

Separating Belligerent Populations: Mitigating Ethno-Sectarian Conflict

**A Monograph
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Abstract

SEPARATING BELLIGERENT POPULATIONS: MITIGATING ETHNO-SECTARIAN CONFLICT by LTC Leonard. B. Scott, US ARMY, 40 pages.

Ethnic and sectarian conflict is a prevalent form of conflict today. Most of the conflicts on-going today and in occurring the past twenty years have been internal wars between rival groups with ethnic or sectarian identities. Though its causes vary, the brutal nature of its conduct and its far-reaching consequences make it a threat that the international community cannot ignore.

As result, the international community has debated the extent to which it should intervene, if ever, in such conflicts. By its actions, the international community has demonstrated its willingness to intervene, often with military force, to mitigate ethnic conflicts. The past twenty years has seen a series of military interventions that have varied in purpose from humanitarian assistance to nation building. Although many of the military interventions have been only marginally effective at best, there is every reason to believe that the international community will continue to intervene to mitigate future conflicts.

United States' military doctrine and tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP) does not specifically address ethnic and sectarian conflict like it has recently done with insurgencies. Its peace operations and subordinate peace enforcement operations doctrine and TTP form the basis for thinking about how to approach military interventions amid ethnic and sectarian conflict. Two relevant peace enforcement operations to consider are separating belligerents and establishing protected areas.

Those two peace enforcement tasks are based on an underlying assumption of separation of populations in ethnic conflict. Amid such conflict, the rival populations separate as people flee or are forcibly expelled from their homes. Intervention occurring in such conditions can apply variations of the two peace enforcement operations to maintain the separation of the rival populations and thereby lessen the conflict. The approach an intervention force pursues is largely dependent on the degree and geographic extent of separation that it encounters. Situations where populations that have separated completely, either regionally or locally, lend themselves to a separation zone being established between the sides. The Bosnian War is an example of a regional separation using a separation zone, while the city of Mitrovica in Kosovo is an example of a divided city. Situations where rival populations are intermingled, either regionally or locally, lend themselves to the establishment of protected areas for the ethnic enclaves. The United Nations safe areas of the Bosnian War are regional examples of protected areas, while the Baghdad "gated communities" established by Multi-National Corps-Iraq are local examples. The examples demonstrate that such operations are both feasible and at least potentially adequate for military intervention forces to accomplish.

Though military forces can effectively separate rival populations to mitigate ethnic conflict, there is much debate whether it is acceptable to do so. Opponents of separation point out its long-term negative consequences and believe those outweigh any short-term benefits to reducing violence. An advocate for separation regards the immediate cessation of conflict as the only means by which the long-term desired effects can be achieved. Ultimately, the increasing trend of many countries resorting to separation measures in order to mitigate conflict demonstrates separation's utility.

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Introduction

Ethnic and sectarian violence has characterized many of the world's conflicts in the past twenty years. Conflicts in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Kosovo in the 1990s particularly stand out for the extent of internal ethnic strife and the resulting humanitarian crises that were their identifying components. The international community responded to those conflicts with varying degrees of military intervention. While the overall justification and purpose of such interventions ranged from strict humanitarian assistance to comprehensive state building, intervening military forces also had the role of mitigating ethnic conflict.

Intervention forces have yet to show themselves effective at mitigating ethnic conflict. Much of the major ethnic violence in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Kosovo was consummated by the time capable military forces arrived. In current day Iraq, the presence of multinational forces conducting counterinsurgency operations neither prevented ethno-sectarian conflict nor prevented significant ethno-sectarian population expulsions. Indeed, much of the ethnic and sectarian violence in all of these conflicts only seemed to abate after large population movements had ended, signifying such movements as an intention of the violence in the first place.

Given these disappointing outcomes, what can future intervening military forces do to effectively mitigate ethno-sectarian conflict? United States Joint and Army peace operations doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) provide material to suggest a framework based on the concept of separating belligerent populations. One approach is to establish and secure protected areas for victimized populations. Another approach is to interpose between belligerent populations and establish a separation line or zone between them. Both approaches are intended to, temporarily at least, deny rival groups access to each other in order to prevent further violence. This paper explores those approaches for their validity.

This monograph explores the following fundamental question: how can an intervening military force effectively mitigate ethno-sectarian conflict? It focuses on temporary measures that

an intervening military force could take within a peace enforcement operation to reduce ethnic and sectarian violence in a country engaged in an internal conflict. The intervening forces are not intended to create facts on the ground that do not already exist as a result of the ethnic conflict. This paper assumes that the country's government has effectively ceased to provide essential services, including security, and that its security forces have divided along factional lines. This study does not address permanent political separations requiring a broader mandate, such as formal partitions, as those are clearly beyond the purview of a military commander of an intervention force.

Demonstrating the validity of a concept for mitigating ethnic and sectarian conflict will require that it meet three conditions. First, the concept must adequate. That is, ethnic and sectarian violence must lessen, both in amount and effect, as a result of applying the concept. Then the concept must be feasible. The intervening military force must be capable of accomplishing the mission. Finally, the concept must be acceptable. It must balance the benefits of accomplishing the mission with costs, prevailing sentiments, and future consequences.

To show that an approach or concept meets adequacy and feasibility conditions this paper will refer to instances from the past where military forces performed similar missions. There have been several instances where intervening military forces have established protected areas to secure threatened populations. There has not been a recent instance where an intervening military force resorted to separating belligerent populations (as opposed to belligerent *forces*) specifically as a means of mitigating ethno-sectarian violence. There are examples from the Bosnian War and the war in Kosovo that can suggest an approach for doing so. There is also an example from the recent U.S.-led Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) operation that saw the erection of temporary walls to protect selected sectarian communities in Baghdad from further violence. Therefore while it is not possible to analyze a single past case that provides a complete account of separation as an effective mitigation measure for ethno-sectarian violence, it is possible to

reasonably assess adequacy and feasibility of separation from the combined Bosnia, Kosovo, and Baghdad accounts.

To assess the acceptability of population separation as an approach to ethno-sectarian conflict mitigation, this paper surveys the relevant literature for sentiments regarding military intervention in internal ethnic conflicts. Key factors associated with acceptability are the cost in casualties to intervening military force, the suffering induced on populations as a result of the security measures, and the effects that any security measures might have on a future reconciliation process. Based on academic and professional sentiments regarding those factors, it will be possible to judge the acceptability of a particular mitigation approach.

The monograph is organized into sections. The first three sections establish the relevance of trying to derive a concept for dealing with ethno-sectarian conflict. The first section introduces internal ethno-sectarian conflict and establishes it as a real threat that U.S. Army forces will likely confront. The second section discusses intervention as an option for mitigating ethno-sectarian conflict and suggests the likelihood of Army participation in future interventions. The third section reviews current U.S. Army doctrine and TTP concerning stability operations and peace operations. It reviews where and how the Army addresses ethnic and sectarian conflict and what measures it suggests for dealing with it.

The fourth section introduces separating belligerent populations as a concept for an intervening military force to mitigate ethnic and sectarian conflict in the conduct of peace enforcement operations. It establishes this concept as useful, at least in the short term, for providing security to rival groups. It establishes that separating belligerent populations makes it more difficult for ethno-sectarian violence to occur by denying rival groups unhindered access to each other. This is especially important in large population centers where intervening forces generally do not possess the number of soldiers historically required to maintain order. This section refers to historical examples to show where this concept has been adequate and feasible.

The fifth section discusses the acceptability of separation as a concept for mitigating ethnic conflict. It discusses the current sentiment of applicable literature that indicates population separation would not be well received by the international community and that sentiment appears to generally favor reconciliation and reintegration instead. It concludes, however, that the fact that forces continue to employ different forms of separation is the final proof of its continued utility.

