

Ethnicity and Y2K "Bugs" in the Sphere of Conflict Management: Challenges and Opportunities

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Volume 19, numéro 2, fall 1999

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs19_02re01

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Éditeur(s)

The University of New Brunswick

ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)

1715-5673 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce document

Chasdi, R. J. (1999). Ethnicity and Y2K "Bugs" in the Sphere of Conflict Management: Challenges and Opportunities. *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 19(2), 168-177.

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Sisk, Timothy. *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1996.

Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1997.

Kolodziej, Edward, and Roger Kanet, eds. *Coping With Conflict After the Cold War*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

Whether the reflective observer of contemporary international politics scrutinizes events happening in parts of the Balkans, Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East or Asia, one underlying theme is how to address the challenges and opportunities that revolve around the central idea that conflict has, in large part, been reconfigured in the wake of the Cold War. While the looming catastrophe of war between nation-states remains, the emergent reality is a world replete with sub-national actors that, all too frequently, engage other subnational actors and nation-states in zero sum competition over finite political, economic and territorial resources.

Faced with a post-Cold War international system complete with looming political demands and aspirations that grow apace from an array of players ranging from nation-states to subnational and intergovernmental actors, there is an underlying need to wed the study of international politics with comparative politics and peace and conflict studies that focus increased devotion to the sources and origins of non-traditional conflict. Each of the three monographs under consideration here reflects a generally recognizable understanding of that basic premise and contributes, albeit from different vantages, to a growing storehouse of responses to meet head-on the challenges and opportunities of the post-Cold War international and intranational political landscape.

In Timothy Sisk's work, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts*, the author focuses special attention to the role that ethnicity plays in violent conflict and by extrapolation non-violent ones, in a world where, as John Lederach reports, most conflict appears to be "intra-state" in nature. (Lederach, pp. 7-8) At the start of the book, Sisk skillfully traces an arc from summary findings about "consociational" and "integrative" perspectives on power sharing (to be defined below) to two fundamental ways of thinking about ethnicity. On the one hand, the author, drawing on the works of Milton Esman and others, suggests that "primordialists" tend to view ethnicity as a relatively inert phenomenon comprised, among other things, of linguistic, religious and historical ties that are inextricably bound up with shared visions of the future and a common mythology. (Sisk, pp. 12-14)

On the other hand, "instrumentalists" view ethnicity as a more "fluid" compound, ripe for manipulation by the ruling elite who seek to generate and sustain political power through a process that Sisk describes as the "outbidding" of political moderates that all too

frequently offsets any political gains made for particular ethnic groups. What seems significant here is that Sisk's work reflects the rather subtle point -- commonplace to note in literature on decision-making theory -- that where you stand, in this case on the efficacy of "integrative" or "consociational" models of power sharing, in large part really presupposes and derives from where you sit with respect to the "school of thought" a person feels most comfortable with, in this case either the "school" of "primordialism" or "instrumentalism." (Sisk, pp. 12-14, 17; Patchen 1988; Blainey 1988)

An underlying theme of Sisk's work is his desire to avoid, through the crafting of political frameworks, a cookie-cutter like strategy of conflict management. Sisk provides a solid and wide-ranging discussion about "consociational" and "integrative" power sharing and which of those approaches may prove most robust in different political contexts differentiated in part by the depth of social cleavages in the "deeply divided societies" under consideration here. He suggests that "consociational power sharing" can be conceived of as an overarching framework in which *groups* are the analytical construct between which a set of political power interconnections reverberate. We are told, ". . . groups are represented as groups (usually through ethnically exclusive political parties), in essence as building blocks of a common society." (Sisk, p. 5) Sisk goes on to elaborate that consociational approaches to crafting political systems include "proportional representation and consensus rules in executive, legislative and administrative decision making." (Sisk, p. 71) In turn, "integrative power sharing" approaches, by contrast, pursue the goal of eliciting some degree of "cross-cutting" or "criss-crossing" cleavages that allow members of groups to generate and sustain affinities that move over and beyond ethnic group politics, thereby in effect promoting political stability. Hence, Sisk tells us "the integrative (or pluralist) approach . . . seeks[s] to foster political organizations that transcend ethnic group differences." (Sisk, p. 7)

