–440). As well as enshrining ethnic principles in the constitution, the Dayton Peace Agreement contained provisions to allow the reversal of ethnic cleansing and potentially a reintegration of the country through a right of return and a right to vote in one's original home. These provisions, if effectively implemented, potentially challenged the ethnic basis of the entities. However, early elections confirmed the ethno-nationalist parties in power on the ground and initially most returnees were 'majority returns' to areas where they were the dominant group. A concerted effort by the international programme did achieve considerable success in encouraging 'minority returns' with over 450,000 people or almost 20 per cent of all those displaced during the conflict returning to areas where they are in the minority (see www.unhcr.ba for the latest statistics).

However, the continued high level of ethnicization in Bosnia-Herzegovina means that social reintegration has not been an easy process. In only relatively few cases did the

returns change the demographic balance of the municipalities. Even where returns constituted a significant proportion of the pre-war population of that group in the municipality they were counterbalanced by resettled members of the new majority population in the area (O Tuathail & Dahlman, 2004, pp. 444–445). In some areas, the returns process has effectively produced new enclaves within, but separate from, the dominant population often accessing different social services (Heimerl, 2006, p. 79).

Interventions by the international community to encourage more moderate political parties, and facilitate their forming coalition governments, have had some limited success. However, the consociational structures mean that political competition is largely within ethnic blocks. Even the more moderate parties are still parties which draw their support predominantly from one group and have to represent the interests of that group. They always face the risk of ethnic outbidding by the more hardline parties (Mac Ginty & Gormley-Heenan, 2007). There is a risk that in conditions of change and uncertainty people will vote for the party seen as the strongest ethnic defender. This appears to have happened in Northern Ireland with the rise of the Democratic Unionist Party.

The returns process and electoral engineering by the international community in Bosnia-Herzegovina have been a relative success, but have not produced a return to the pre-conflict demographic or political geography. However, it has produced a more complex pattern of coexistence than existed after the attempts by ethnonationalists during the conflict to produce homogenous ethnic homelands. On the positive side more regular interaction and participation in local government together may produce a gradual process of integration. However, the institutionalization of ethnic politics in the consociational structures of post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina limits the possibilities for a de-ethnicization of politics in Bosnia. Furthermore, in the context of continued uncertainty about the political future and limited economic opportunities nationalist parties have played on ethnic security dilemmas as well as using their position in power to control access to state jobs. Many people have sought security through voting for ethnic parties (Manning & Antic, 2003, p. 56).

Iraq and Afghanistan avoided the formal inclusion of ethnic principles of federalism and power-sharing in their new constitutions. However, power-sharing has been practised informally along ethnic and sectarian lines. This, together with the use of patronage networks by politicians in both countries and escalating sectarian conflict in Iraq, has produced a pattern of ethnic politics in both countries. However, the informal nature of the ethnic power-sharing does allow at least the theoretical possibility that politics may be de-ethnicized in future as the salience of ethnicity as a political identity declines (Simonsen, 2005, pp. 297–318). Where ethnic principles have been enshrined in the constitution, as in Bosnia-Herzegovina, this provides institutional incentives for political mobilization along ethnic lines. It also provides a body of politicians elected as ethnic representatives who are likely to resist any future reform to remove ethnic principles, as indeed has been the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The constitutional reform proposed in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2006, was again based on ethnic principles (see Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 2006) although it did streamline state institutions and remove direct discrimination against 'Others'. The reform was rejected by the Bosnian

parliament on 26 April 2006 because pro-reform politicians opposed to the use of ethnic principles voted against it (European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity, 2006).

Institutionalizing ethnicity in a constitutional settlement freezes ethnic divisions at the moment of greatest tension and limits the possibilities of a later decline in the salience of ethnicity. Enshrining ethnicity in the constitution provides continued incentives for ethnic mobilization of political support. Avoiding the enshrining of ethnic quotas in peace agreements and constitutions at least leaves open the possibility of a future change in the basis of representation and political mobilization.