The Threat of Ethnic and Sectarian Conflict

Since 1990 most of the world's armed conflicts have been internal and have had an ethnic or sectarian component.¹ Ethno-sectarian conflict is a most agonizingly pernicious form of warfare that is notable for its apparent intractability, senselessness, and brutality. It is also a very complex phenomenon that defies simple explanations and solutions.

Critical Definitions

Internal ethnic and sectarian conflict, as a concept, is not difficult to apprehend. The specific terminology varies somewhat throughout the relevant literature, but the meanings are generally consistent. "Ethnic" and its derivatives are comprehensive terms that refer to race, tribe, language group, or religion. Croats, Serbs, Kurds, and Arabs are examples of ethnic groups. "Sectarian" refers to different sects or denominations, usually within the same religion. Orthodox versus Catholic is a sectarian contrast, as is Shiite versus Sunni. The term "ethno-sectarian" appears to be a recent addition from the war in Iraq where conflict occurs along ethnic lines (Kurd and Arab) and sectarian lines (Shiite and Sunni) simultaneously. Other, similar expressions

¹ Monica Duffy Toft, *The Geography of Ethnic Violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 3.

in the literature include the terms “communal,” “racial,” “religious,” “intergroup,” “factional,” and several “ethno-“ variants, and for the purpose of this study are synonymous.

Additional terms constrain location and establish a level of violence. The term “internal” refers to conflicts occurring within the borders of a state. Synonymous terms in the literature and this paper are “intra-state,” “domestic,” and “civil.” The term “conflict” refers here to warfare in the general sense of Rupert Smith’s “war amongst the people,” in which military engagements occur among, by, and even against civilians to forcibly secure a decisive result.²

Two extreme forms of ethnic violence deserve special mention as the world has witnessed and potentially faces additional instances of both. Ethnic cleansing is defined as a “planned, deliberate removal from a certain territory of an undesirable population distinguished by characteristics such as ethnicity, religion, race, class, or sexual preference” where these characteristics are “the basis for removal.”³ Genocide is defined as “the intent to destroy in whole or in part a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.”⁴

Admittedly, ethnic and sectarian divisions are subjective as individuals may possess traits that could place them in any rival group. The key intent of defining these terms for ethnic and sectarian conflict for this study however is not only to describe how people identify themselves, but also to relate how they physically group themselves into communities. These aspects of ethnic and sectarian identity and location not only become a basis for initiating violence; they also may become a key to managing it.

² Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 5-6.

³ Andrew Bell-Fialkoff, *Ethnic Cleansing* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 3.

⁴ The 2006 National Security Strategy of the United States (March 2006), 17.

Causes

A wide variety of circumstances can trigger ethno-sectarian conflicts. Donald Snow describes internal conflicts potentially developing whenever multi-group states transition from one government or form of government to another.⁵ Often, these transitions are the result of the collapse of an authoritarian government that had previously forcibly integrated rival groups and successfully suppressed ethno-sectarian passions. During the transition and subsequent loss of central authority the state fails partially or completely, losing its ability to effectively govern or even maintain order. Government agencies, including security forces, fracture along ethnic and sectarian lines. The different groups revert back to their foundational identities, based usually on ethnicity or religion. The different groups then resort to conflict for control of the government, or even the shape of the state itself. John Steinbruner attributes poor standards of living and perceived inequalities as leading to conflict.⁶ These political and economic factors appear to trigger deep ethno-sectarian animosities that may have been dormant for years. Retaliation for past wrongs, redress for new grievances, or stirred up hatred leads to violence that breeds fear for basic human security. Monica Toft asserts that ethnic groups view territory as an indivisible asset and key to their survival.⁷ Ethnic conflict therefore arises as groups vie for control of disputed lands. Others attribute the causes directly to tribal rivalries and ethnic or religious hatred.

The result of all of these factors is often that groups that have coexisted in apparent tolerance, if not harmony, for years resort to seemingly senseless and intractable armed conflict.

⁵ Donald M. Snow, *Uncivil Wars* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), 38.

⁶ John D. Steinbruner, *Principles of Global Security* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2000), 138.

⁷ Monica Duffy Toft. *The Geography of Ethnic Violence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 132-33.

The very idea of reconciliation, much less any return to a state of peaceful, intergrated coexistence, especially within a generation of the conflict seems utopian at best.

Conditions

Within the warring state, ethnic and sectarian conflict is characterized by a lack of a coherent political objective and a lack of restraint regarding violence.⁸ In addition to regular forces, irregular elements and armed civilians, living and operating amid the population, may carry out the violence. There seems to be no attempt to convert or co-opt rival groups to seek political consensus. As a result, conflict objectives devolve to little more than territory gain and demographic change.

Rival groups have often become extensively intermingled, regionally and locally, during the years of peaceful coexistence. In conflict, ethno-sectarian groups desire to consolidate land either for physical or economic security reasons, and they seek to supplant the populations of rival groups with their own. The logic of violence is often unclear and seems to have no other purpose than to terrorize the rival group. Civilians are most often the primary targets and victims.⁹ The purpose of the violence is either to intimidate the rival populations into submission, or to eliminate them, either by killing them or forcing them to move elsewhere. Unchecked, ethno-sectarian violence may devolve into ethnic cleansing or even genocide.

In short, the objective is security and the strategy is control. The operation is removal or elimination, and the tactic is terror. Because the instability causes key state institutions like the police and the judiciary tends to cease functioning, general chaos ensues.

⁸ Snow, 100.

⁹ Boutros-Ghali, Boutros, *An Agenda for Peace*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Nations, 1995), 9.

Consequences

Internal ethno-sectarian conflict is a threat to neighboring states and the international community. Though such conflicts have tended to occur in economically poor states positioned on the fringes of the global economy, the international community's ability to ignore them is eroding. Globalization has given the consequences of ethno-sectarian conflict disproportionate weight, primarily because such conflicts tend to be contagious and can cause interstate confrontation and instability.

Neighboring states feel the effects first and most closely. Ethno-sectarian members in neighboring states can overtly support or join their brethren, or they can sponsor irredentist or secessionist movements within their own states. Also, refugees stress the economies and infrastructure of neighboring states.

Ethno-sectarian conflicts also have international effects. Media coverage and activist diasporas give the brutal aspects of the conflict international visibility. Failed and failing states suffering ethno-sectarian conflict present themselves as havens or fertile recruiting venues for terrorist organizations and organized crime, especially drug and weapons trafficking. The brutality of the conflict tends to produce humanitarian crises through population displacements and suffering, and damaged industry and infrastructure potentially threaten the environment. Such conflicts also threaten international access to natural resources and the security of trade distribution infrastructure and routes. There are also concerns for accountability of weapons of mass effect.

Continuance

Though academics and watch groups disagree on the current number of active internal ethnic and sectarian conflicts (between 30 and 40), nearly all optimistically acknowledge the trend is downward. None however see an end to ethnic and sectarian strife. Not only are new

possibilities in Kenya and Pakistan emerging, but conditions are also present in locations such as Bosnia, Sri Lanka, and Iraq to re-ignite as intervention forces depart. As long as historical rival ethnic and sectarian groups are interspersed within a state, conditions will exist for a spark to trigger another cycle of conflict. The international community's response to internal ethno-sectarian conflict has evolved in the last twenty years and is the focus of the next section.