At the heart of Sisk's work is a "typology of conflict regulating practices" that provides "a menu" or way of thinking about "integrative" and "consociational" points of view that presupposes and derives from qualitative analysis of three types of factors: "territorial divisions," "decision roles," and "defining relations between the state and ethnic groups." (Sisk, p. 48) For Sisk, the sphere of "territorial divisions" revolves around generally recognizable mixes of federalism and consociationalism, namely what he describes as "non-communal federalism" (e.g., the United States), "mixed federalism" (e.g., Canada, Yugoslavia under Tito, and India), and "polycommunal federations" (e.g., Burma and Czechoslovakia). At a functional level, Sisk suggests the foregoing variants introduce political flexibility into the system of political framework choices available for particular political contexts under consideration, thereby in effect promoting stability with democracy in mind. (Sisk, pp. 50, 71, 47, 69, 62-63) In turn, Sisk's description and delineation of "decision rules" and "state-ethnic relations" builds on the foregoing discussion to consider what types of "electoral systems" and public policy formulations lend themselves best to the arduous task of constraining and suppressing ethnic conflict. (Sisk, p. 168)

While Sisk's book is workman-like in its review of some very important and widely recognized works in the realm of comparative politics and provides some valuable insight

into ways of thinking about constraining ethnic conflict, the book does not seem to probe far enough or seem especially fresh. From the start, Sisk needs to discuss the fundamental question of what generates and sustains nationalism. Clearly, Ted Robert Gurr and Barbara Harff's work that delineates seven sources of group identity would fill what is, in my judgment, a glaring omission in the work. (Gurr and Harff, pp. 82-95) In addition, Sisk's work would also benefit from a discussion about the role modernization and differing rates of modernization between ethnic groups play in protracted communal conflict. Plainly, Samuel Huntington's discussion about "economic development and instability" and modernization and effective political institutionalization would fill what is, in my judgment, an important omission. (Huntington, pp. 43, 49-50, 8, 348). Unequivocally, even a first pass at discussion about typology operationalization, replete with empirical examples, would be a tantalizing suggestion as to the direction this work, or a new edition of this book, might follow. To be sure, the reader almost cries out for more than what Sisk describes as "a menu" of some very tantalizing challenges and opportunities associated with confronting ethnic conflict.

In a similar vein, since Sisk seems to allude in consistent ways to some type of "constitutional engineering" as an elixir of sorts, it seems incumbent for him to talk about some important case study "failures" in more depth, such as Nigeria's Second Republic which steered the course in terms of constitutional reform, moving from a parliamentary to a presidential system, but failed nonetheless. As Larry Diamond suggests, this was because of economic ills that plagued the country and the corruption that could trace an arc to the absence of a thriving and effective private sector. (Diamond, p. 371) In other words, in many cases, "constitutional engineering" may be a necessary but insufficient condition to ameliorate political instability and social unrest. In the broader sense, what is equally troublesome is what Rolf Theen and Frank Wilson suggest, namely that there is a mixed record of success for "constitutional engineering." It is commonplace to note that, apart from France's time honored Fifth Republic, the two outstanding examples of effective and sustained successes at "constitutional engineering" during the twentieth century presuppose and derive from outside and violent interventions: the devastating and unconditional defeat of Nazi Germany and Tojo's military regime in Japan at the end of the Second World War. (Theen and Wilson, pp. 376-77, 367, 116-17, 109, 111, 43, 55). To be sure, Sisk's work would benefit in profound and lasting ways from some discussion about the foregoing.

Somewhat paradoxically, Sisk saves most of his discussion about the interconnections between intra-state conflict and other actors (i.e., national, sub-national, intergovernmental or supranational), all within a continuously evolving post-Cold War international political system, for a rather sparse final chapter of the book. This approach fails to capture the importance of ethnic conflict associated with the structural political and economic change in the international political system that happened between 1989-91, and discussion about the emergent reality of a multipolar international political system ought to start much earlier in the work.

