CHAPTER 7

Ethnic Conflict and International Terrorism

Although scholars of global politics have generally focused on understanding wars between states (see Chapter 6), there is renewed interest in internal wars. This is partly because of their pervasiveness: "In every year since the end of World War II, the number of ongoing internal armed conflicts has exceeded the number of interstate conflicts. . . . The number of interstate conflicts has remained fairly stable."[1]

Scholars of global politics are also interested in civil wars because they are rarely isolated: A foreign actor actively aids one side or the other or directly intervenes in the war, or the internal war has international consequences. In the decade 1989 to 2000, nine civil wars involved intervention by a foreign state.[2] Generally, "most intrastate conflicts do not remain confined within the borders of a single country. Nominally internal conflicts typically exhibit transnational (i.e., cross-border) characteristics, such as the outflow of refugees, the illicit international trade in natural resources and weapons, and the transit across international borders of rebel and government forces."[3]

The most recent internal conflicts are of global concern, particularly since the events of September 11, 2001.[4] Internal conflicts can generate terrorism, another source of violence in global politics. Terrorism can certainly remain inside borders during a civil war, but can also become transnational, as discussed in Chapter 4. Internal conflicts can also weaken states so that their territory becomes a refuge for international terrorist activities.

In this chapter, we take a look at two types of conflict important in contemporary world politics: ethnic conflict and terrorism. To assess these sources of violence, we examine definitions of ethnicity and terrorism, their history, the role of religion, the origins of these types of violence, and the difficulties the international community has in dealing with ethnic conflicts and international terrorist groups.

Ethnic Conflict in Global Politics

As with interstate war, a variety of factors contribute to ethnic conflicts, a type of international and civil war that has become particularly pervasive, severe, and consequential since the end of the Cold War. Ethnic strife threatens the integrity and even the existence of a set of countries that girdles the globe. Ethnic conflicts certainly appeared to be involved in the process that led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. French separatists in Quebec, some fear, could set off a chain reaction that might lead to the dissolution of Canada. The largest democratic state in the world, India, is increasingly besieged by conflict focusing on ethnic grievances.

Probably the ethnic conflict grabbing the biggest, ugliest headlines in recent years occurred in the former Yugoslavia (see Chapter 3), but the conflict in Rwanda involved genocide of unimaginable proportions. In his book *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families,* Philip Gourevitch wrote:

> Decimation means the killing of every tenth person in a population, and in the spring and early summer of 1994 a program of

> massacres decimated the Republic of Rwanda. Although the killing was low-tech—performed largely by machete—it was carried out at dazzling speed: of an original population of about seven and a half million, at least eight hundred thousand people were killed in just a hundred days. Rwandans often speak of a million deaths, and they may be right. The dead of Rwanda accumulated at nearly three times the rate of Jewish dead during the Holocaust. It was the most efficient mass killing since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.[5]

The Rwandan conflict was between the Hutus and the Tutsis:

> In November of 1992, the Hutu Power ideologue Leon Mugesera delivered a famous speech, calling on Hutus to send the Tutsis back to Ethiopia by way of the Nyabarongo River, a tributary of the Nile that winds through Rwanda. He did not need to elaborate. In April of 1994, the river was choked with dead Tutsis, and tens of thousands of bodies washed up on the shores of Lake Victoria.[6]

Unfortunately, internal conflict in Africa did not stop with Rwanda. As the twenty-first century began, ethnic conflicts in Liberia and Congo, for example, continued to take lives, create refugee crises, destroy economies, and spread weapons. In Sudan, after a twenty-year war between the Muslim-dominated government in the North and the Christian population in the South in which more than a million people were killed, conflict erupted

These refugees have fled from areas of ethnic conflict in Rwanda, one of many countries experiencing such conflict in recent years. (Liz Gilbert/Sygma/Corbis)

in the western region of Darfur. The Sudanese government responded to insurgent militia groups by backing other militias. According to one observer, "because the insurgents were mostly blacks, the government tapped the Darfuri Arab tribes for militiamen, telling them that the *abid* (slaves) were about to take over. The strategy worked wonderfully. Soon the Darfuri Arab militias, known as the *janjaweed* (which can be loosely translated as "the evil horsemen") were looting, burning, raping, and killing entire black villages.[7] The violence in Darfur has been astonishing. Over 200,000 are estimated to have been killed and 2 million have been displaced (either within Sudan or across the border into Chad).

Although the study of interstate war is often separate from the study of ethnic conflict, there are a number of similarities in the factors that are relevant to both types of conflict. The causes of both interstate and ethnic wars, for example, can be traced to political and economic relationships, lack of an overarching authority, legitimacy needs of leaders, a history of rivalry, and psychological images and identities. Moreover, in the case of both interstate and ethnic conflict, it seems that more than one of these various factors are operating in a particular war and the multiple factors that are involved often relate to each other in a complex, and reinforcing, fashion.

What Is Ethnicity?

ethnic group People who perceive themselves as distinct in terms of language, origins, physical appearance, or region of residence.

An obvious prerequisite to a useful discussion of ethnicity and ethnic conflict in international politics is a clear definition of the term **ethnic group.** With ethnic conflict so prominent in the news on a daily basis, it might seem that everybody must have a clear idea what the term *ethnic* means. Appearances are deceiving. For example, in the early 1990s, the former Yugoslavia was the site of probably the most publicized "ethnic" conflict in the world. And yet it can be argued that ethnicity had nothing to do with it. "Yugoslavia's 'ethnic war' is waged among three communities [the Muslims, the Croatians, and the Serbians] possessing no distinct physical characteristics or separate anthropological or 'racial' origins. . . . The notion of an exclusive, and exclusionary ethnic existence for each of the Yugoslav peoples is an invention."[8]

Similarly, historically in Rwanda,

> Hutus and Tutsis spoke the same language, followed the same religion, intermarried, and lived intermingled, without territorial distinctions, on the same hills, sharing the same social and political culture in small chiefdoms. The chiefs were called Mwamis, and some of them were Hutus, some Tutsis; Hutus and Tutsis fought together in the Mwamis' armies; through marriage and clientage, Hutus could become hereditary Tutsis, and Tutsis could become hereditary Hutus. Because of all this mixing, ethnographers and historians have lately come to agree that Hutus and Tutsis cannot properly be called distinct ethnic groups. Still, the names Hutu and Tutsi stuck . . . and . . . the

> source of the distinction is undisputed: Hutus were cultivators and Tutsis were herdsmen. This was the original inequality: cattle are a more valuable asset than produce, and although some Hutus owned cows while some Tutsis tilled the soil, the word Tutsi became synonymous with a political and economic elite.[9]

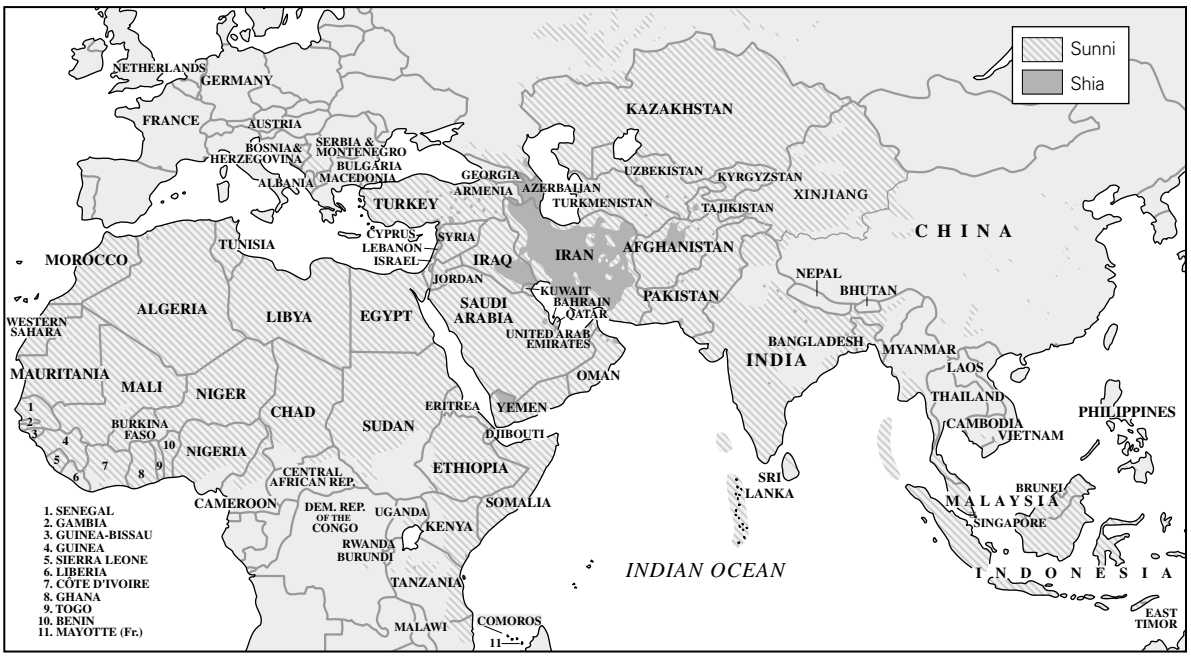
When Belgium ruled the Rwandan territory as a colony, the Belgians decided that the Tutsi were a superior "race" and issued ethnic identity cards to separate the groups. "Whatever Hutu and Tutsi identity may have stood for in the precolonial state no longer mattered; the Belgians had made 'ethnicity' the defining feature of Rwandan existence. . . . With every schoolchild reared in the doctrine of racial superiority and inferiority, the idea of a collective national identity was steadily laid to waste."[10]

Although it is often assumed that for an ethnic group to qualify as such, it must have some distinguishing physical or "racial" characteristic, this is clearly not the case. Consistent with the constructivist perspective, ethnic groups can be considered socially constructed or "imagined communities."[11] This recognition, however, can lead to a definitional strategy suggesting that if any group defines itself as an ethnic group, it qualifies as one. One definition of *ethnicity*, for example, asserts that it is a "*subjective* [emphasis added] sense of shared identity based on objective cultural or regional criteria."[12] Another writer takes this strategy to an even simpler extreme by defining an ethnic group as a "group of people who define themselves as distinct from other groups because of cultural differences."[13] While the subjective nature of ethnic identity is important, one can identify many subjectively defined ethnic groups on objective criteria. A recent comprehensive review of ethnic minorities, for example, defines communal groups (that is, ethnic groups) as "people who share a distinctive and enduring collective identity based on a belief of common descent and on shared experiences and cultural traits."[14] This project uses five relatively specific cultural traits to identify ethnic groups: (1) language or dialect, (2) social customs, (3) religious beliefs, (4) physical appearance, and (5) region of residence.[15] For the purpose of this discussion, we will define an ethnic group as one that perceives itself to be culturally distinct in terms of its language, customs, religious beliefs, physical appearance, or region of residence.