Intervention in Ethnic and Sectarian Conflict

Defining Intervention

Intervention in this study refers to the overt deployment of military ground forces by outside actors to a country engaged in internal conflict. The purpose of these forces involves protecting civilians and ultimately imposing or enforcing a settlement.¹⁰ This definition does not deny or diminish the diplomatic, economic, and other types of instruments that states and organizations throughout the international community employ as part of a larger conflict resolution effort. Rather, limiting intervention to the military aspect enables a focus on what an intervening military force can do to mitigate violence, particularly in the context of a conflict in which ethnic and sectarian violence is a prevalent component. The U.S. operations in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo in the 1990s are examples of relevant interventions, as are the on-going stability operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

Conditions and Guidelines for Intervention

Why states and other international organizations choose to intervene in conflicts within other countries is the subject of much scholarly study and debate. While a detailed treatment is

beyond the scope of this paper, a simplified answer is that states have tended to intervene to protect their interests, the interests of their allies and alliances,¹¹ and humanitarian interests in that order. As conflicts in Rwanda and the Sudan attest, humanitarian interests in themselves have not always been sufficient to induce a timely, forceful intervention. Rather, it is the presence of a national core interest coupled with a humanitarian interest that is more likely to gain such a response.¹²

Recognizing the relationship between national and humanitarian interests and intervention is important. Communal conflicts tend to generate just those interests that can lead to intervention. Understanding the conditions for intervention is also critical for determining the objectives and endstate of an intervening military force, which in turn suggest the concepts and tasks that force will perform.

Regarding set guidelines to intervention, there are none.¹³ Rather, conventions regarding intervention have evolved considerably since the early 1990s and have greatly contributed to the proliferation of interventions since. Important changes, according to Andrea Talentino, evolved regarding the concepts of sovereignty and international legitimacy.¹⁴ Together these conceptual changes moved prevailing sentiment from nonintervention or reluctant intervention to intervention as a moral obligation. That states have a right and a responsibility to intervene in the communal conflicts of other states is still held valid today and continues to govern many states' intervention decisions.

¹⁰ Andrea Kathryn Talentino. *Military Intervention After the Cold War* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005), 12-14.

¹¹ Michael V. Bhatia. *War and Intervention: Issues for Contemporary Peace Operations* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2003), 17.

¹² Kimberly Zisk Marten. *Enforcing the Peace* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 75.

¹³ Bhatia, 16.

¹⁴ Talentino, 277.

Sovereignty, defined by Dominik Zaum as “the recognition of the claim by a state to exercise supreme authority over a clearly defined territory,”¹⁵ is also not the impediment to intervention in internal conflicts that it once was.¹⁶ International convention formerly held that sovereignty was inviolate. A recognized state could conduct its domestic affairs, including the exercise of authority over its population and resources, with little concern for external interference. More recently, however, the UN and Western nations have demonstrated increased willingness to intervene in internal conflicts in order to enforce stability. As a former Secretary-General of the United Nations has written, “The time of absolute sovereignty...has passed.”¹⁷ The international community is now holding states responsible for their actions toward other states and toward their own citizens, and the ability to govern effectively has also become a measure of sovereignty. The 2006 National Security Strategy calls this “responsible sovereignty.”¹⁸ States that cannot govern effectively lose their sovereign status and become subject to outside intervention.

Closely tied to sovereignty is the concept of international legitimacy. For all of its perceived criticality in recent years, intervention literature prior to 2003 has remarkably little to say about it. With the U.S.-led invasion and continuing stability operations in Iraq though, how the international community, the intervening state, and the target state perceive the justice of the intervention has assumed utmost importance. As Talentino has written, “power cannot be effective without legitimacy and does not itself convey legitimacy as it once did.”¹⁹ Legitimacy,

¹⁵ Dominik Zaum, *The Sovereignty Paradox: The Norms and Politics of International Statebuilding* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3.

¹⁶ Scott R. Fiel, *Preventing Genocide: How the Early Use of Force Might Have Succeeded in Rwanda* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1998), 23.

¹⁷ Boutros-Ghali, 44.

¹⁸ National Security Strategy, 38.

¹⁹ Talentino, 36.

or the lack thereof, affects the ability to mobilize support for the intervention, and it arguably affects its eventual success or failure.

Two facets of legitimacy merit attention here. The first concerns the perceived intentions of an intervening state. Interventions are largely perceived as more legitimate if the intervening state is more committed to the targeted state's interests and welfare than its own. Intervention for the purpose of gaining territory, resources, or influence is considered illegitimate. Accurately or not, the on-going U.S.-led effort in Iraq has suffered accusations from the outset based on suspicions that its actions were mostly self-interested. In contrast, the international intervention in East Timor in 2000 was generally perceived as legitimate for its adherence and commitment to human security and rehabilitation.²⁰

Another facet of legitimacy for intervention is international consensus and institutional sanction. Despite its perceived shortcomings, the intergovernmental organization most esteemed for conferring institutional sanction remains the UN. States that disregard the UN and choose to intervene despite international political opposition, as the U.S.-led coalition did in Iraq, have suffered the affects of perceived illegitimacy. That the U.S. sought assistance for Iraq from the UN in 2004 is further evidence of the UN's endorsement as a desired prerequisite to intervention.

Limits to Intervention

If sheer volume of literature is any indication, events since September 11, 2001 appear to have tempered academic advocacy for intervention. The realities of ongoing interventions in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere have challenged the theoretical efficacy of intervention and exposed limits that oppose its eventual success. As Michael O'Hanlon has observed, the American public tends to be supportive of efforts to "mitigate suffering where that can be done

²⁰ Ibid., 277-278.

with high confidence, modest cost, and limited duration.”²¹ It is those precise qualities, however, that are so elusive to interventions. States will need to reexamine their expectations regarding interventions, or they will need to continue to evolve their methods if intervention is to remain a conflict mitigation tool.

The cost of commitment is a severe limit to intervention. Aside from money and material resources, which are certainly not inconsiderable, the military ground forces alone required to provide effective security for threatened populations are beyond the capabilities of most states. As a result, states often assume risk, both to their forces and to the mission, by deploying less than the requisite military capability. Cycles of violence may therefore continue and ethnic cleansing may occur in spite of the presence of security forces. The expense in money, material resources, and personnel can eventually exhaust intervening states.

There are also limitations imposed by international legitimacy. Because legitimacy implies institutional sanction, it also implies moral oversight and an avenue for redress for belligerent parties. In doing so, legitimacy necessarily imposes limits on the extent to which intervening forces can apply force to manage violence. It ensures that the application of force is not unfettered but is subordinate and integral to the larger political process of conflict resolution. The limits imposed by legitimacy exacerbate security shortfalls caused by inadequate numbers of security forces. The intervening forces are generally not able to apply the commensurate security (or population control) measures that might mitigate security force shortfalls.

Time is another severe limitation to interventions. Public will in states that provide intervention forces generally and paradoxically has low tolerance for lengthy interventions. Yet, if states cannot employ enough force to effectively secure large populations, and if they are

²¹ Michael O’Hanlon, *Saving Lives with Force: Military Criteria for Humanitarian Intervention* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997), 2.

restrained from imposing population controls that might otherwise mitigate insufficient numbers, then their operation will likely require more time to achieve the desired end state. Ethnic conflict worsens the prospects of a quick intervention by making political and social reconciliation and reintegration a process requiring years to achieve if not generations.

Finally, the dark cloud hanging over all modern interventions is the uncertainty of success. Without adequate resources, sufficient enforcement methods, or enough time the likelihood of achieving stability becomes less reliant on the intervention force and more dependent on the belligerents. This uncertainty gives the intervention the appearance of a stalemate, which decreases domestic and international support for continued intervention.

The Future of Intervention

What is salient to the discussion on intervention is whether the U.S. and the international community will choose to intervene in internal conflicts in the future. The answer is most likely that they will. Conditions continue to exist that constitute threats to U.S. interests, and international conventions regarding sovereignty and legitimacy still sufficiently favor intervention as a conflict mitigation method. Regarding humanitarian concerns, the most recent U.S. National Security Strategy declares that in some cases, such as genocide, armed intervention is a moral imperative, whether the belligerent parties consent to the intervention or not,²² and it proposes to engage with conflict intervention in order to stop a conflict and restore peace and stability.²³ Since interventions are likely, the question remains then how intervening forces can effectively conduct them to mitigate ethnic and sectarian violence. The next section will address how the U.S. Army approaches that problem.