One way of thinking about that issue is to place the profound and lasting role ethnicity plays in a theoretical seedbed, as Milton Esman does. Esman suggests that both

prevailing ideologies during the Cold War, namely classical liberalism and Marxist-Leninism, never took into account fully the profound and lasting importance of ethnicity. In the case of the former, so called "ascriptive loyalties" were to "wither away" with the emergent reality of a transnational proletariat and, in the words of Esman, "the inevitable triumph of socialism. . . ." In the case of the latter, Esman suggests those "ascriptive loyalties" were to fall away and be replaced by affinity to socioeconomic fissures in society. (Esman, pp. 11-12) In both cases, "transformation" was makeshift and incomplete at best and a non-starter for many who scrutinized patterns of behavior in political-social systems.

Likewise, Sisk does precious little in the way of delving into structural correlates of intra-state warfare. For example, the book would have benefitted from discussion about Harvey Starr and Benjamin Most's "contagion effect," especially within the context of what Sisk describes as "mixed federalism." What seems significant here, for example, is the prospect of "contagion effect" (e.g., "cross fertilization") between those with political demands and aspirations for Quebec and the cacophony of "native people" voices that issue a clarion call for greater autonomy from provincial and federal government in Canada. (Esman, pp. 147-75) To be sure, the looming catastrophe of Starr and Most's "contagion effect" remains in the Balkans, the Soviet Union, and parts of Africa as well (Starr and Most, 1983, 1976).

Seen from a different angle, the challenges and opportunities associated with the contemporary international system are addressed from a peace studies vantage in John Paul Lederach's *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Perhaps the single most pervasive theme of this work is the fundamental question of how to craft international conflict management institutions with a special focus on middle level actors that, Lederach tells us, have a profound and lasting set of interconnections to both the ruling elite and to the populace at the "grassroots" level.

Lederach's work is skillfully broken down into parts that provide a discourse about the contemporary post-Cold War world and sections that devote increased attention to the processes and structures of peace building. The cornerstones of his way of thinking about building "the house of peace" revolve around the central ideas that peace building is a proactive rather than reactive undertaking, that different "time frames" in the political fray require a set of tailor-made responses, and that different teams of specialists, specifically trained for peace building at different stages, will serve as gatekeepers of a web of successful policies that constrain ethnic conflict. Equally important is the emphasis Lederach places on generating and sustaining solid infrastructure that allows resources to be distributed in effective and sustained ways that are seen as equitable by the different ethnic groups under consideration. (Lederach, pp. 87-97)

Clearly, one of the most important contributions that Lederach makes is the ineluctable supposition, nay conclusion, that policy makers need to think about what he calls "non-statist" approaches to conflict in the contemporary world. (Lederach, p. 16) At the start, drawing on Wallensteen and Axel's delineation of conflict and war, Lederach tells us that in the contemporary world, "most current wars are intra-state affairs." (Lederach, pp. 8,

4) Accordingly, approaches that move over and beyond the ruling elite to target sub-national chieftains at various points of time and presumably their constituent supporters, such as middle range non-government actors (e.g., clergy) and grassroots leaders, is a requisite for long haul success. What seems significant here and what is clearly the strongest part of the book is the reiteration of those themes and the presentation of those concepts in ways that showcase multi-faceted approaches to interventions at the "local level."

Regrettably, as is commonplace to note in much of the peace and conflict literature, Lederach weakens his own substantial contributions by failing to recognize inherent limitations intrinsic to the peace studies approach. Nowhere is the problem more acute, for example, than in his discussion about the international arms trade. Lederach tells us, "perhaps some form of tax could be levied on those who produce and sell weapons; the funds they raise could be used to defray the social and material costs of dealing with the use of weapons." (Lederach, p. 89) That rather freewheeling discussion fails to capture the dynamics associated with a Westphalian world replete with self-help measures, where the chances of crafting institutions, be they jurisprudential (e.g., an international criminal court) or economic in nature, that have the potential to undercut a state's national interest either now or in the future are practically nil. Closer to the mark, in my judgment, are appraisals of how peace studies can provide insight into how to move further away from state-centric appraisals of conflict and response, to isolate and identify factors at the "local level," as Lederach puts it, to evoke some very tantalizing intra-state policies with an enormous capacity to make real change in perception and interaction among groups in conflict.