Map: Ethnicities in Asia, Atlas page 57

These bases of distinction tend to go together. Indeed, only about 10 percent of minorities in the developing world are distinct in terms of only one of these cultural characteristics.[16] Most ethnic groups that perceive themselves as such not only have a different language but also have at least one other distinctive cultural trait having to do with their customs, religious beliefs, physical appearance, or the place where they live. As we have seen, it can be argued that the civil war in the former Yugoslavia did not constitute ethnic conflict, because the Croats, the Muslims in Bosnia, and the Serbs are not "racially" distinct. But because these groups are distinct in terms of their religious beliefs and their region

Map 7.1 Sunni and Shia Distribution



Source: Courtesy of the University Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin.

of residence, they are distinct ethnic groups by our definition, and they can be said to have engaged in ethnic conflict.

Similarly, the conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims in the Middle East qualifies as ethnic conflict, according to our definition. The difference between Sunnis and Shias lies in a historical disagreement over the succession to the Prophet Muhammad for the spiritual leadership of Muslims. Thus, although both groups are similar in many ways—both groups have members who are Arabs and speak Arabic (although both groups contain non-Arabs as well, particularly Farsi-speaking Iranians who make up the majority of Shias), and all are Muslim—their **sectarian** (intra-religious) differences separate them into distinctive and enduring communal groups. Although Sunnis and Shias live throughout the Middle East, they also tend to reside in separate regions that have either a Sunni or Shia majority (see Map 7.1).

sectarian Pertaining to intra-religious divisions.

The Scope of Ethnic Conflict in the Contemporary Global System

Because defining an ethnic group is difficult, there are widely disparate estimates of how many such groups there are in the world. One source asserts there are 862 ethnic groups globally.[17] A geographer has identified five thousand nations, or distinct communities, in the contemporary world that could claim to be national peoples.[18] Using the definition and criteria discussed in the previous section and focusing on disadvantaged

Map: Languages, Atlas page 14

Map: Religions, Atlas page 15

groups and groups that have organized to promote their collective interests, one group of researchers has identified 275 such groups.[19]

Not only are there a lot of ethnic groups in the world; it is safe to conclude that the politics, domestic and international, of virtually every state in the world is affected in important ways by the activities of these ethnic groups. Gurr declares that about three-fourths of the 161 largest countries in the world have at least one politicized minority.[20] There are very few states in the world that are ethnically homogeneous (see the discussion of nations versus states in Chapter 4). Moreover, "Wherever one looks in the world there seems to be an unresolved ethnic conflict underway."[21] David Lake and Donald Rothchild note that "since the end of the Cold War, a wave of ethnic conflict has swept across parts of Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Africa. Localities, states, and sometimes whole regions have been engulfed in convulsive fits of ethnic insecurity, violence, and genocide."[22] The human and political costs of ethnic conflict have already reached substantial proportions and threaten to get worse. There were some eighty guerrilla and civil wars fought by rebelling ethnic groups from 1945 to 1980, such as the Karen and Kachin in Burma, the Nagas and the Tripuras in India, the Eritreans in Ethiopia, the Palestinians in Israel, the Kurds in Iraq, and the Basques in Spain.[23] Because of this ethnic conflict, there have been "rights denied, immiseration, exodus of refugees, mass murder, democracy subverted, development deferred . . . and regional wars."[24] The list of ethnic problems in the world seems nearly endless:

> The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina has received the most attention in the West because of the intense coverage it has received from the Western media, but equally if not more horrific conflicts are underway in Afghanistan, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Burma, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Liberia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Tajikistan. Other troublespots abound—Bangladesh, Belgium, Bhutan, Burundi, Estonia, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Iraq, Latvia, Lebanon, Mali, Moldova, Niger, Northern Ireland, Pakistan, the Philippines, Romania, Rwanda, South Africa, Spain, and Turkey, for example.[25]

Map: World Refugees, Atlas page 19

Some of the ethnic conflict is confined within the borders of a single state, but most are not and thus they become international in scope. This is in part because quite often, ethnic groups are spread over the boundaries of states. More than two-thirds of ethnic groups in the developing world have ethnic compatriots in two or more adjacent countries.[26] Such situations can create pressures to extend the political power of the homeland to include the ethnic compatriots currently outside the boundaries of the country in which they live. Annexation of another state, or part of it, based on ethnic ties, is known as **irredentism.** "Irredentist movements usually lay claim to the territory of an entity—almost invariably an independent state—in which their in-group is concentrated, perhaps even forming some local majorities. The original term *terra irredenta* means territory to be

irredentism
Annexation of an area that includes ethnic compatriots residing in another state.

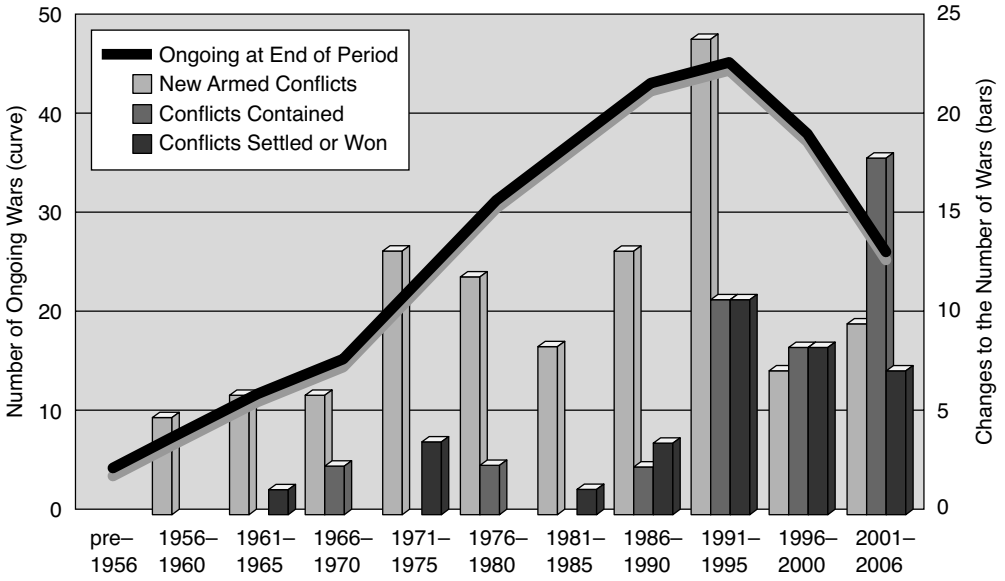
redeemed. . . . The territory to be regained sometimes is regarded as a part of a cultural setting (or historic state) or an integral part of one homeland."[27]

Even without irredentist pressures, ethnic conflict can become international when ethnicity combines with nationalism and ethnic groups seek self-determination and work toward creating a new state in the international system. (See Chapter 2 for a historical discussion and definitions of nationalism and national self-determination.) According to one definition of nationalism, it is present when "individual members give their primary loyalty to their own ethnic or national community" and "these ethnic or national communities desire their own independent state."[28] Ethnic conflicts also become internationalized because other members of the international community have economic, security, or political interests affected by the conflict or become involved for humanitarian purposes. That ethnic minorities are often subjected to discrimination, and that current state boundaries seldom coincide with the physical distribution of ethnic groups has made ethnic conflict a virtual epidemic.

Ethnic conflict is not new, as a moment's reflection on the legendary battle between David and Goliath or the Roman custom of throwing Christians to the lions will reveal. In more recent times, Turkish groups in the Ottoman Empire are suspected of murdering about 1.5 million Armenians, mostly during the First World War.[29] The Nazis in Germany killed 6 million Jews and perhaps as many as 14 million people of other ethnic groups, such as Slavs, Serbs, Czechs, Poles, and Ukrainians.[30] There were mass murders of members of ethnic groups in East Bengal in 1971, in Kampuchea in 1977, and in Uganda in 1978.

It is true that violence focused on or fostered by ethnic conflict did increase in the early 1990s, but "the eruption of ethnic warfare that seized observers' attention in the early 1990s was actually a culmination of a long-term general trend of increasing communal-based protest and rebellion that began in the 1950s and peaked immediately after the end of the Cold War. The breakup of the USSR and Yugoslavia provided opportunities for new ethnonational claims and the eruption of a dozen new ethnic wars between 1988 and 1992. In the global south, more than two dozen ethnic wars began or restarted in roughly the same period, between 1988 and 1994."[31] The good news is that ethnic conflict may have peaked in the mid-1990s. Figure 7.1 shows that the number of ongoing conflicts reached a height in the early 1990s and declined thereafter. There is also "evidence that more ethnonational wars have been settled or contained through international engagement and negotiations since the early 1990s than in any decade of the Cold War. Examples include the settlement and deescalation of ethnonational rebellions by the Miskitos and other coastal peoples in Nicaragua (1990), the Gagauz in Moldova (1995), the Moros in the Philippines (. . . 1996), and the Chakmas in Bangladesh (. . . 1997)."[32] Gurr, however, warns that "the ebb in new ethnopolitical conflicts since the early 1990s and the expanding repertoire of strategies for managing them do not mean that communal violence is about

Figure 7.1 Trends in Armed Conflicts for Self-Determination, 1956–2006



Source: Reprinted with permission from David Quinn, "Self-Determination Movements and their Outcomes," in *Peace and Conflict 2008* by J. Joseph Hewitt, Jonathan Wilkenfeld, and Ted Robert Gurr Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2008, p. 35.

to disappear as a challenge to global or regional order. Ethnic rioting in Indonesia, communal and civil war in Eastern Congo, and ethnic cleansing in Kosovo illustrate the ever-present possibility that ethnic conflicts can recur and morph in unexpected and deadly ways."[33]