²² National Security Strategy, 17.

²³ Ibid., 16.

Ethnic and Sectarian Conflict in U.S. Army Doctrine

United States Army field manuals do not address ethnic and sectarian conflict as a form of warfare with distinct characteristics, consequences, and mitigation implications. Instead, doctrine and TTP only recommend that planners and practitioners take ethnic, cultural, and religious considerations into account when planning and conducting operations. This treatment is understandable and not necessarily inappropriate in light of the generic nature of doctrine in general and the contemporary operating environment in particular. It just means that intervening forces confronting ethnic conflict need to develop their own considerations and conceptualization for applying mitigation measures.

Ethnic and Sectarian Conflict in Counterinsurgency

The omission of ethnic and sectarian violence from Army doctrine and TTP is notable in light of the ubiquity of that phenomenon in modern conflict. The single doctrinal reference where ethnicity and religion occur frequently other than as generic planning factors is in FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, where those characteristics are considered to figure prominently in identity-based insurgencies. Identity-based insurgency, on the surface, might appear to be analogous to ethnic and sectarian conflict, but it is not. Counterinsurgency is appropriate for identity-based insurgency up to the point that some “trigger” generates the conditions for increasing cycles of ethnic violence. The al-Askari Mosque bombing in Samarra, Iraq in February 2006 was such an event. At the point that ethnic identity becomes the basis for alignment, retribution and repression, ethnic conflict diverges from insurgency. For instance, insurgents attempt to induce the populace to accept its governance over the existing governments. In ethnic conflict the different ethnic populations have already declared for their own faction. A counterinsurgency attempts to protect the people from the insurgents. In ethnic conflict populations will protect themselves from one another. A counterinsurgency will attempt to isolate the insurgency from the

population. In ethnic conflict the populations will separate themselves. Ethnic conflict therefore requires some different concepts from those used in counterinsurgency to mitigate it.

The emergence of ethnic conflict is more than a characteristic of insurgency that a counterinsurgent must consider; it is rather a stark indication that the insurgency has escalated and that a different approach for mitigating the conflict must be pursued. As FM 3-24 repeatedly emphasizes, the goal of counterinsurgency is for the populace to consent to governmental authority and cease support to any effort that attempts to overthrow it. The populace is the key to both insurgents and counterinsurgents. Actions taken by each side have political intentions and consequences to influence the population's sentiment for or against the government. It is imperative for a counterinsurgency to protect the populace from insurgents in order to maintain the government's legitimacy. In contrast, an ethnic conflict pits ethnic populations against one another. Communal violence also has a political purpose – the removal of a rival group. Once this expulsion begins, the effects it produces are determinant and supersede any gains the counterinsurgency might have made. As the fabric of a society tears along ethnic and sectarian lines, it cannot quickly or simply re-coalesce. In addition to securing the populace one of the most basic tasks for a counterinsurgent then is to preventing an identity-based insurgency from escalating into an ethnic conflict.

The emergence of ethnic and sectarian violence is therefore extremely relevant to a counterinsurgency effort. FM 3-24 recognizes this fact with the only direct reference to ethnic and sectarian conflict found in current Army doctrine. It does so only once amid an aside that implores counterinsurgents to fight an insurgent's strategy, not the insurgent. "If they (the insurgents) are trying to provoke a *sectarian conflict*" (emphasis added), it reads, "transition to

peace enforcement operations.”²⁴ The implication here is that counterinsurgency concepts are not necessarily effective for ethnic and sectarian conflicts. What then does current peace enforcement doctrine say about ethnic and sectarian conflict and how to mitigate it?

Ethnic and Sectarian Conflict in Peace Enforcement Operations

The U.S. Army’s Field Manual 3-07, *Stability Operations and Support Operations*, adheres to U.S. Joint doctrine when it defines peace enforcement as “the application of military force, or the threat of its use, normally pursuant to international authorization, to compel compliance with resolutions or sanctions designed to maintain or restore peace and order.”²⁵ Peace enforcement differs from peacekeeping in that peace enforcement relies on coercion and force and does not require the consent of the belligerents or the host nation.²⁶ Peace enforcement operations are intended to provide safety and security so that conflict termination and resolution may occur.²⁷ They are not considered major combat operations, although one could escalate if one or more belligerent parties resist compliance.²⁸ Peace enforcement operations are not seeking to defeat or destroy belligerents, but they must be capable of doing so if need be.²⁹

It is curious that FM 3-24 defers sectarian conflict to peace enforcement measures because U.S. Army peace enforcement doctrine does not specifically address ethnic and sectarian conflict, much less a transition from counterinsurgency. The Army has avoided setting specific

²⁴ FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 2006), A-8.

²⁵ FM 3-07, *Stability Operations and Support Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, February 2003), 4-6.

²⁶ JP 3.07-3, *Peace Operations* (October 2007), III-1.
www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp3_07_03.pdf (accessed 28 November 2007).

²⁷ FM 3-07, 4-6.

²⁸ JP 3.07-3, III-1.

²⁹ FM 3-07, 4-6.

contexts for peace enforcement operations because of the uniqueness of each situation. It has instead provided generic tasks that an intervening force could tailor as needed. With the modern prevalence of ethnic and sectarian conflict, however, it would be useful to see a detailed treatment of ethnic conflict similar to what FM 3-24 provides for counterinsurgency. Several considerations for conducting peace enforcement operations within an ethnic conflict could be included that may influence the mitigation measures that intervening forces devise. First, belligerent populations in an ethnic conflict will separate. Ethnic violence will produce large numbers of dislocated civilians, as most conflicts do. Some may want to return to their homes following the conflict but may not be able to if their homes are in a rival faction's territory. Second, population movements associated with ethnic cleansing campaigns create new demographic realities. Intervening forces should treat them as temporary pending conflict resolution between the belligerents. Third, ethnicity is often subjective. Many people could legitimately belong to more than one faction. Fourth not all of the violence in ethnic conflict has a political or military purpose. Some violence will derive from vendettas and other purely criminal activity. Fifth, the factions engaged in ethnic conflict each have narratives that they believe legitimize their desires and actions. Finally, while social and political reconciliation and reintegration are worthy goals, intervening forces should have realistic expectations about possibilities of achieving them.

The U.S. Army's doctrine and TTP list an assortment of subordinate operations applicable to peace enforcement operations. Two operations in particular can provide a basis for two ways to approach separation of belligerent populations and mitigating ethnic and sectarian conflict. One subordinate operation is called forcible separation of belligerents. It entails an intervening force compelling belligerent forces to withdraw from one another, interposing between them, and establishing an area of separation between them. It may also include other

tasks such as disarming belligerent forces.³⁰ Another operation is the establishment and supervision of protected areas. Field Manual 3-07.31, *Peace Ops*, defines a protected area as “ a geographic area, inside of which the military force provides security and facilitates humanitarian aid for people at risk.”³¹ Intervening forces may establish protected areas “when any community is at risk from persistent attack.”³² Important tasks including disarming belligerents within the protected area and, if need be, defending it against attack.

The implied theme in both subordinate operations is security through separation. Separating the belligerent parties reduces continued conflict by limiting their access to one another.³³ Since conflict mitigation rather than resolution is the objective of the intervention force, separation creates conditions for the intervening force to effectively provide security for the population. Are operations to achieve population separation valid, and where have they been tried before? How might they work in the context of ethnic and sectarian conflict? That is the subject of the next section.

Separating Belligerent Populations

Separation of warring populations is a fundamental concept in this study for mitigating ethnic and sectarian conflict. Unless a mandate prescribes otherwise, the approach or method an intervening force uses to achieve separation depends primarily on the separation conditions it finds in the target country upon deployment (see fig. 1). One condition is the degree of separation that the belligerent populations have already achieved as a result of the conflict. Rival populations

³⁰ FM 3-07, 4-7.