Alternative Approaches

Institutional-design in post-conflict situations seeks to promote stable political institutions. In societies that are perceived to be ethnically divided consociational approaches attempt to achieve this by providing guarantees of representation and power to ethnic groups. However, this provides incentives to ethnic mobilization and institutionalizes ethnicity as the basis of political representation. Consociationalism has been the dominant model of managing ethnically divided societies, however, there is an alternative consensus emerging amongst academics and NGOs that emphasizes the promotion of civil rather than ethnic identities and the use of institutional design to limit the potential of ethnic mobilization rather than reward it. One reason for the emergence of this alternative approach is a growing view that consociational approaches may not be appropriate in post-conflict situations (see for instance ICG, 2003 for the case of Kosovo).

This approach favours incentives for moderation rather than guarantees of power-sharing. It attempts to create conditions in which political parties and politicians seeking office, and government officials and institutions are rewarded for reaching out towards other ethnic groups. In electoral terms this means designing 'centrapetalist' electoral systems that provide incentives for politicians to broaden their appeal beyond their own ethnic group. From a centripetalist perspective, the party list electoral systems favoured by consociationalists as the electoral systems that produce the most proportional outcomes, provide no real incentives for moderation or inter-ethnic co-operation. In a party list electoral system politicians concentrate on appealing to a particular community, in contrast centripetalist approaches use electoral rules that are designed 'to make politicians reciprocally dependent on the votes of members of groups other than their own' (Horowitz, 1990, p. 471).

Preferential voting systems, such as the alternative vote system or supplementary vote system that allow voters to vote for not just their first preference candidate but also their subsequent preferences, are argued to provide incentives for politicians to appeal for the second preferences of voters from other groups. It may also promote co-operation amongst ethnic leaders to gain votes through 'vote-pooling' and 'preference swapping' and thus promote moderation and accommodation. These electoral systems are argued to reward moderate parties that can attract vote transfers from supporters of other parties (Reilly & Reynolds, 1999).

Other tools in centrapetalist electoral design include requiring winning candidates to have not only a plurality of votes but also a minimum level of support in different regions (required in Nigerian presidential elections), and to require all parties to organize in different regions. An electoral system along these lines was advocated for Iraq by Andreas Wimmer (2004, p. 122). Wimmer also advocated a territorial rather than ethnic federalist system for Iraq (2004, pp. 123–124). The history of federalism suggests that federal systems are likely to work where there are a reasonably large number of federal units with no single one which can dominate, federal boundaries which do not coincide with communal divisions and a party system which produces linkages across the boundaries of member states (Vile, 1982, pp. 222–223). Where linguistic and religious groups are broken up into a number of federal units, communal conflicts can be moderated through political and administrative structures. Where boundaries are drawn to coincide with ethnic, linguistic or religious groups there is a much greater likelihood that communalism will escalate into conflicts between federal units (Vile, 1982, pp. 222–223).

Finally this type of approach requires the protection of minority rights at all levels and a fair system of distribution of resources (fiscal federalism). The International Crisis Group in their criticism of the consociational policies pursued by the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) argue that rather than broker deals with ethnic parties for short-term gains, the international community should gamble on a civic future and provide incentives and rewards to local governments that distribute resources fairly and behave appropriately towards minorities (ICG, 2003). However, guaranteeing minority rights and a fair distribution of resources requires effective administrative and legal systems which are not easy to provide in a post-conflict situation.

An approach that seeks to provide incentives for moderation and inclusiveness without ethnic quotas does not guarantee a de-ethnicization of politics. However, this type of approach does avoid institutionalizing ethnicity. Territorial federalism can be interpreted as dividing rather than uniting communities in order to promote shifting coalitions between groups in the subunits, so that 'today, A governs in alliance with B; tomorrow B with C; and the day after, C with A; and so on' (Anderson & Stansfield, 2005, p. 362). This is consistent with a static view of ethnicity in which ethnicity is expected to remain the basis of political representation. However, by not institutionalizing and rewarding ethnic politics the possibility is created that the political salience of ethnicity may decline over time.