Undoubtedly, the single most comprehensive effort to provide a framework for thinking about conflict management in the wake of the Cold War is offered in Edward Kolodziej and Roger Kanet's anthology, *Coping With Conflict After the Cold War*. This compilation of work is divided into sections that involve: a chronicle of the foreign policy national interests of key players in today's world; efforts to isolate and identify non-state actors inclusive of intergovernmental or supranational organizations and sub-national actors and the potential they have to contribute to conflict management or disrupt it; and structural and cognitive responses to offset conflict that presupposes and derives from nations or groups of nations shackled with protracted conflict.

One very effective approach that Kolodziej and Kanet use is to include material in their compilation that does not necessarily square with their neo-realist thinking about the utility of systems-like approaches to deal with conflict in the international political system. To be sure, what distinguishes neo-realism from realism, from the vantage of neo-realists, is the notion, commonplace to note in the literature, that neo-realists view what Joseph Nye refers to as a nation's "security dilemma" as a function of the decentralized nature of the international political system, thereby in effect making continuously evolving efforts to prepare for war a "tragic" necessity. (Nye 1993; Waltz, 1959; Waltz 1986, pp. 98-99, 110-12; Ashley 1986, pp. 275, 295-96; Holsti 1985). By extrapolation, if the international political landscape is fraught with peril because of systemic problems and not, as the realists would have us believe, because of

shortcomings of humankind, then a systems approach such as the use of political and economic institutions like the UN, OCSC, ECOWAS, EU, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, can be used to at least partially offset the effects of a decentralized system.

Perhaps the single most pervasive theme that permeates Kolodziej and Kanet's work is how to use existing structures and processes of the "nation-state," "global markets," and "democratization" to generate and sustain "order" "welfare" and "legitimacy," otherwise known as "OWL objectives." (Kolodziej and Kanet, pp. viii, 3, 365) In contrast to both Sisk and Lederach's primary emphasis, Kolodziej and Kanet suggest that time honored and long standing conflict is, in their words, ". . . not susceptible to local solution," thereby in effect having enormous capacity to destabilize the international political system. (Kolodziej and Kanet, p. 14) With that in mind, the authors draw on Karl Deutsch's work on crafting a "security community" to create a "Deutschian paradigm" scale that is delineated by several "rungs" of conflict. (Kolodziej and Kanet, pp. 22, 25)

At one end of that "Deutschian paradigm" are actors that the authors tell us comprise an "immature security community" and that have an enormous capacity for coercive measures in the pursuit of political goals. Illustrative of "immature security communit[ies]" are Lebanon, South and North Korea, and Somalia. At the other end of the scale, by contrast, are those "security communities" that engage in "consensual cooperation" in effective and sustained ways to generate and sustain mutual gain. We are told that the set of interconnections between Canada and the US, and France and Germany within the context of the EC are examples of more "mature communities" (Kolodziej and Kanet, pp. 27, 25, 365, 367). What seems significant here is to provide incentives, ranging from negative ones to what David Baldwin calls "positive sanctions," to induce societies in conflict to "move up the ladder" to rungs that represent less static or profound and lasting forms of intractable conflict. (Baldwin, 1971, 1985) In essence, from the vantage of today's great multipolar powers, a range of political and economic instruments is described by the authors that, so the argument runs, will help in the remediation of political instability and social unrest.