Keeping in mind that ethnic conflict has occurred for centuries and that it may be on a decline, it is still appropriate to ask, Why was there an apparent explosion of ethnic passions and ethnic conflict and violence in the years immediately following the end of the Cold War? It might be admitted first that the academic field of international politics (as well as, perhaps, the contemporary global political system) is ill equipped to deal with, or to explain persuasively, this outburst of ethnic passion, since it has a history of ignoring ethnic groups and their relationship to international politics. As one specialist in ethnic conflict observes, "The postwar world has been dominated by the ideological battle between Western liberalism and Soviet style Marxism," and "neither of these systems of belief have shown much concern for ethnicity."[34] "Liberals" in the classic Western tradition have tended to see the emphasis on collective rights by emotional ethnic groups as a dangerous threat to the individual human rights that they hold dear. Marxist scholars have tended to view ethnic groups and their ethnically based political passions as annoying diversions on the road to communism. Religious differences, an increasingly important part of many ethnic conflicts, have also been ignored by scholars

of international relations.[35] "Paradigms like realism [and] liberalism . . . placed their emphasis on military and economic factors as well as rational calculations, all of which left little room for religion.[36] In short, as the prominent analyst of ethnicity Walker Connor argued several decades ago, international politics as an academic field has had a regrettable tendency to treat ethnicity as an "ephemeral nuisance."[37]

The Role of the International System and Economic Modernization in Ethnic Conflict

Perhaps partly because they have been considered not only annoying but of marginal importance, ethnicity and ethnic conflict also seem to have been confusing to students of international politics as well. In recent decades, it has commonly been hypothesized that ethnic conflict generally tends toward violence because the structure of the international system, a bipolar system, prohibited conflict between the major powers but not among its clients.[38] In other words, during the Cold War, it often appeared that antagonism between the superpowers made ethnic conflicts worse. In Angola, for example, the United States and other Western powers tended to support the Ovimbundu people in the southern part of the country against the Soviet-supported Mbundu-led coalition that controlled the government. The result was a civil war that dragged on for years. Because of situations like this, during the Cold War the competition between the superpowers

> to complete a network of international alliances in such a way as to maximize the number and wealth of allies and trading partners, tremendously enriched and inflated ethnic movements, particularly in the Third World. The injection of external resources into domestic ethnic conflicts resulted in larger, better organized, and more violent ethnic movements. The consequences . . . were a lengthening and escalating of conflict, often resulting in civil wars, and a decreased likelihood of negotiated settlements.[39]

But the end of the Cold War has hardly seemed to be a cure-all for the world's epidemic of ethnic strife. On the contrary, it and the end of communism obviously brought to the surface a host of violent conflicts in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. And the end of global competition between the superpowers has not brought to an end many conflicts that previously seemed to be primarily a function of that competition. We can now see that even without superpower encouragement, ethnic conflict in Angola, Sudan, Afghanistan, Burundi, Burma, Iraq, Turkey, and other places continues.

In many ways, current ethnic conflicts are simply the latest expressions of the principle of national self-determination that was legitimized as a political value and international norm by Woodrow Wilson after World War I when empires began to be dismantled and colonies became

independent. The application of the self-determination principle continued with post–World War II decolonization. Current conflicts are the logical next step. "The same principles which fashioned out of European colonialism many Third World independent states, became the platform upon which challenges to those state boundaries were mounted. Nationalism against colonialism become sub-nationalism against the new states. This confrontation between nationalism and ethnic subnationalism was a predictable outcome clearly implied in anti-colonialist argumentation."[40]

The debate over whether the Cold War encouraged or dampened ethnic passions and conflict is reminiscent of an even more fundamental issue regarding the relationship between economic modernization and ethnicity. Traditional Western scholarship has viewed ethnicity as a phenomenon destined to be overcome by broader, stronger modernizing forces. "Twentieth century approaches to the study of ethnicity in politics can be traced to the writings of Marx and Durkheim, both of whom evaluated ethnic identities as part of a larger set of phenomena subject to transformation by the forces of economic modernization."[41] For Marx, as we have noted, attachment to ethnic groups was an annoying obstacle that would surely and ultimately give way to more powerful forces, moving the nations of the world to socialism. For the sociologist Emile Durkheim, and then a whole generation of scholars associated with **modernization theory,** nation-building efforts were destined to erode old-fashioned loyalties to smaller, outdated, even quaint ethnic groups. Similar to the liberal expectation that increased interdependence would ameliorate interstate conflict, "a major assumption of western social science in the post-war decades was that ethnic conflict would disappear as nations modernize and minority groups were assimilated. Industrialization would lead to increased contact and community between different groups. Urbanization would take place. Gradually this would result in . . . acculturation, which would result in a transfer of loyalty from the ethnic group to the nation-state."[42] Modernization theorists also assumed that religion, as a basis of ethnic identity, would be replaced with secularism.[43] In other words, states were to become melting pots in which anachronistic divisions between ethnic and religious groups would dissolve and everybody would adopt the more modern attitude of loyalty to one's country.

modernization theory The idea that economic modernization assimilates peoples and that identity to the country replaces ethnic and religious attachments.

History has not been kind to this theory. In a manner reminiscent of the way predominant opinion seems to have shifted from the notion that the Cold War made ethnic conflict worse to the obviously contradictory theory that the end of the Cold War has inflamed ethnic passions and conflict, there has emerged something of a consensus that rather than ameliorating ethnic conflict, economic modernizing forces actually increase its likelihood. "Although many scholars endorsed . . . [the] melting pot modernization approach, the weight of . . . evidence eventually overwhelmed these theoretical arguments."[44]

Now it is more commonly argued that modernizing and centralizing governments provoke a backlash from ethnic groups that fear losing their

identity in the move toward a more integrated state or that economic modernization increases contact between ethnic groups that increasingly perceive themselves in competition with each other. Walker Connor, for example, argues that "economic modernization does not undermine ethnic divisions but invigorates them by bringing together previously isolated ethnic groups that suddenly find themselves competing for the same economic niches."[45] Modern life also represents a threat to religious traditions, leading many groups to fight to preserve them.[46] Others believe that economic processes in the most recent decades, with their emphasis on computers, decentralization, and flexibility, also encourage ethnic passions. In the computer information age, economic producers are able to offer ever more specialized, personalized products for ever more narrowly defined consumer groups in grocery stores, hobby shops, automobile dealer showrooms, and bookstores. These processes may be driving people apart rather than assimilating them in a "melting pot."[47]

So during the Cold War, it was commonly argued that the confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union made ethnic conflicts worse. Now that the Cold War has ended, we are told that its demise has worsened ethnic conflict. At one time, analysts were relatively confident that economic progress and modernization would ameliorate ethnic conflict, but now that global economic integration has reached new heights, it seems that it may instead also increase the intensity of strife among ethnic groups.

Other Causes of Ethnic Conflict

It is tempting to see ethnic conflict as inevitable, as an expression of deep animosities between groups that are destined to fight. Indeed,

> one of the first theories about the proliferation of violent ethnic conflict was the *ancient hatred* explanation, which was mainly the creation of journalists covering the various wars in Europe, Africa, and Asia. The core idea was that the ethnic groups locked in murderous combat had a long history of conflictual intergroup relations. Historically, the periods of relative peace in intergroup relations arose when strong central authority managed to keep tenuous intergroup harmony through the use of rewards and sanctions. Whenever central authority weakened, though, interethnic relations became marked by hostility and violence. From this it follows that under communist rule in countries like Yugoslavia, ethnic relations were kept in check by strong authoritarian elites like Tito; however, when the center itself became weak and crumbled in the early 1990s, the relations between the constituent ethnic groups—Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Kosovars, Macedonians, Bosnian Muslims, Montenegrins—naturally regressed back to violence.[48]

One problem with such explanations is that it does not account for why some ethnic groups live peacefully with each other, while others do not. It also ignores the fact that in many situations, such as in the former Yugoslavia, relations between groups were not simply held in check by powerful authorities but at times were quite harmonious and positive. In Yugoslavia, "the rivalries in question had been dormant for decades. In the early 1980s, intermarriage rates among Serbs, Croats, and Bosnian Muslims were high in ethnically mixed areas . . . [and] ethnic hostility was low. Conflict among these groups was kept alive primarily in ethnic stereotypes falling far short of hatred."[49] In Darfur, Sudan, intermarriage between "Blacks" and "Arabs" was also quite common until violence erupted in 2003. The ancient hatreds perspective also leaves out the political, economic, and social conditions and goals of many ethnic groups in conflict. In Darfur, "when the janjaweed were organized into coordinated military units and assigned to camps they shared with the regular army, it is not possible to characterize what was happening as spontaneous violence. Ethnic tensions in Darfur were and still are real, and recurring droughts have made them worse. But they themselves were not sufficient to unleash the violence we have seen. They were the raw material, not the cause."[50]

Ethnic groups may engage in conflict in situations of a collapsed state or a power vacuum not because of enduring hatreds, but because of uncertainty and a fear of discrimination if they do not control the state. In this way, ethnic groups fight for the same reason that realists argue states fight. In situations of anarchy, in which there is no overarching government, groups face a security dilemma and must protect themselves. Because groups in anarchical situations are not likely to possess strong military capabilities, "their military strength becomes largely a function of their 'groupness' or 'cohesion.' But because all sides . . . stress their groupness and cohesion, each appears threatening to the other. Under these conditions, the only way to assess the intentions of other groups is to use history. But prevailing political conditions may lead to nationalist interpretations of history. The result . . . is a 'worst case analysis' whereby every group thinks the other is the enemy."[51] Even without complete anarchy, weak and unstable states often give rise to insurgencies and civil wars.[52] The political vacuum and struggle for power that arose after the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq may have sparked such conditions, leading to high levels of sectarian conflict unprecedented in modern Iraqi history.[53] One criticism of this anarchy explanation is that ethnic conflicts are not isolated to failed states, but mostly occur where governments continue to have some control, where the condition of anarchy is not present. Furthermore, this perspective "stresses material factors and parsimony, at the expense of a vast array of other motivations—religious, ideological, and emotional—that fuel domestic conflict."[54]

Material factors are nevertheless important. Of the 275 communal groups identified by Gurr's Minorities at Risk project, about 65 percent

theory of relative deprivation The idea that groups that perceive themselves as relatively worse off than others will mobilize and take action.

are the victims of economic discrimination, and about 73 percent were the targets of political discrimination in 1994–1995.[55] The **theory of relative deprivation** expects groups that perceive themselves as relatively worse off to mobilize:

> The theory of relative deprivation is useful for explaining the rise of ethnic political mobilization not only among economically backward groups but also among relatively prosperous ethnic groups, such as the Sikhs in India, the Tamils in Sri Lanka, and the Tutsis in Central Africa. When such groups perceive a threat to their privileged position, or if they become victims of state discrimination, they too may take to political action. After all, as the theory suggests, it is the realization by a group that it is receiving less than it deserves and that others are receiving more that motivates the group to take political action. Applying this concept to ethnic conflict . . . , it is easy to understand why perceived disadvantage or discrimination (real or imaginary) by a group regarding its status (sociocultural, economic, political) is an underlying cause for political action.[56]

Theories such as relative deprivation that focus on the economic and political grievances of groups do not directly explain why it is that ethnicity is such an important base for group identity and comparisons to other groups. Many argue that "socioeconomic factors may form the basis of discontent but that only discontent based on ethnocultural identity can lead to ethnonationalism and secessionist sentiments."[57] Some see ethnic identities as the basic, or primordial, identity that is salient for people.