³¹ FM 3-07.31, *Peace Ops: Multi-Service Tactics, Techniques and Procedures for Conducting Peace Operations*, (October, 2003), III-2.

³² FM 3-07; 4-9.

³³ O’Hanlon, 32.

could range from being thoroughly intermingled to being completely separated depending on how early or late in the conflict intervention forces arrive. Another condition is the geographic extent of separation. The populations may be separated regionally or just locally.

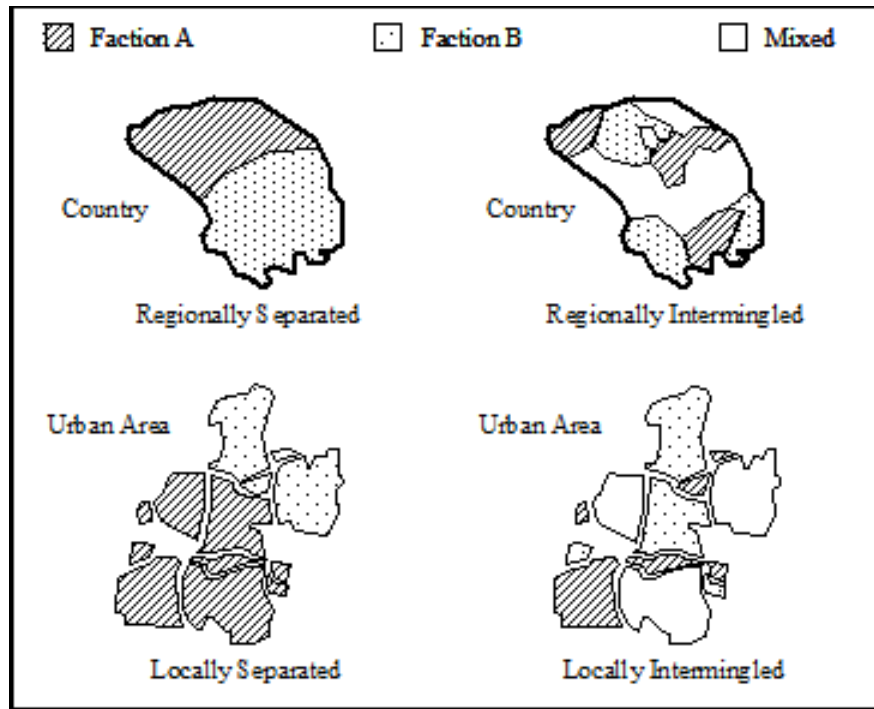


Figure 1. Population separation conditions.

The intervention force must decide how to respond to the on-going demographic redistribution resulting from ethnic conflict. It could attempt to restore the pre-conflict distribution. It could attempt to freeze the current distribution in place. It could anticipate a potential acceptable political end state premised on separation and attempt to facilitate it.

Populations that are ethnically mixed lend themselves more to an intervening force establishing protected areas. Forces may establish protected areas regionally and locally. Regional protected areas are established around urban areas that have become regional ethnic enclaves. Local protected areas are established around neighborhoods that have become ethnic

enclaves within an urban area. Protected areas create isolated ethnic enclaves. Intervention forces provide security at each protected area. The size and capability of the intervention force will determine how many protected areas it can establish.

Populations that are ethnically separated lend themselves more to an intervening force interposing and establishing a separation zone between them. Forces may establish both regional separation zones and local separation zones. Regional separation zones are appropriate when ethnic populations have separated themselves into segregated regions within a country. Local separation zones are appropriate when ethnic populations have locally separated themselves into segregated districts within a divided urban area. Separation zones create faction-controlled territory that is generally contiguous. Intervention forces provide security along the separation zone. The size of the intervention force determines the length of separation zone it can secure.

Regional Separation of Mixed Populations

One approach to separating populations is the establishment of regional protected areas, where a protected area is a geographic area, typically an urban area, in which an intervening force secures a threatened population and facilitates humanitarian assistance. Regional protected areas are more appropriate when ethnic populations live in enclaves that are intermingled throughout a region. In addition to presupposing that ethnic populations will of necessity separate amid ethnic conflict, it also presupposes that an intervening force does not have the capability to protect a population within a region but can provide security for discrete areas. Threatened people who do not reside in a protected area could then displace to one as necessary. An example where a similar concept was attempted was the UN's establishment of so-called "safe areas" during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina from April 1992 to October 1995.

The fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina among Bosnian Serbs, Muslims, and Croats generated well over two million displaced civilians.³⁴ Intending to create a contiguous and ethnically pure Serb area within Bosnia,³⁵ the Bosnian Serbs conducted a deliberate campaign of ethnic cleansing against Bosnian Muslims and Croats to secure territorial gains made by Serb forces in opening months of the conflict.³⁶ Wanting to avoid costly urban fighting where they could, Serb forces bypassed many of these enclaves and contained them. Many of the displaced civilians were able to flee the country, but most fled to ethnic enclaves in Bosnia, typically urban areas, where their faction's forces could protect them.

By August 1992, Bosnian Serbs controlled nearly 70 percent of Bosnian territory.³⁷ They had isolated large numbers of Bosnian Muslims, both combatants and non-combatants, in the bypassed enclaves. In the spring of 1993, Serbs began reducing these enclaves. Reports of atrocities were common. UN observers had moved into Bosnia from Croatia to observe and facilitate humanitarian aid to the isolated Muslims. In a visit to the isolated Muslim enclave of Srebrenica in March 1993, the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) commander in Bosnia promised the inhabitants there that the UN would protect them. Their suffering was widely reported, and the international community was under great pressure to do something. It settled on safe areas.

The concept of safe areas was not new. U.S. forces had established protective zones in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq in 1991, and UNPROFOR had established protected areas in Croatia in 1992. The idea in both cases was that military forces protected the population from

³⁴ Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 252.

³⁵ Malcolm, 246.

³⁶ Steven L. Burg and Paul S. Shoup, *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 175.

³⁷ Talentino, 170.

armed attack. The safe area concept for Bosnia surfaced early in the war out of humanitarian concerns for the Bosnian Muslims trapped in the isolated enclaves. It was not well received because of its perceived negative consequences. Political leaders believed safe areas would facilitate and legitimize further ethnic cleansing, and they did not want to commit the estimated 100,000 soldiers required to make safe areas viable. Their reluctance continued until Bosnian Serbs overran three Muslim enclaves in eastern Bosnia and expelled its residents in the spring of 1993. On the verge of the Serbs reducing a fourth enclave, the UN acted. UN Security Council Resolutions 819 and 824 established six safe areas in Bosnia for the Bosnian Muslim population. They were Sarajevo, Srebrenica, Tuzla, Zepa, Goradze, and Bihac. UN Security Council Resolution 836 authorized UNPROFOR and supporting nations to use force to defend them.

There were several serious flaws with the safe areas, however. First was the extent of the mandate. UNPROFOR was a fundamentally a peacekeeping operation, meaning it relied exclusively on the consent and cooperation of the belligerent factions to enable it to carry out its primary missions to observe, report, and facilitate humanitarian aid. The new mandate to include the establishment of safe areas did not change that. Everything the UNPROFOR did, from their very presence in the safe areas, to their activities, to their logistics and humanitarian support relied on the consent of the factions.

In keeping with the peacekeeping mission, the mandate extension charged UNPROFOR to deter attacks rather on safe areas rather than defend the safe areas. It allowed UNPROFOR to use force, including air strikes, but only in defense of the UNPROFOR units themselves, not the safe areas or its inhabitants. In short, the safe areas were not really safe.