The problems with Kolodziej and Kanet's approach are threefold. First, much of the dynamics of their approach seems to encapsulate what is at the heart of strains and tensions intrinsic to "north-south relations." To be sure, much of what is proposed seems to read like a Western European morality tale in terms of how the ruling elite ought to be formulating political and economic policy. Nowhere is this problem more acute and clearly articulated than when Kolodziej tell us, "in developing coping theory as a halfway house for a theory of war and peace that remains to be defined, the contributors to this volume neither rule in nor rule out the use of force as an effective tool that can be useful over time in moving a particular security community, say the African Horn, from a primitive to a more mature level." (Kolodziej and Kanet, p. 366)

At a more substantive level, Kolodziej and Kanet's way of thinking about conflict management does not adequately take into account sources and origins of war at the individual or nation-state levels of analysis. For example, stratagems for remediation that

rely on political and economic instruments do not dovetail well to challenges posed by the processes of decision-making that contribute to what Robert Jervis has described as "perception and misperception" among decision makers. (Jervis 1976) Likewise, "organizational filtering" of information by bureaucracies, Irving Janis's "groupthink," and other correlates of war unfold as they do to contribute to outcomes that seem elusive to the underlying theme of "rational expectations" that is a hallmark, in my judgment, of much of neo-realist thinking. (Patchen 1988)

Seen from a slightly different angle, traditional neo-realist thinking, as Mohammed Ayoob so elegantly suggests in "Subnational and Transnational Actors," does not really address the fundamental question of how to confront certain forms of religious-nationalist ideology where economic incentives as a vehicle to promote patterns of behavior generally recognizable as conforming to international law are simply not relevant. In fact, the promise of economic incentives has under certain select circumstances an enormous capacity to fan the flames of resistance.

In this reviewer's book, *Serenade of Suffering: A Portrait of Middle East Terrorism 1968-1993*, I cite and discuss Ehud Sprinzak, Eliezer Don Yehiya, and Peter Demant's work that really describes the Gush Emunim ("Block of the Faithful") as comprising a spectrum of supporters ranging from ideological "hardliners" at one end to "hanger-on" types at the other. (Sprinzak 1991, pp. 111-12, 118, 228; Don Yehiya 1994, pp. 266-67, 270, 272; Demant 1994, pp. 1, 6, 7; Harris 1989) In the broader sense, while any set of "positive sanctions," as Baldwin would put it, might in some ways affect ways of thinking of "hanger-on" types, thereby in effect breaking up a solid "hard-line consensus" among terrorist group constituent supporters, it still remains possible that any political gains made in the narrower sense would be more than offset by the cacophony of voices calling for resistance against what is perceived to be yet another variant of great power imperialism. (Baldwin, 1971, 1985)

In fact, the fundamental issue of the threat of Western (i.e., American) "cultural imperialism" could be added in as an entire chapter in Kolodziej and Kanet's work. For example, some communists and nationalists in the Russian Federation view NATO expansion to include Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland as a platform to promote American economic and cultural hegemony, thereby in effect evoking time honored and generally recognizable Russian fears of Western encirclement. In a similar vein, the terrorist assaults carried out by Osama bin Laden last year against US government targets in Kenya and Tanzania mirror similar underlying concerns about American cultural hegemony in the Middle East and showcase perceptions of the enormous ideological distance between Islamic revivalism and classical liberalism in the West.

This rather in-depth critique of Kolodziej and Kanet's work should in no way be interpreted as detracting from the enormous contribution the authors' work makes to ways of thinking about conflict and stratagems for remediation in the post-Cold War international political system. This work serves as a gatekeeper and a set of guideposts for exploring pivotal players in that system, their national interests, and some processes

associated with policy formulation, notwithstanding any shortcomings that are less a function of their work than the neo-realist perspective they embrace in the broadest sense.

What does seem puzzling, in my judgment, is that all three monographs under consideration here devote relatively scant attention to terrorism, both within the context of ethnic conflict and within the context of thinking about conflict management in the "new" or, as is commonplace to note, new version of the old multipolar international political system. Clearly, more in-depth discussion about terrorism and its interconnections to what President George Bush described as "the new world order," as well as some in-depth discussion about the sources and origins of particular terrorist groups and how to approach the challenges and opportunities posed by terrorism from the vantage of peace studies and comparative politics, deserves increased devotion by these four scholars. Such discussion would add another essential dimension to ways of thinking about the international political system and local conflict that the foregoing works provide insight into and describe, each in effective and sustained ways.

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