Psychologically, ethnicity is often an easy category for people to use to simplify the world. Social psychologists argue that categorization is a natural way that people function in an information-rich, complex world, and **social identity theory** suggests that categorizing people into groups helps promote an individual's self-esteem. Categorization includes a division of peoples into "us" (in-groups) and "them" (out-groups). Once such categorization occurs, people tend to process information that reinforces group boundaries and develop an in-group bias, or **ethnocentrism,** seeing their own group in a favorable light and the out-group in an unfavorable light. Research suggests that "the mere perception of belonging to two distinct groups . . . is sufficient to trigger intergroup discrimination favoring the in-group. In other words, the mere awareness of the presence of an out-group is sufficient to provoke intergroup competitive or discriminatory responses on the part of the in-group."[58] People, for example, tend to see the in-group as more heterogeneous than it often is and the out-group as more homogeneous ("*they* are all alike") than it often is. Furthermore, people will remember more about the in-group, discount information that is inconsistent with their stereotype of the out-group, explain away any success achieved by the out-group, and make decisions

social identity theory Theory suggesting that group membership promotes self-esteem and creates favorable in-group biases.

ethnocentrism Belief that one's ethnic group is superior to others.

that reward the in-group and penalize the out-group, often without recognizing that they are doing so.[59] In extreme situations, the need for social identity and the way stereotypes are maintained through errors and biases in information processing may produce a dehumanized view of out-group members. Once dehumanization occurs, killing members of the out-group is not that uncomfortable since they are seen as less than human. Dehumanizing other ethnic groups is similar to leaders seeing other countries with an enemy image, with similar effects of increasing the likelihood of conflict.

instrumentalist approach
Explanation of ethnic conflict focusing on leaders' use or creation of ethnic divisions for political ends.

Political leaders often recognize the power that group identity can play in mobilizing the masses to commit violent behavior. The **instrumentalist approach** to ethnicity and ethnic conflict focuses on the role that elites play in highlighting, or even creating, ethnic identities for political ends:

> From this perspective, ethnic identity, one among several alternative bases of identity, gains social and political significance when ethnic entrepreneurs, either for offensive or defense purposes or in response to threats or opportunities for themselves and/or their groups, invoke and manipulate selected ethnic symbols to create political movements in which collective ends are sought. At such moments, ethnicity can be a device as much as a focus for group mobilization by its leadership through the select use of ethnic symbols.[60]

Leaders within states may use ethnic identities for the same reasons that leaders of states may go to war: to divert attention and enhance their legitimacy. In Sudan, for example, "Darfur represents the latest example in which Khartoum [the government] has used its policy of Arabization in an effort to bolster or restore its hegemony."[61]

Leaders are successful at manipulating ethnic identity for instrumental ends when there is a history of group antagonism and there are severe economic problems.[62]

> In the Balkans, there is no doubt that leaders of the former Yugoslavia, particularly Serbian head, Slobodan Milosevic, helped cause the fighting by inflaming ethnic nationalism. . . . Milosevic (and others) stirred up ethnic conflict in order to realize their personal interest of remaining in power. . . . Recognizing that he could not hold on to power in a multiethnic Yugoslavia . . . , Milosevic deliberately fostered a racist nationalism that resulted in the replacement of most of Yugoslavia with a state that had a clear Serbian majority.[63]

The Belgians, as the colonial power in Rwanda, also used ethnicity for political means. By cultivating separate Hutu and Tutsi identities, they focused any potential conflict between these groups, diverting attention away from the fact that they were ruling over both.

As with the causes of interstate war, the causes of ethnic conflict seem individually insufficient to explain all ethnic violence. "People do feel strongly about their ethnicity, but very few convinced nationalists actually go as far as to exterminate their neighbors. Maniacal leaders clearly play an important role in civil wars, but simply saying so does not explain why some end up as powerful demagogues while others simply rant in obscurity. Economic grievances and security dilemmas can also push groups toward violence, but such explanations predict far more conflict than actually occurs in the world."[64] Thus, as in wars between states, all levels of analysis—the structural condition of the state, the strategies of leaders, and the beliefs of the masses—all contribute to an understanding of why ethnic conflict occurs. Some even argue that conditions at all levels must be present to spark ethnic war:

> It is the interaction between these factors—all of them necessary conditions for ethnic war—which causes ethnic violence to begin and escalate. There can be no violence without hostile feelings, and hostile feelings are unlikely to be widespread unless groups have a history of conflict, conflicting symbolic interests, and negative stereotypes of each other. . . . Even in these conditions, violence can only be sustained if the war effort is organized by extremist leaders who gain or hold power by outflanking more moderate rivals. Unless all of these factors operate to a sufficient degree, any ethnic violence which occurs is likely to be brief and on a relatively small scale.[65]

Soldiers in the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in March 1999, during the conflict between Kosovars and Serbs in Yugoslavia.
(David Brauchli/AP Photo/ AP Images)

POLICY CHOICES

Dealing with Ethnic Grievances

ISSUE: There are many ethnic groups in the world that wish to have a state of their own, but this would involve the dismemberment of currently existing states. Whether the international community should, or effectively can, address the intensity and scope of ethnic conflicts raises many issues and concerns.

Option #1: The international community should treat all of these problems as matters of domestic concern only.

Arguments: (a) International institutions, such as the United Nations, and global powers, such as the United States, should conserve their resources to deal with the truly international problems. (b) The international community will avoid having to choose which internal disputes to deal with and which to disregard. (c) The international community will avoid the risks of making situations worse by intervening.

Counterarguments: (a) Ethnic problems may invite unilateral interventions from single states in the various regions, creating international problems that might have been easier to deal with at an earlier stage. (b) Since most ethnic conflicts are increasingly domestic rather than international, international institutions such as the United Nations risk becoming irrelevant to the globe's most serious conflicts. (c) Hundreds of thousands of people may suffer oppression at the hands of governments that are insensitive to the needs or aspirations of minority ethnic groups.

Option #2: The international community should energetically defend the principle of national self-determination, which suggests that all peoples deserve to have their own state if they so desire.

Arguments: (a) An active policy of self-determination would allow the United Nations to become a major player in attempts to resolve the most serious violent conflicts in the global system today. (b) Hundreds of thousands of people could be rescued from insensitive, perhaps even racist, oppression. (c) Interventions on behalf of oppressed peoples might undermine autocratic governments, leading to their replacement by democratic governments.

Counterarguments: (a) Operations on behalf of oppressed minorities could become too expensive, perhaps bankrupting the United Nations. (b) Activism of this sort by the international community might encourage additional minorities to aspire to establish their own states, increasing instability on a global scale. (c) Schisms and disagreements about which minorities are truly oppressed and deserving of external support may weaken the ability of the United Nations to deal with truly international problems.

Resolving Ethnic Conflicts

Given the long-term trend of increasing violence and the global implications of these conflicts, the international community is wrestling with ways to address this problem (see the Policy Choices box on ethnic grievances). An attempt to anticipate the future of ethnic conflicts throughout

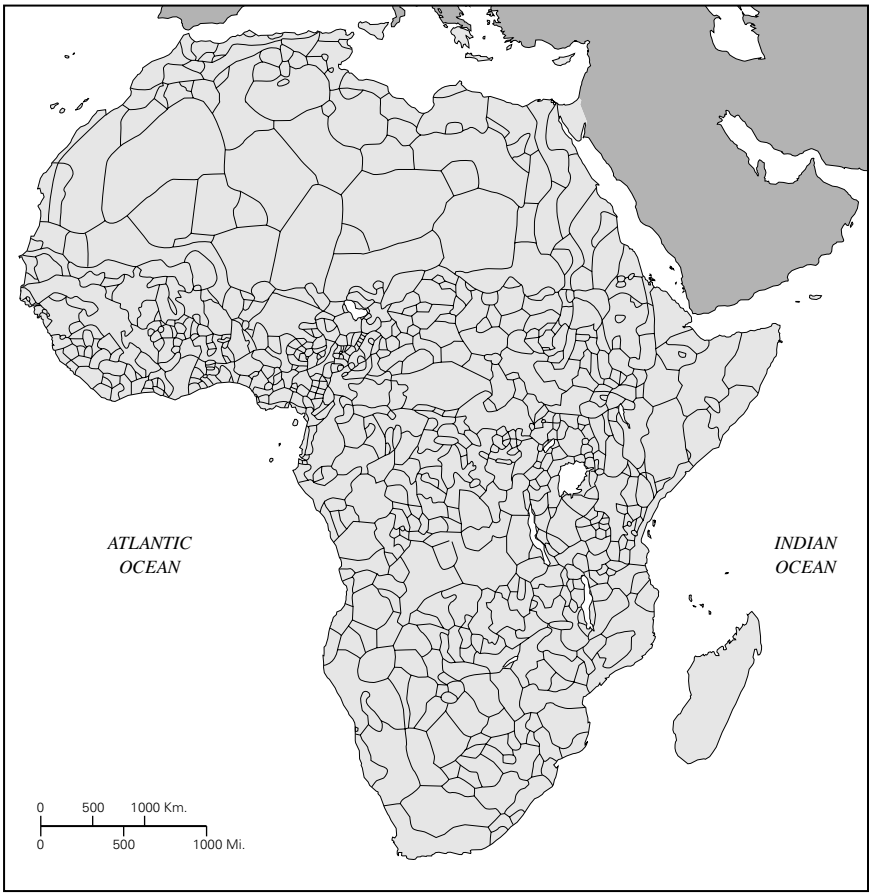
the world needs to take into account, unfortunately, the extent to which ethnic conflicts in Europe have been "resolved" in roughly the Yugoslavian fashion: with "ethnic cleansing," forced migrations, and displaced peoples. "Europe's nationality problem was 'solved' by wars and population transfers over the span of centuries."[66] Peace settlements after the First World War redrew boundaries in such a way as to decrease the percentage of ethnic peoples without a state or self-government from about 26 percent in 1910 to about 7 percent in 1930. As a result of the Second World War, 20 million people settled in new homelands. Often they were relocated with little attention to their own interests or wishes. For example, "3 million Germans [were] forced to abandon lands their families had occupied for centuries, banished with nothing but tattered clothes and bandaged feet into a harsh winter. The expulsion of Sudeten Germans from their villages in Czechoslovakia still resonates . . . as one of World War II's most contentious incidents."[67] As a result of such episodes of brutality and relocation, the share of Europe's total population belonging to ethnic minorities without autonomy or self-government was reduced to about 3 percent.[68]