Another flaw was that the UNPROFOR units in the safe areas were not even capable of defending themselves. With few exceptions, they did not possess the heavy weapons and equipment to conduct combat operations. Their strength did not meet or exceed that of the Serb or Bosnian forces in their areas, and so they had no inherent deterrence effectiveness. As a result,

they were subject to intimidation and depredation. Both Serb and Bosnian forces often took and held UNPROFOR personnel hostage as leverage. The access to close air support was not much help, either. The process for requesting and receiving CAS was so difficult and time consuming that by the time it was approved the opportunity for its effectiveness was gone.

A third problem was that the mandate did not require safe areas to be completely demilitarized. It called for UNPROFOR to promote the withdrawal of Bosnian Serb forces from them, but Bosnian Muslim forces could remain. Bosnian Muslim forces then used the safe areas as bases from which to attack and raid Serb forces and civilians. This undermined the peacekeeping principle of impartiality. It made it appear as if UNPROFOR were supporting the Bosnian Muslim side over the Bosnian Serbs.

Overall, the safe area concept was unsuccessful in Bosnia. The flaws though, and the subject of most of the subsequent criticism, were in its implementation, not in its future utility. As such, the U.S. Army still maintains establishing and supervising protected areas as a peace operation task. Provided the intervening force is not saddled with the same limitations that UNPROFOR had in Bosnia, protected areas remain relevant and could be useful as a concept for separating belligerent populations as an approach to mitigating ethnic and sectarian conflict. In contrast to the UN safe area concept, the U.S. version of establishing a protected area is a peace enforcement operation and not a peacekeeping operation. This is critical because it implies the intervening force can take appropriate measures to defend, secure, and sustain the inhabitants. The task stresses the necessity of demilitarizing the protected area and not allowing it to be used as a base from which one faction can conduct operations against another. It also emphasizes the necessity of proper force size and composition for conducting the mission.

Local Separation of Mixed Populations

A second approach to separating populations is the establishment of local protected areas where a local protected area is a geographic area, typically a neighborhood within an urban area, in which an intervening force secures a threatened population and facilitates humanitarian assistance. Local protected areas are more appropriate when ethnic populations reside in ethnic communities intermingled throughout an urban area. This approach presupposes that ethnic communities will seek to expel minority families and will receive families of the same ethnicity that have been expelled from their homes. The closest recent example of local protected areas are the so-called “gated communities” established by Multinational Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) in Baghdad in the spring of 2007.

At the beginning of the 2003 war in Iraq, Baghdad was a mixed city of some 5 million people. Sunni Arabs held political power but only accounted for 30 percent of the city’s population.³⁸ Shiite and Sunni populations were integrated across much of Baghdad, though there were several segregated neighborhoods from both groups also interspersed throughout the city. Tensions between Sunni and Shiite populations were strained from historical Sunni repression of the Shiite majority.³⁹ Following the collapse of the Baathist regime, tensions rose as the Shiites achieved political power at the expense of the Sunnis. Sunnis were so dissatisfied that they boycotted the 2005 national elections.

The al-Askari Mosque bombing in Samarra in February 2006 served as a trigger to ignite sectarian conflict in Iraq. Until then, most sectarian violence had been Sunni on Shiite. After the

³⁸ Patrick Cockburn, “Battle of Baghdad ‘has already started,’” *The Independent*, March 25, 2006, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/battle-for-baghdad-has-already-started-471347.htm> (accessed December 14, 2007).

³⁹ Shafeeq N. Ghabra, “Iraq’s Culture of Violence,” *The Middle East Quarterly*, vol. VIII: no. 3, (Summer 2001). <http://www.meforum.org/article/101> (accessed December 14, 2007).

Samarra incident, Shiites also began targeting Sunnis, especially in Baghdad. Sectarian killings, in forms ranging from execution-style murders to car bombs, rose dramatically in Baghdad, and Iraqi security forces were often either willing participants or unwilling to stop it. Ethnic and sectarian killings peaked at nearly 2200 in December 2006.⁴⁰

In response, MNC-I conducted a series of operations as part of the Baghdad Security Plan to reduce the sectarian violence. In April 2006 U.S. soldiers in Baghdad constructed security fences around several Sunni communities, including the neighborhoods of Adhamiyah and Ghazaliya. U.S. and Iraqi Army officials insisted the barriers were temporary in nature. The fence around Adhamiyah consisted of concrete barriers, was nearly 3 miles long, 12 feet high, and took a month of nights to complete. Iraqi soldiers guarded the handful of openings in the wall using fingerprint scanning equipment to control access. Their purpose was to prevent Shiite militias from conducting operations against the Sunnis and to prevent the Sunnis from using the neighborhood as a staging base for attacks on surrounding Shiites.⁴¹ The Ghazaliya fence was similarly constructed and was 2.5 miles long. It had two checkpoints, manned by Iraqis, and it was also intended to stop reciprocal Shiite and Sunni violence.⁴²

The barriers faced opposition from local residents and Iraqi politicians of both sects. The Sunnis being enclosed complained that they were being collectively punished and that they were being cut off from goods and services. Iraqi politicians warned that the fences would incite more

⁴⁰ Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Patterns of Violence and Casualties in Iraq 2007: The Need for Strategic Patience* (Washington, DC: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 8, 2008), http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_pubs/task,view/id,4266/type,1/ (accessed January 21, 2008).

⁴¹ Sgt Mike Pryor, "Paratroopers Help Create 'Gated Community' in Adhamiyah," *Crossed Sabers*, April 30, 2007.

⁴² Charles, Crain, "Behind the Baghdad Wall," *Time*, May 9, 2007, <http://www.time.com/world/article/0,8599,1618898,00.html> (Accessed December 15, 2007).

sectarian violence and demanded they be removed.⁴³ In fact, the barriers were successful at reducing incidents of violence. In Ghazaliya, sectarian violence dropped 50-percent in the weeks following the barrier's construction,⁴⁴ and sectarian violence was down in Baghdad overall from 2006 to 2007.⁴⁵ It is still too soon to assess the full effects of the security fences, but initial reports indicate they were reasonably effective.

Regional Separation of Segregated Populations

A third concept for separating populations is the establishment of regional zones of separation. This concept is most appropriate for separating ethnic populations that have generally achieved regional separation, where each side is demographically dominant in their respective region, and where each region is a contiguous whole. The idea is for the intervening force to interpose between the belligerent populations and establish a zone of separation that, at least temporarily, limits contact between the groups. Segregated groups make it more feasible for the intervening force to establish an effective zone of separation. Limiting contact then reduces instances of ethnic violence and mitigates the conflict. Again the Bosnian War provides a relevant example, this time of an intervention force separating belligerent forces and establishing a zone of separation between them.

Major combat ended in the Bosnian war with the three factions, the Bosnian Muslims, the Bosnian Croats, and the Bosnian Serbs, accepting a cease-fire in October 1995 and arrayed along the winding, one-thousand mile long cease-fire line that divided Bosnia roughly in half.⁴⁶ The

⁴³ BBC, "Iraqi PM Criticises Baghdad Wall," *BBC News*, April 22, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/6582225.stm (Accessed December 15, 2007).

⁴⁴ Charles, Crain, "Behind the Baghdad Wall."

⁴⁵ Anthony H. Cordesman, *The Patterns of Violence and Casualties in Iraq 2007: The Need for Strategic Patience*.

⁴⁶ Burg and Shoup, 360.