In Conclusion

In this article I have argued that ethnic identities should be understood as dynamic identities whose salience and meaning can be transformed. In conflicts the salience of ethnicity often increases as mobilization on ethnic lines ethnicizes the conflict. In highly ethnicized situations people are categorized as an X with all the assumed characteristics of a member of that category. Their multiple, complex senses of self and connections to others are reduced to a single characteristic. Identity in this sense is violent in the way that it can reduce people to simply a member of a category (see Sen, 2006). The language of ethnic mobilization in conflict uses history and myth to stress the differences between

ethnic groups and their incompatibility. Violence in conflict polarizes people, so a conflict that becomes ethnicized produces a polarization between ethnic groups represented as distinct cultural groups unable to live together in peace, although people have been living together peacefully before the conflict.

Assumptions about ethnicity made by international policy-makers have a significant impact on post-conflict situations. International policy-makers have in the past accepted the image of ethnicity as a relatively fixed political identity. Rather than focusing on the ways in which conflicts have ethnicized people and raised the salience of ethnicity, they have accepted, or even imposed, an ethnic framing of the conflict. In the process it is implicitly assumed that the patterns of ethnic divisions at the end of a conflict are permanent. This then defines post-conflict societies as ethnically divided societies and representative government as being the representation of ethnic groups. In this context peace-building in attempting to produce legitimate representative government has institutionalized ethnic politics.

Reversing processes of ethnicization once they have occurred is not simple. Categories and stereotypes do not disappear overnight. Nationalist discourses may remain central to the legitimacy of post-conflict states. There are no simple universally applicable policy formulas to de-ethnicize politics in a post-conflict situation. However, a starting point is avoiding institutionalizing ethnicity in post-conflict politics.

Contradictions between nationalist discourses and personal experiences may emerge during and after the conflict as people have to deal with their current situations, and memories and understandings of past violence. Nationalism may lose the passion and hatred it had in times of conflict but will not disappear. Sometimes it provides a legitimating background for acts of violence. For others conforming to the dominant discourse of nationalism may provide a comfort in uncomfortable times; it provides straightforward stories in a context of post-war confusion (Jansen, 2006, p. 433). These complexities erode the image of the monolithic ethno-national community, but do not provide a political identity to challenge it. Nevertheless, recognizing the dynamic nature of ethnicity and the transformations of identities that may occur provides a much better account of the complexities of post-war politics than the narratives of fixed identities.

International policy-makers involved in peace processes and peace-building need to demonstrate a greater awareness of ways in which conflict and displacement raise the salience of ethnicity and lead to new identities emerging. If the dominant identities at the end of the conflict are accepted as permanent identities this recognizes and institutionalizes the identities of the dominant, normally armed, groups. Peace processes run the risk of empowering these armed parties as ethnic representatives to the exclusion of less violent pre-conflict groups based on different identities. Peace-building that institutionalizes ethnic identities in consociational agreements provides incentives for politicians to continue to mobilize on an ethnic basis. In effect, consociational agreements in post-conflict situations freeze ethnic identities in their moment of greatest polarization.

Processes of ethnicization are not easily reversed. However, a starting point is avoiding institutionalizing ethnicity in post-conflict situations by steering clear of writing

ethnic quotas into a constitutional settlement. Alternative approaches to institutional design based on centripetal principles will not necessarily de-ethnicize politics, but do avoid providing institutional incentives for ethnic mobilization. In the longer term they may allow space for other identities and sources of political mobilization to emerge. Policy-makers involved in peace processes and post-conflict institution-building would do well to take into account the transformations of identities during conflicts and recognize that the salience as well as meaning of identities can change again after the conflict.

NOTES

1. For Bosnia, see for instance: Daalder (1998, pp. 5–18); Mearsheimer (1997); Mearsheimer and van Evera (1995); Mearsheimer and van Evera (1996); Pape (1998, pp. 25–28); on Iraq see for instance Galbraith (2004); Gelb (2003); Jenkins (2006); Peters (2003).
2. For arguments in favour of ethnic federalism see Anderson and Stansfield (2005, pp. 359–82); Brancati (2004, pp. 7–21); Eklund *et al.* (2005, pp. 116–142); O'Leary (2005, pp. 47–91).

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