The implications of this history of relationships among ethnic groups in Europe for much of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa are sobering, if not downright depressing. Nationalism as an ideological movement emerged in Europe as a result of the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century. It took nearly two centuries of massive relocations and wars for the peoples of Europe to sort themselves out and redraw boundaries in such a way that the distributions of ethnic groups and national boundaries were made largely congruent. And even so, the United Kingdom has yet to resolve the situation in Northern Ireland; Spain faces continuing conflict with the Basques and Catalans; and France still has problems with the Bretons and the Corsicans. Must Africa, Asia, and the Middle East go through these relocations and wars to establish a match between the physical distribution of peoples and legitimate national boundaries? Or to put this partially rhetorical question in more specific but equally gloomy terms, are "Arab-Israeli Wars," complete with refugees and relocations, destined to be duplicated throughout the rest of the Middle East, in Africa, and in Asia?

Anyone who wishes for a more peaceful and stable global political system in the twenty-first century must hope that this is not the case. Even centuries of wars and relocations in Europe have not resolved all the ethnic problems there, and Stalin's forced relocations of millions in the Soviet Union certainly did not resolve all of those ethnic conflicts. It is, in fact, nearly futile to hope that peaceful relationships among the ethnic groups of the world can be established by relocating people and redrawing national boundaries. Africa, for example, is faced with probably the greatest number of ethnic conflicts of all the continents. These problems are often traced to Africa's colonial heritage. "Africa . . . is a continent of a thousand ethnic and linguistic groups squeezed into some 50-odd states,

Map 7.2 Ethnic Groups of Africa

Source: Martin Ira Glassner and Harm J. de Blij, *Systematic Political Geography,* 4th ed. (New York: Wiley, 1989), p. 532. Copyright © 1989 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reprinted by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.



Map: Ethno-linguistic Groups in Africa, Atlas page 52

many of them with borders determined by colonial powers in the last century with little regard to traditional ethnic boundaries."[69]

But consider Map 7.2 showing the geographical distribution of ethnic groups in Africa. The colonial powers did undoubtedly draw national boundaries in Africa that arbitrarily cut across or combined disparate ethnic groups. But the number and distribution of ethnic groups in Africa is such that even had they attempted to be more sensitive in that regard, they would have found it nearly impossible to satisfy all the national aspirations of the various ethnic groups. There are too many of them, and they are not organized in neat, state-size geographical packages. Obviously there are many areas in Africa where ethnic groups are intermingled in the same territory. Ethnic peace will never come to Africa (or anywhere else in the world) if it depends on every ethnic group's satisfying its aspirations to national autonomy and self-determination. In short, no amount of national boundary redrawing is going to resolve all, or even most, of

the ethnic conflicts in the world. Such redrawing of boundaries historically creates as many problems as it resolves. The former Soviet Republic of Georgia, for example, has broken away from Russia, to be confronted itself by a rebellion in its own region of Abkhazia. The Eritreans have successfully established independence from Ethiopia, but "the Eritrean nationalists themselves are an amalgam of Muslims and Christians who, if they gain autonomy, are likely to fracture along . . . ethnic lines."[70] In the former Yugoslavia, the Macedonians have broken away from Serbia, only to face irredentist pressures from the 20 percent of its population that is Albanian, not to mention its even smaller Serbian population. There may be no end in sight to this kind of process. As it appears increasingly likely that Kosovo, formerly party of Serbia and Yugoslavia, might become independent, "some of the world's most powerful countries are fearful the move will encourage separatist movements elsewhere to intensify their often bloody struggles and give hope to nascent independence groups that have not yet begun to fight."[71]

It is incumbent on those of us who live in the major industrialized countries, secure in our national identities within states with a long history of democracy and stability, not to be condescending toward ethnic groups with frustrated desires for national autonomy and self-determination. It is too easy for us to say (or feel), Why can't those people (in Rwanda, Lebanon, Georgia, Burundi, India, or Northern Ireland) just give up their delusions of national grandeur and learn to live together? Even so, the conclusion of Ted Gurr, the author of one of the more comprehensive surveys of ethnic conflicts in the world, seems reasonable. He observes that a strategy of reconstructing the state system so that state boundaries correspond more closely to the social and cultural boundaries among ethnic communities would "create as many problems as it resolved." According to Gurr, "A more constructive and open-ended answer is to pursue the . . . coexistence of ethnic groups and plural states. . . . [Ethnic] groups should have the protected rights to individual and collective existence and to cultural self-expression without fear of political repression. The counterpart of such rights is the obligation not to impose their own cultural standards or political agenda on other peoples."[72]

Indeed, Gurr attributes the decline in ethnic conflict in the second half of the 1990s to a "regime of managed ethnic heterogeneity." This regime includes a recognition of the rights of minority peoples and the right of ethnic groups to have some degree of autonomy within states, democratization that institutionalizes these rights, and an increasingly accepted "principle that [maintains] disputes between communal groups and states are best settled by negotiation and mutual accommodation."[73] Democratic governance is one logical solution to the ethnic conflict. "Minorities in the . . . democracies . . . have two distinctive traits. Their grievances usually are expressed in protest, rarely in rebellion, and the most common response by government . . . is to accommodate their

interests rather than forcibly subordinate or incorporate them."[74] In states where governmental power is exercised autocratically, struggles for control of the government are likely to be more desperate and violent. In general, democratic "societies bleed off conflict in divergent directions, preventing that fatal congruence of cleavages and oppositions that leads to intense struggles over societal powers and consequent extreme violence."[75]

But it is difficult to impossible to initiate democratic reforms in a country already torn by ethnic conflict. In fact, many analysts are convinced that transitions to democracy are likely to increase ethnic strife and other sources of internal conflict, even if relatively entrenched, stable democracy may ultimately prove to be an important solution to it. Carment and James provide systematic evidence that "high political constraint [by which they mean democratic controls on the use of political power] reduces threat perception and belligerent behavior" by states involved in conflict over ethnic issues.[76] But they believe that this finding must be taken with a grain of salt, arguing that politicians in democratic countries might use ethnic grievances and strife for their own purposes in ways that could increase conflict.

The challenges of democratization in a country with ethnic and religious divisions were evident after the 2003 military intervention of Iraq. Although Arabs constitute a majority (80 percent) of the population, there is a large Kurdish minority that has long fought for national self-determination. Iraq is also divided along sectarian lines—with roughly 60 percent Shia and 35 percent Sunni Muslims. Larry Diamond, an expert on democratization and senior adviser to the Coalitional Provisional Authority in Baghdad in 2004, spelled out the tasks facing the United States and a new post-Saddam Iraqi government:

> The political challenges in Iraq from around 9 April 2003—when Saddam's regime fell in Baghdad and a U.S.-led postwar administration began to assert itself—resembled many of the other recent postconflict-reconstruction or nation-building efforts. Once the Ba'athists [Saddam Hussein's ruling political party] were ousted from power, the vacuum of political authority had somehow to be filled, and order on the streets had to be reestablished. The state as an institution had to be restructured and revived. Basic services had to be restored, infrastructure repaired, and jobs created. Fighting between disparate ethnic, regional, and religious groups—many of them with well-armed militias—had to be prevented or preempted. The political culture of fear, distrust, brutal dominance, and blind submission had to be transformed. Political parties and civil society organizations working to represent citizen interests, rebuild communities, and educate for democracy had to be assisted, trained, and protected. A plan needed to be developed to produce a broadly representative

> and legitimate new government, and to write a new constitution for the future political order. And sooner or later, democratic elections would need to be held.[77]

These tasks proved to be quite difficult. Although sovereignty was officially transferred from U.S. authorities to an appointed interim government in June 2004, and although voters approved a new constitution in 2005, and elections were held in January 2005 for a transitional authority and in December 2005 for a full-term government, criminal and sectarian violence escalated. Shias and Sunnis have attacked each others' mosques and religious gatherings and each group has targeted spiritual leaders from the other. And Sunnis have been suspicious of the political process, which they see as dominated by the majority Shias. By mid-2006, most observers agreed that Iraq was experiencing civil war.[78]

As the Iraqi experience illustrates, state-building and democratization involves many difficult issues, including the timing of the first elections. "Ill-timed and ill-prepared elections do not produce democracy, or even political stability, after conflict. Instead they may only enhance the power of actors who mobilize coercion, fear, and prejudice, thereby reviving autocracy and even precipitating large-scale violent strife. In Angola in 1992, in Bosnia in 1996, and in Liberia in 1997, rushed elections set back the prospects for democracy and, in Angola and Liberia, paved the way for renewed civil war."[79]

The United States is not the only international actor to engage in state-building and face the challenges of democratization in countries divided by ethnic conflict. The United Nations, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9, recently involved itself in efforts to deal with ethnic conflicts in Yugoslavia, Somalia, Cyprus, Lebanon, Kashmir, India, and Rwanda. Efforts by the international community to deal with ethnic strife in Rwanda were particularly controversial, with some analysts arguing that those efforts actually provided a base of operations for those who committed genocide, thus prolonging the conflict for years.[80] According to one observer, "The pre-cold war, cold war, and post-cold war record on intervening militarily to promote the more ambitious goals of political and economic development yields a cautionary lesson—don't."[81]

Despite the difficulties of democratization and resolution to ethnic conflict, the international community remains interested in these tasks (see the Policy Choices box in Chapter 6 for more on the pros and cons of democratization). Ethnic conflicts can present moral imperatives—such as the prevention of genocide—and can affect the political, security, and economic interests of other states. As already mentioned, ethnic conflicts frequently become internationalized and can easily spark interstate conflicts. Ethnic conflict can also produce terrorist groups and these groups can become significant transnational actors. International terrorism, along with ethnic conflict, is another significant source of violence in contemporary global politics.