Serbs occupied the territory north of the line, while the Bosnian Croats and Muslims controlled the areas south of it. Subsequent negotiations sponsored by the United States produced a General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) that included detailed provisions for the withdrawal, separation, and disarmament processes that the factions would submit to. The GFAP also stipulated that a NATO-led Implementation Force (IFOR) would supervise the military aspects of the agreement. The purpose of IFOR was to bring an enduring end to the fighting and establish conditions for eventual reconciliation.⁴⁷ Its specific responsibilities were to monitor and ensure compliance by all factions regarding withdrawal and separation of forces, to supervise the marking of separation control measures between the factions, provide support to withdrawing UNPROFOR forces, ensure freedom of movement for humanitarian assistance efforts and dislocated civilians, monitor minefield and obstacle clearance, and create secure conditions for the nonmilitary aspects of the GFAP to occur.⁴⁸

The GFAP offered specific directions regarding the procedures for separating forces. Forces were to conduct separation in two phases. Phase I allowed the Bosnian Serbs, Muslims, and Croats 30 days to withdraw factional forces to positions at least two kilometers back from the Agreed Cease-Fire Line. This would establish a four-kilometer wide Agreed Cease Fire Zone of Separation between the Muslim-Croat forces and the Serb forces. Within the city of Sarajevo the separation zone would only be two kilometers wide. As the forces withdrew, they were responsible for removing all weapons and munitions, including mines, and obstacles and earthworks. Those mines that could not be removed were to be marked. Phase II directed the

⁴⁷ NATO. *The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Annex 1A: Agreement on the Military Aspects of Peace Settlement* (Paris, 1995), <http://www.nato.int/ifor/gfa/gfa-an1a.htm> (accessed November 28, 2007).

⁴⁸ NATO. *The General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Appendix B to Annex 1A: Agreement on the Military Aspects of Peace Settlement* (Paris, 1995), <http://www.nato.int/ifor/gfa/gfa-ap1a.htm> (accessed November 28, 2007).

factional forces to adhere to a second and final line, the Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL). The IEBL was the final demarcation between the two Bosnian federal areas that comprised the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina: the Serb Republic of Srpska to the north, and the Muslim-Croat Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina to the south. In most areas the Agreed Cease-Fire Line and the IEBL were the same. In some areas there were differences. Phase II allotted 45 days from IFOR mission assumption for factional forces to withdraw at least two kilometers back from the IEBL. This would establish the final four-kilometer wide Inter-Entity Zone of Separation. In those areas that factional forces withdrew from, IFOR elements would occupy for a period up to 90 days from IFOR mission assumption. Once IFOR withdrew, the gaining faction could finally occupy those parcels. Just as in Phase I, withdrawing forces had to demilitarize the separation zone by removing all weapons, munitions, obstacles, and earthworks.⁴⁹

The United Nations Security Council authorized IFOR on 15 December 1995 to carry out the military provisions specified in the GFAP. Unlike UNPROFOR before it, IFOR was not a peacekeeping force. Instead, it was a peace enforcement force mandated under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to use force, if required, to compel faction compliance with the GFAP articles.⁵⁰

IFOR assumed mission authority on 20 December 1995. It consisted of nearly 60,000 soldiers from many contributing countries, many more than the 38,000 of UNPROFOR.⁵¹ The IFOR headquarters located in Sarajevo and had three subordinate commands. The British-led Multinational Division Southwest operated in the western third of the country, the U.S.-led Multinational Division North operated in the northern third of the country, and the French-led

⁴⁹ GFAP, Annex 1A.

⁵⁰ Donald C. F. Daniel, Bradd C. Hayes, and Chantal de Jonge Oudraat, *Coercive Inducement and the Containment of International Crises* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999), 75.

⁵¹ Robert F. Baumann, George W. Gawrych, and Walter E. Kretchik, *Armed Peacekeepers in Bosnia* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), 120.

Multinational Division Southeast operated in the eastern third. All three sectors included significant portions of the two federal areas. Accordingly, each sector included a sizable length of the Agreed Cease-Fire Line that separated the opposing factions.

Though, IFOR conducted its separation mission in accordance with the GFAP phases, timelines, and requirements, there were additional critical tasks for IFOR associated with achieving and maintaining separation. For example, IFOR initially had to ensure routes were cleared through the separation zone in order to establish freedom of movement for IFOR elements, humanitarian assistance, and civilian traffic. IFOR required factional forces to perform the route clearances, but when factions had clear shortfalls IFOR provided special equipment, instruction, and guidance to overcome faction deficits in materiel and training. IFOR also had to operate checkpoints along the zone of separation, both to regulate movement and ensure freedom of movement. Complimenting those checkpoints, IFOR conducted daily patrols, both ground and air, through the entire separation zone to ensure factions were not infiltrating back in and reoccupying positions. IFOR also came to rely extensively on Joint Military Commissions. These were IFOR-sponsored and supervised meetings between IFOR and faction military representatives held regularly to disseminate information and instructions, coordinate actions, and resolve disputes. As needed, IFOR used the Joint Military Commissions to report violations of the agreement and to warn factions of the consequences of continued noncompliance. With few exceptions, factions met their compliance conditions within the GFAP time constraints. As a result, by 3 February 1996 the forces were effectively separated.

On the whole, IFOR's separation of factional forces in Bosnia was successful. Combined with the nonmilitary aspects of the GFAP, the measure removed the immediate possibility of

renewed armed conflict.⁵² Though its success relied on the cooperation of the different factions, the credible threat of military force to compel compliance was in large measure responsible for the factions' positive behavior.

Local Separation of Segregated Populations

A fourth possibility for mitigating ethnic conflict is to locally separate adversary populations, as within a city. This concept is most appropriate for populations that have achieved local separation in a city that is already only divided into a very small number of large ethnic and sectarian enclaves. The ideal end state would be one contiguous enclave for each faction with some kind of separation zone or barrier between them. French forces were able to achieve such a result as part of NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) intervention in Kosovo beginning in 1999. There the French established the Ibar River as a line of separation between Serbs and Kosovar Albanians in Mitrovica.

NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR) entered Kosovo on 12 June 1999 following an eleven-week air campaign that induced Serbian military forces to redeploy to Serbia. Over one million displaced civilians,⁵³ mostly Kosovar Albanian victims of the Serbian ethnic cleansing campaign, followed within days en route to their homes located throughout Kosovo. Many returned to a city in north-central Kosovo called Mitrovica.

Prior to the war in Kosovo, Mitrovica had been a multi-ethnic city of some 60,000 people. The Ibar River bisected the city, dividing it into northern and southern halves. The northern part of the city was predominantly Serb, although Kosovar Albanians also lived and

⁵² Burg and Shoup, 378.

⁵³ William G. O'Neill, *Kosovo: An Unfinished Peace* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publications, 2002), 15.

worked there. The southern part of the city was historically Kosovar Albanian, yet Serbs lived and worked there as well.

Mitrovica lay in the French-led sector of KFOR, called Multinational Brigade North. When the French unit entered Mitrovica, it established a checkpoint on the central bridge that separated the two halves of the city. Using the river as a separation barrier, it then proceeded to deny access north of the river to Kosovar Albanians attempting to return to their homes. Likewise, the French also denied access south of the river to Serbs returning to their homes after having fled with the Serbian military forces. Kosovo Albanians who could not return to their homes on the north side of the river occupied former Serb homes on the south side. Serbs who could not return to their homes on the south side of the river occupied former Kosovo Albanian homes on the north side. In effect, the French unit used the river to separate adversary populations and create a divided city.⁵⁴

The reasons for the French action remain undetermined. One account charges acting UN Senior Representative to the Secretary-General Sergio Vieira de Mello with responsibility for the decision.⁵⁵ However it came about, it was not a popular decision at the time. The bridge became the site of several large civil disturbances in the ensuing years. Individuals and organized groups from both factions have maintained surveillance on the bridge and have resisted any attempts for anyone from the rival group from entering their enclaves. The Serbs have also denied Kosovar Albanians access to both a hospital and a university north of the river.⁵⁶

It has not been a popular decision in the years since, either. More recent commentators harshly criticize the decision, asserting that segregating the populations has reinforced ethnic

⁵⁴ Ibid., 45.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 45.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 45.

tensions rather than dissipate them. It has done nothing to facilitate long-term reconciliation and reintegration, but it has only sown the seeds of future strife. They point out that the separation has undermined Kosovar Albanian community's relationship with the French.⁵⁷

Yet despite the criticism, what is unsaid is equally telling. The disturbances centered on the bridge and checkpoint, and a rocket attack from the Kosovar Albanian side against Serb dwellings on the north side, have received much attention. But these incidents have largely been the only ones that have produced casualties, and those that occurred near the bridge occurred where the French force could manage it. Unmentioned is what might have otherwise occurred had the French forces not established a separation. There was widespread retaliation and violence perpetrated on Serbs and other minorities by the Kosovo Liberation Army and other returning Kosovar Albanians. Many Serbs, other minorities, and even moderate Kosovar Albanians living south of Mitrovica have been expelled from their homes or worse in ensuing years. How much more severe then might the violence and retribution have been in Mitrovica had the French not established their checkpoint? The answer is of course unknowable, but it is reasonably probable that what occurred throughout the rest of Kosovo would also have occurred in Mitrovica.