International Terrorism

As discussed in Chapter 4, international terrorist groups are significant nonstate actors in contemporary international politics and in some ways represent a challenge to the sovereign state system. Although international terrorism is not new, its contemporary features include a strong connection to religion, a worldwide presence that uses globalization in a sophisticated way, and an increase in the number of deaths of targeted civilians. After the attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, transnational terrorism and states' attempts to fight terrorism have become a central aspect of global politics.

Defining Terrorism

terrorism Acts of intimidation against civilians committed by nonstate actors for political motives.

Any useful discussion of terrorist groups or terrorism must first deal with the question, "What is **terrorism**?" As is the case with most questions on this subject, the answers are both numerous and controversial.[82] The standard summary of this controversy asserts that "one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter" because terrorism is a highly charged political term used by most people to refer to political violence (or any other political tactic) of which they disapprove:

> In their conflict with the Palestinians, for example, the Israelis claim the moral high ground by pointing to the means their opponents employ, notably suicide bombings. . . . The Palestinians, in contrast, focus on ends. Israel, they argue, is intent on continuing its occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Opposing this occupation is legitimate, in their eyes, and the huge disparities in strength leave them no alternative to terrorism.[83]

The term *terrorism* often comes with a moral judgment. For example, one definition is that "terrorism is the deliberate, systematic murder, maiming, and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear in order to gain political ends. . . . Terrorism . . . is intrinsically evil, necessarily evil, and wholly evil."[84] The problem is then defining what are "evil" political ends and what ends justify certain means. Since there is usually considerable disagreement on what is moral, defining terrorism in moral terms becomes problematic. The French Resistance and the Polish Underground were labeled terrorists by Germany in World War II, but others would certainly disagree, believing that resisting Nazi occupation was a moral cause. This is not to say that terrorist acts should not be held to moral and legal standards, but that it becomes problematic if morality is part of the very definition of terrorism.

Because of the moral judgment connected to the label *terrorism,* defining groups as terrorists has become a tool that political actors use to undermine the legitimacy of their enemies:

> The political nature of determining under what circumstances a violent international political act should be considered terrorism is

> illustrated by [the] U.S. State Department's official list of states supporting terrorism. . . . With no objective criteria for deciding when countries should be placed on or removed from the list, inclusion is a purely political decision.[85]

For example, Syria remained on the list for years even though the State Department testified it had no evidence of Syrian support for terrorism.[86] Since September 11, the tool to define enemies as terrorists has become even more powerful. China, for example, "has launched its own 'war on terror.' Beijing now labels as terrorists those fighting for an independent state in the northwestern province of Xinjiang."[87] China uses, as do many other states, the term terrorist partly in an attempt to avoid condemnation from the international community of its activities against internal groups. The term terrorism, then, is unfortunately related to the judgment of the morality of the actor's objective and the political consequences of being labeled a terrorist.

Less judgmentally, Thomas Schelling points out that the dictionary defines the term as "the use of terror, violence, and intimidation to achieve an end."[88] A CIA-sponsored study has defined international terror as "the threat or use of violence for political purposes when (1) such action is intended to influence the attitude and behavior of a target group wider than its immediate victim, and (2) its ramifications transcend national boundaries."[89] The main problem with these definitions is that they are far too broad. They would include under the same rubric an incredibly diverse array of phenomena. According to these definitions, terrorism includes more than the hijacking of airplanes or the random machine-gunning of people in airports. The bombing of civilian populations in cities by both sides in the Second World War, the invasion of Germany by Allied troops, the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the arrest and torture of political prisoners, and the execution of criminals (or imprisonment of criminals, for that matter) would all qualify as terrorism according to these definitions. A more useful definition might stipulate that terrorism is "the use of violence for political purposes by nongovernmental actors." This definition, however, is still broad since it would include attacks on states by revolutionaries or guerrillas, such as the French Resistance or the Polish Underground in the Second World War, and many feel that guerrilla fighters who restrict their targets to the military forces of the government they are trying to overthrow should not be labeled terrorists. Indeed, "a condemnation of terrorism is not a denunciation of revolutionaries or guerillas. It is only a reiteration of the limits of violence that a civilized society is willing to permit. It does not in any sense preclude the right to revolution, which is a recognized and protected right under international law."[90]

noncombatant targets Targets that have no connection with military forces of a state.

A more tenable distinction, perhaps, is offered by those who argue that "in terrorism, the perpetrators *deliberately* choose **noncombatant targets** and relatively indiscriminate means."[91] It is probably easier to discriminate between combatants and noncombatants than between those who

are innocent and those who are not. Even that distinction, though, is not free of ambiguities. President Reagan denounced as terrorism the 1983 attack that killed 241 U.S. Marines in Beirut. He had argued previously that "freedom fighters" act against military targets, while "terrorists" attack innocent civilians. Can soldiers be classified as noncombatants? Reagan's answer to that question with respect to the bombing of the marines' barracks in Lebanon was that the Marines were noncombatants. He argued that those troops were on a peacekeeping mission and that they were asleep when they were attacked. Furthermore, if terrorism is restricted only to noncombatants, would the September 11, 2001, bombing of the U.S. Pentagon, the headquarters of the U.S. military, qualify as a terrorist act? As is obvious in these cases, the question of whether soldiers can be classified as noncombatants is likely to spark considerable debate even among those determined to conduct a relatively dispassionate analysis of terrorism.[92]

Another problem with defining terrorism as violence against noncombatants is how to classify political assassinations. Politically motivated murders of leaders of states are frequently considered acts of terrorism. The U.S. State Department's list of "Significant Terrorist Incidents, 1961–2001," for example, includes the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Gemayel in 1982 and the attempted assassination of former U.S. President George Bush in 1993. Most of the popular historical examples of terrorists are assassins as well. Yet just as with military personnel, it is difficult to view state officials as innocent civilians in political conflicts.

Title 22 of the U.S. Legal Code (Section 2656[d]) defines *terrorism* as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents. . . . The term 'international terrorism' means terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country."[93] This definition is reasonably specific and avoids many or even most of the problems posed by the definitions discussed above. The only possibly questionable phrase is "clandestine agents," which opens the door to the idea that states can commit terrorism through such agents.

States and their agents, clandestine or not, certainly commit violence for political purposes against noncombatant targets and this violence inspires "terror." Furthermore, the violence perpetrated by governments is a problem incomparably greater in scope and intensity than terrorism.[94] But most who offer analytical definitions of terrorism believe that if any definition is going to be sufficiently precise to be useful, such violence is not terrorism. An act of unjustifiable violence by a government should certainly be called an atrocity but not terrorism. Of course, it is true that states can sponsor terrorism and terrorist agents and that this is a significant problem, as will be discussed shortly. Still, there can be a distinction made between states sponsoring terrorism and states themselves engaging in political violence against noncombatants.

Another aspect missing in these definitions is the drama associated with terrorism and the fear it is meant to inspire. The murdering of a man in his wheelchair during the *Achille Lauro* cruise ship hostage crisis was certainly designed to instill terror. The visual image of airplanes crashing into the twin towers of the World Trade Center seemed to be crafted to shock an audience accustomed to Hollywood films. "Terrorist strategy is basically psychological in nature. The first step is to create mass terror, not mass destruction. . . . The second step is to manipulate political disaffection created by this psychological reaction either to intimidate governing authorities into acceding to specified political demands, or else to get rid of the government entirely."[95] Indeed, "terrorists choose their targets to appear to be random, so everyone feels at risk—when getting on a plane, entering a federal building, or strolling a market square. Businesspeople, military personnel, tourists, and everyday citizens . . . are generally the targets of terrorist attacks."[96]

As we can see, there are numerous ways to define terrorism. Yet there seems to be a consensus in the academic community on key ingredients to classifying acts as terroristic: "the underlying political motive [as opposed to a purely criminal or personal motive], the general atmosphere of intimidation, and the targeting of those outside of the decision-making process."[97] Terrorist groups are nonstate actors that commit such acts.

The History of Terrorism

It is easy to get the impression that terrorism is a quite recent phenomenon, almost entirely dependent on, and so to a great extent a result of, modern communications media, especially television. But terrorist acts were quite common a hundred years ago:

> As the nineteenth century ended, it seemed no one was safe from terrorist attack. In 1894 an Italian anarchist assassinated French President Sadi Carnot. In 1897 anarchists fatally stabbed Empress Elizabeth of Austria and killed Antonio Canovas, the Spanish prime minister. In 1900 Umberto I, the Italian king, fell in yet another anarchist attack; in 1901 an American anarchist killed William McKinley, president of the United States. If in the year 1900 the leaders of the main industrial powers had assembled, most of them would have insisted on giving terrorism top priority on their agenda.[98]

Other historical examples of international terrorist groups include Narodnaya Volya ("The People's Will"), operating in Russia in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), formed in the 1890s. "For several years, the IMRO waged guerilla warfare, sometimes employing terrorist tactics, against the Turkish rulers of their region. . . . Other nations both assisted and

interfered in the struggle. Bombings and kidnappings, as well as the murder of civilians and officials were frequent."[99]

One analysis of three groups of religious terrorists that existed centuries ago—the Thugs (Hindu), the Assassins (Islamic), and the Zealots (Jewish)—makes it clear that terrorist activity on a significant scale has occurred at least since the days of the Roman Empire. Clearly, terrorism is not a phenomenon produced solely by excessive attention from modern media. The Assassins, for example, "did not need mass media to reach interested audiences, because their prominent victims were murdered in venerated sites and royal courts, usually on holy days when many witnesses were present." In general, the idea that "terrorist operations require modern technology to be significant" is a "misconception."[100]

In the modern age of terrorism, one analyst has identified four waves.[101] The first wave, beginning at the end of the nineteenth century, was characterized by anarchism as a motive and assassination as a method, including the assassination of the Austrian archduke in Sarajevo in 1914 that sparked World War I. The second wave was primarily a reaction to decolonization after World Wars I and II and involved groups fighting for national self-determination. The third wave came in response to criticism of the United States in Vietnam and Israel in the Middle East. This wave was more transnational in character, and airline hijacking was the most popular method used. Presumably the fourth wave, beginning with the Iranian revolution in 1979 and growing significantly in the post–Cold War era, involves religion more directly as a motive, or at least as a rhetorical and recruitment tool.[102]

Hezbollah Political and military Shia Islamic group in southern Lebanon.

International terrorism in the 1980s was largely connected to Israel's invasion of Lebanon and U.S. support for Israel and its involvement in the Lebanese civil war. "The most militant of [the Lebanese] Shiite organizations was **Hezbollah,** whose guerrilla arms inaugurated the tactic of massive truck or vehicle bombs. . . . The American embassy in Lebanon was bombed twice . . . [and] the American embassy in Kuwait was also bombed."[103] A Hezbollah suicide bomber was responsible for the attack on the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983.

Furthermore, the 1980s saw an increased involvement of states supporting or "sponsoring" terrorism.[104] There were reports, for example, that Libya maintained camps within its borders capable of training 5,000 men at a time.[105] Several terrorist training camps were located in Syria in the 1980s.[106] And Iran was suspected of sponsoring several Islamic groups, including the Lebanese Hezbollah.[107] State sponsorship of terrorism in the 1980s was also connected to the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. In 1984, one report claimed that "an ever-increasing flow of arms and ammunition, manufactured in the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany, have been shipped to the PLO via East Germany and Hungary."[108] In addition, the United States has funneled millions of dollars in support of

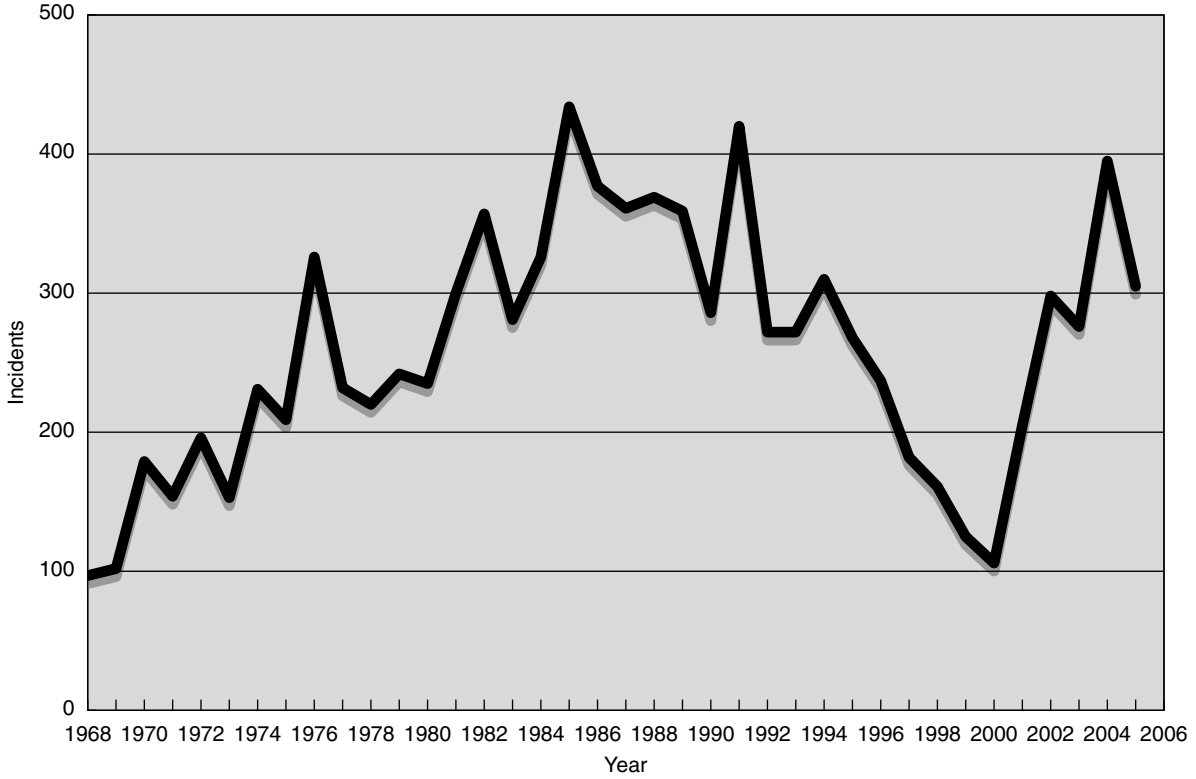
such "nongovernmental perpetrators of violence for political purposes" as the rebels in Afghanistan and the contras in Central America.

One disturbing result of state-supported terrorism is that terrorists acquire access to increasingly sophisticated military technology. Even in the 1970s, terrorists were arrested in Rome, Paris, and Kenya with anti-aircraft missiles and portable rocket launchers.[109] When the Israelis attacked the PLO camps in Lebanon in 1982, they found that the Soviets had supplied that organization with rocket launchers and radar-guided anti-aircraft cannon.[110] The ultimate fear along these lines is that some state at some time would supply weapons of mass destruction to a terrorist group. The Aum Shinrikyo group in Japan used poisonous sarin gas in an attack on the Tokyo subway system in March 1995, and the bombing of New York's World Trade Center in 1993 was intended to involve cyanide gas.[111] Most worrisome is evidence that Al Qaeda has a long history of trying to develop chemical, biological, and nuclear capabilities.[112] Most analysts agree, however, that most terrorist groups do not yet have the financial or technical capabilities to acquire, assemble, and deliver these weapons of mass destruction.[113]

The decline of state sponsorship of terrorism in the 1990s was associated with a decline in terrorist attacks. In 1992, according to a U.S. State Department report (using its own definition of terrorism), "the number of international terrorist incidents dropped sharply [36 percent] . . . falling to its lowest level in 17 years." State Department officials claimed that this decline was attributable to "the disappearance of the Communist governments in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union that provided support and safe haven for terrorist groups."[114] Certainly, the decline in leftist terrorists in the post–Cold War period is partly attributed to the decline of the Soviet empire. Domestic antiterrorism policies by some countries (such as Spain, France, and Germany) and some collective efforts by the European Union and NATO involving coordination and information sharing are also part of the explanation.[115]

Figure 7.2 shows the number of international terrorist attacks occurring each year since 1968, as compiled in the RAND-MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Database. According to this source, the lowest annual total in the last thirty years was 106 incidents in 2000, down from a high of 434 incidents in 1985. The number of incidents generally declined from 1988 to 2003. Since the beginning of this century, the number of terrorist incidents has increased. The number of fatalities, shown in Figure 7.3, associated with these terrorist events also varies across the years. Before 2001, the deadliest year in this record was 1988, with 702 casualties. Even when the number of incidents were on the decline, the number of deaths generally increased, suggesting that terrorist tactics have become more lethal.[116] The embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, for example, killed 247 and injured 5,500, and the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in the United States killed 6 and injured about 1,000. "The attacks of September 11 fit a pattern but also marked a dramatic escalation of

Figure 7.2 Number of International Terrorist Incidents, 1968–2005

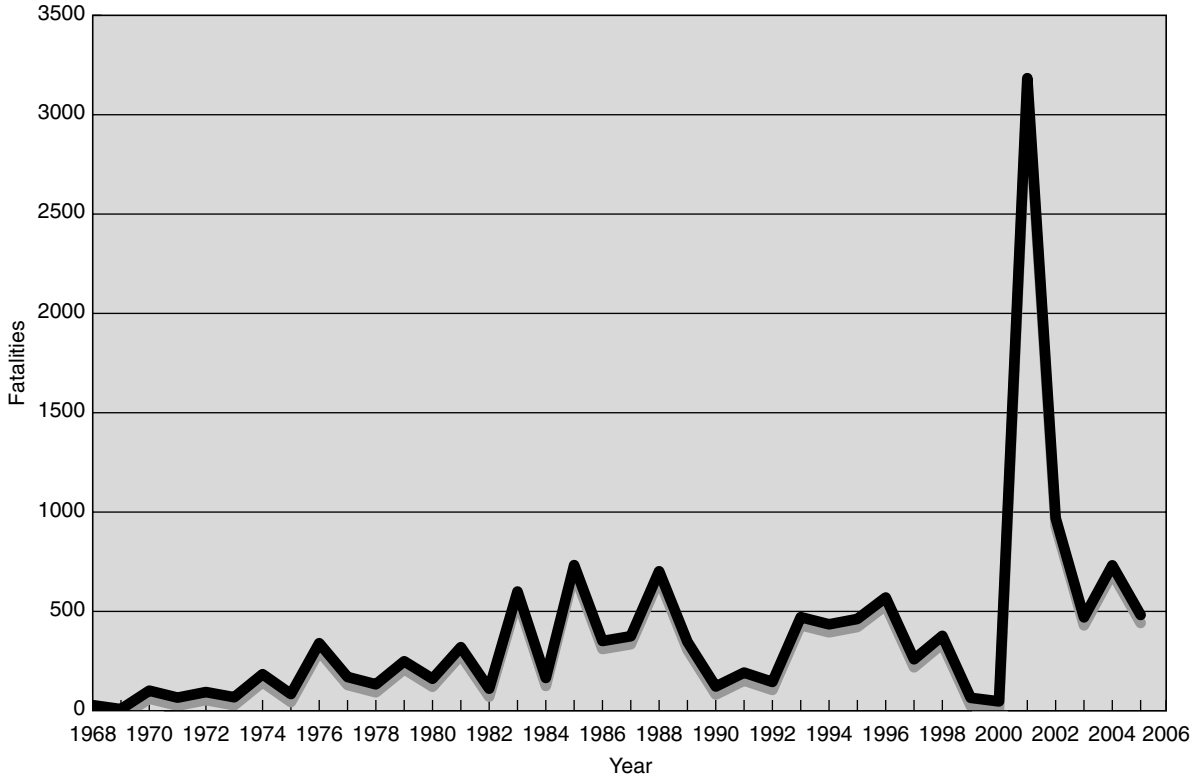


Source: Data from MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Data Base. http://www.tkb.org, accessed October 13, 2006. Data include only international incidents "in which terrorists go abroad to strike the targets, select domestic targets associated with a foreign state, or create an international incident by attacking airline passengers, personnel, or equipment."

violence," killing more than 3,000 people.[117] In addition, the percentage of international attacks against U.S. targets increased from about 25 percent in the mid-1980s to about 47 percent in 2000.[118]

The higher number of deaths seems to have been caused by more attacks on large numbers of civilians, which may be related to the new types of terrorist groups that have emerged (to be discussed later in this chapter). "Although it is tempting to attribute the increased casualties . . . to better technology available to terrorists, incidents have not really relied on new technologies. Old fashioned bombs were used at the World Trade Center, . . . Nairobi, and elsewhere. The difference today is that these bombs are often planned to explode where and when maximum carnage would result."[119] The use of cutter knives and "old-fashioned" hijacking of commercial airlines on September 11, 2001, clearly demonstrates that attacks can be quite lethal without sophisticated technology.