Further, from the French perspective, how much more effective were their security measures than the alternative? Given the size of their force, the size of the area they were responsible for, and their very restrictive limitations against forcibly intervening to stop incidents of ethnic violence, how could they have provided any reasonable level of security if they had opened Mitrovica and then attempted to secure the entire city? They would likely have been much less effective, leaving potentially mixed populations open to more violence and at greater risk to the intervening forces.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 45.

It is therefore possible to advance that the French force's actions were reasonably effective at preventing substantial ethnic violence, and that it performed its mission with the least risk to itself. It is also key to note that the governing UN administration, the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), has not overruled the separation. On the contrary, their silence underscores the reality that while governing bodies may publicly disfavor harsh control measures, their acquiescence to them is ultimate proof of separation's merit and effectiveness.

Regarding local separation as a concept for mitigating ethnic conflict, the French effort in Mitrovica demonstrates its feasibility. With their limited forces, the assistance of a natural barrier, and their arrival ahead of returning displaced civilians, the French were able to effectively separate adversary populations into two nearly homogenous enclaves. That the separation has precluded the widespread and sustained ethnic expulsions and violence that have plagued the rest of Kosovo attests to its effectiveness and adequacy at mitigating ethnic conflict.

The Acceptability of Separation

It is one thing to show that an approach to separating populations is an adequate and feasible operation for a military force because a similar operation has demonstrated effectiveness in the past. It is another to assess the acceptability, to balance cost and risk with advantage and benefit gained, of any concept for separating populations in the future. Yet acceptability is a dominant factor governing employment for Western military forces in modern conflict.

Separation as a general concept provokes many concerns regarding acceptability. Professional and scholarly sentiment toward any form of separation is decidedly negative, but for several different reasons. Those who dwell on the costs of separation generally object to separation on ethical grounds, while those who focus on the risks of separation object for more practical reasons. In general however, the most common position is that separation creates long-term negative consequences that outweigh any short-term benefits.

One argument is that separation is not an acceptable approach because it legitimizes actions such as armed aggression and ethnic cleansing and promotes its continued use. It creates realities on the ground that are costly to revoke. This was a prominent criticism of the way the West intervened in the Bosnian War. In allowing the Serbs to retain 49-percent of the territory of Bosnia as the Republic of Srpska, where Serbs had only accounted for 30-percent of the pre-war population of Bosnia Herzegovina, amounted to rewarding the Serbs for their part in the war. The concern is that other countries will play the Serb strategy of land grabbing and then consolidating and retaining the gains when the international community imposes a cease-fire.

Another common argument against separation is that separating populations does nothing to resolve the underlying reasons for the conflict so that the conflict never gets resolved. Separation only perpetuates and creates more grievances that only serve to sow the seeds for future conflict. It associates the responsibility for conflict with an entire population, most or many of who are peaceful, instead of on the relatively few who advocate or commit violence. Separation also precludes the redeeming processes of reconciliation and social reintegration.

Similarly, some criticize separation because it creates more economic and social problems. Lack of trade and economic opportunity in isolated ethnic enclaves results in chronic unemployment, which leads to further unrest and organized criminal activity. Populations of isolated homogenous ethnic enclaves are also more susceptible to demagogic leaders who exploit the negative effects of segregation to gain and retain political power.

All of these criticisms are valid and well supported from historical experience. What weakens their positions, however, are the realities and contradictions associated with ending conflict and continued coexistence. None offer a way to effectively mitigate the on-going conflict. Their alternatives are equally untenable. For instance, none advocate allowing the sides to fight their conflict to conclusion, either to a decision or to exhaustion. Negotiation is their preferred method of conflict management. In the meantime, however, the conflict continues.

Increased pressure to negotiate increases the impetus to for competing factions to gain positions of advantage, so intensity of conflict increases or the conflict expands.

Also, few countries are willing or capable of providing an intervention force in sufficient numbers to impose security on a population in conflict. To make up for insufficient numbers of soldiers, intervention forces rely on local security forces to make up the difference. But if the local security forces are ineffective or counter-productive, the intervention forces cannot impose security and the conflict continues in spite of their presence. Something else, such as separation, must stand in to enable intervention forces to stop the fighting.

Additionally, the continuation of conflict that accompanies forced coexistence does nothing for the prospects of reconciliation and reintegration. Continued cycles of ethnic and sectarian violence only serve to harden animosities among a population, not soften them. The time and distance that separation affords offer the only realistic opportunities for future accommodation.

Conclusion

Ethnic and sectarian conflict is a prevalent form of conflict today. Most of the conflicts on-going today and in occurring the past twenty years have been internal wars between rival groups with ethnic or sectarian identities. Though its causes vary, the brutal nature of its conduct and its far-reaching consequences make it a threat that the international community cannot ignore.

As result, the international community has debated the extent to which it should intervene, if ever, in such conflicts. By its actions, the international community has demonstrated its willingness to intervene, often with military force, to mitigate ethnic conflicts. The past twenty years has seen a series of military interventions that have varied in purpose from humanitarian assistance to nation building. Although many of the military interventions have been only

marginally effective at best, there is every reason to believe that the international community will continue to intervene to mitigate future conflicts.

United States' military doctrine and TTP does not specifically address ethnic and sectarian conflict like it has recently done with insurgencies. Its peace operations and subordinate peace enforcement operations doctrine and TTP form the basis for thinking about how to approach military interventions amid ethnic and sectarian conflict. Two relevant peace enforcement operations to consider are separating belligerents and establishing protected areas.

Those two peace enforcement tasks are based on an underlying assumption of separation of populations in ethnic conflict. Amid such conflict, the rival populations separate as people flee or are forcibly expelled from their homes. Intervention occurring in such conditions can apply variations of the two peace enforcement operations to maintain the separation of the rival populations and thereby lessen the conflict. The approach an intervention force pursues is largely dependent on the degree and geographic extent of separation that it encounters. Situations where populations that have separated completely, either regionally or locally, lend themselves to a separation zone being established between the sides. The Bosnian War is an example of a regional separation using a separation zone, while the city of Mitrovica in Kosovo is an example of a divided city. Situations where rival populations are intermingled, either regionally or locally, lend themselves to the establishment of protected areas for the ethnic enclaves. The UN safe areas of the Bosnian War are regional examples of protected areas, while the Baghdad "gated communities" established by MNC-I are local examples. The examples demonstrate that such operations are both feasible and at least potentially adequate for military intervention forces to accomplish.

Though military forces can effectively separate rival populations to mitigate ethnic conflict, there is much debate whether it is acceptable to do so. Opponents of separation point out its long-term negative consequences and believe those outweigh any short-term benefits to

reducing violence. An advocate for separation regards the immediate cessation of conflict as the only means by which the long-term desired effects can be achieved. Ultimately, the increasing trend of many countries resorting to separation measures in order to mitigate conflict demonstrates separation's utility.

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