Figure 7.3 Number of International Terrorist Fatalities, 1968–2005



Source: Data from MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Data Base. http://www.tkb.org, accessed October 13, 2006. Data include only international incidents "in which terrorists go abroad to strike the targets, select domestic targets associated with a foreign state, or create an international incident by attacking airline passengers, personnel, or equipment."

Al Qaeda An international network of terrorist cells, created by Osama bin Laden.

The most lethal attacks have been associated with Osama bin Laden and relate to U.S. policy in the Middle East and the **Al Qaeda** network:

> Many sources of the terrorism of the 1990s can be traced to specific events associated with the Persian Gulf war and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. The post-war sanctions against Iraq and the military enforcement of the no-fly zones in Iraq . . . perpetuated that conflict and mobilized anti-American sentiment. . . . Islamic militants from around the world gained experience fighting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. . . . After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the establishment of training camps in Afghanistan by Saudi-born terrorist Osama bin Laden and his Al Qaeda organization provided an ongoing arena for the socialization of Islamic radicals from across the world.[120]

Osama bin Laden, son of a wealthy man who owned a construction company and had ties to the royal ruling family in Saudi Arabia, was part of the resistance against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Indeed, *Al Qaeda* means "the base" and refers to the tracking station that bin Laden established in Pakistan to document the Arabs who went through his guesthouse and training camps on the way to fight in the Afghan resistance. The Muslim opposition to the Soviet Union in Afghanistan was directly encouraged and funded by the United States. The war against the "atheist power" proved attractive; between 1982 and 1992, over 35,000 people from forty Islamic countries joined in the fight.[121] After the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan, bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia but was restricted in his movements for his criticism of the Saudi government, particularly for allowing the Americans to come into Saudi Arabia after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. When he fled Saudi Arabia and was not allowed to return, Sudan accepted him, and there he set up training camps and established ties with groups in Libya, Palestine, Somalia, Bosnia, and the Philippines.[122]

Taliban Fundamentalist Islamic group that supported Al Qaeda and ruled most of Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001.

Under pressure from the United States, Sudan expelled him in 1996, at which time bin Laden returned to Afghanistan, soon to be ruled by the **Taliban,** an Islamic government led by teachers and students from seminaries for the training of the Islamic clergy. The Taliban were backed by neighboring Pakistan and, initially, by Saudi Arabia. Bin Laden set up a number of terrorist camps in Afghanistan and significantly influenced the Taliban leadership.[123] During this time period, he has been linked to the attacks on the Khobar towers in 1996 in Saudi Arabia, the embassy bombings in Africa in 1998, and foiled attacks in Jordan and the United States at turn-of-the-century celebrations in 1999. In 1998 he joined forces with groups in Egypt, Pakistan, and Bangladesh to issue a "Declaration of the World Islamic Front for Jihad against the Jews and the Crusaders." Among other things, the declaration criticized the U.S. "occupation" of Saudi Arabia and issued a *fatwa*, or ruling, stating, "To kill Americans and their allies, both civil and military, is an individual duty of every Muslim . . . until their armies, shattered and broken-winged, depart from all the lands of Islam, incapable of threatening any Muslim."[124] Despite the intent of the signatories that the *fatwa* should apply to all of the Islamic faith, the statement to most Muslims was a "grotesque travesty of the nature of Islam and even of its doctrine of jihad ["holy war"]. . . . At no point do the basic texts of Islam enjoin terrorism and murder. At no point do they even consider the random slaughter of uninvolved bystanders."[125]

The attacks of September 11, 2001, seemed, however, to be gruesomely prophesied by the declaration and previous activities of Al Qaeda and took the history of terrorism, some say world politics, into a new era. Since then, additional attacks, assumed to be connected with Al Qaeda in some form, have occurred in a tourist area of Bali, Indonesia (in 2002), in Casablanca, Morocco (in 2003), and in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (also in 2003).[126] More recently, in March of 2004, terrorists, assumed to be Spanish-based Moroccans connected to Al Qaeda, attacked a Madrid commuter train, killing 191 and

injuring over 1,400 people. In July 2005, 52 people died in an attack on buses and subway trains in London. The London bombings were carried out by British-born Muslims and it is unclear how much Al Qaeda played a role in the training of the attackers and the planning of the attacks.[127] Al Qaeda is also suspected of involvement in a plot to blow up as many as ten transatlantic planes in August 2006. Although the attacks on seven trains in Mumbai, India, in July 2006 were similar in style to the London and Madrid bombings, they are not believed to have been organized by any Al Qaeda group. Instead, Indian authorities suspected a Pakistani-based group fighting against Indian rule in Kashmir.[128] To many, the attacks in London and Madrid served as further proof that global politics had entered a new phase of terror. Europe, for example, seems to be a new locus of Islamic extremist activity, with both long-time residents and new immigrants joining the now-global, decentralized network associated with Al Qaeda.[129]

Still, in the light of the actual amount of suffering and death from international terrorism, it might be argued that it is an overpublicized phenomenon: "[I]t is worth remembering that the total number of people killed since 9/11 by al Qaeda or al Qaedalike operatives outside of Afghanistan and Iraq is not much higher than the number who drown in bathtubs in the United States in a single year."[130] The total number of deaths caused by international terrorist incidents from 1968 to 2005, according to the RAND-MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, is 9,858.[131] That is a tragically large number, although not in comparison with the numbers killed by international wars, civil wars, government-sponsored policies of oppression, and so on.

In the end, perhaps, what is most worrisome about international terrorism in the contemporary era is its potential for wreaking massive havoc and suffering with nuclear weapons, biological and chemical weapons, or information warfare techniques that could result in massive dislocations in banking records, airline traffic, and communication networks. "Chances are that of 100 attempts at terrorist superviolence, 99 would fail. But the single successful one could claim many more victims, do more material damage, and unleash far greater panic than anything the world has yet experienced."[132]

The Origins of Terrorism

It is a mistake to believe that terrorism is mindless violence, without purpose other than a release for pent-up frustration:

> The ultimate goals of all international terrorism are political. This distinguishes it from nonpolitical violence by criminal elements or the emotionally disturbed. Most terrorist goals involve a sense of grievance, real or imagined, which the perpetrators seek to overcome either by forcing political authorities to accede to their demands or by forcing them from power entirely.[133]

Terrorism can have several tactical aims for resistance groups. For some of the Palestinian groups, these aims include publicizing the groups' cause, "provoking Israel to adopt repressive measures against innocent,

uncommitted Arabs in the hope that such measures will lead the latter to join or support the resistance, . . . provoking Israel to retaliate severely against Arab states and thereby undermine diplomatic efforts to achieve peace, . . . [and] dissuading moderate Arab regimes from making concessions to Israel."[134]

Like the Palestinians, several groups are ethnic minorities seeking national self-determination:

> Faced with the overwhelming odds in favor of the well-established and well-armed state, many of the peoples seeking to exercise their right to self-determination have been increasingly willing to use less conventional methods and means of waging war. Lacking large popular support from the indigenous population, facing a state whose trained army and weaponry make conventional resistance a mockery, such groups are increasingly willing to use . . . terrorism . . . to achieve their right.[135]

From the late 1960s until the late 1980s, transnational terrorism was primarily motivated by nationalism, separatism, Marxist ideology, racism, nihilism, and economic equality.[136] Some argue that the current wave of modern terrorist activity is distinct because of its religious character. "Older groups like the PLO or the IRA are generally constrained by nationalists or irredentist goals—a Palestinian state, a united Ireland—that are negotiable. . . . What motivates their violence is the desire to obtain a particular political result. Old terrorists are looking to bargain, new terrorists want only to express their wrath and cripple their enemy."[137]

Indeed, over the last two and a half decades, groups for which religion provides the dominant objective and who engage in terrorist acts have become more prevalent.[138] Possibly due to a worldwide growth of religious fundamentalism, some analysts view these more religious-based groups as more dangerous "than earlier terrorist groups that wanted to win over the people and, in so doing, did not want to leave massive casualties. During . . . earlier decades, precision attacks were directed at well-defined targets of the establishment."[139] And suicide attacks, possibly motivated by religious notions of martyrdom, have become more prevalent. "The years from 2001 to 2005 alone account for 78 percent of all the suicide terrorist incidents perpetrated between 1968 and 2005."[140]

Others disagree, arguing that the current type of violence is not particularly new[141] and not particularly related to religion. Islam, for example, strictly prohibits the targeting of innocent civilians, and Islamic "theology cannot explain suicide as a method of terrorism. Here again, the perpetrators and their supporters may twist religion to suit their ends, and to brush aside the basic Islamic doctrine prohibiting suicide."[142] Furthermore, suicide bombing is not a new terrorist tactic. Historically, other groups, such as some Palestinian Islamic and Lebanese Christian groups in the 1950s and 1960s and the Japanese in World War II, used tactics that involved the necessary death of the attacker.[143] And one

non-religious group, the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, is "the world leader in suicide terrorism."[144]

Furthermore, "while there is some truth to the notion that Islamism is the leading doctrinal ideology among terrorists today, . . . the political dynamics of the Islamist terrorist groups are overwhelmingly nationalist and ethnic in scope."[145] The origins of Al Qaeda terrorism, for example, are decidedly political. Members of Al Qaeda, particularly those with roots in Egypt, were first fighting quite authoritarian and repressive regimes, backed by the United States:

> For most of the militants now engaged in Al Qaeda, opposition to authority at home, whether peaceful or violent, was ineffective. Local regimes countered dissent with severe repression. As a result, radical frustrations apparently were transferred to the United States as a symbol of both oppression and arrogance. . . . One cannot understand Al Qaeda without understanding the domestic politics of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, or now much of the Muslim world.[146]

Specifically, U.S. support of successive Egyptian governments (after 1979, Egypt became the second largest recipient, following Israel, of U.S. foreign aid) angered groups that had been fighting repression for decades. One of these groups, the al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya, had been active since the 1970s in attempting to overthrow the government, and it began working outside Egypt in the 1990s. Its spiritual leader, the cleric Umar Abd al-Rahman, along with other members of the group, were convicted in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. Another group, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, joined forces with Osama bin Laden in 1998, and this alliance "can be interpreted as an outcome of the group's inability to continue its terrorist activities within Egypt."[147]

In contrast to Egypt, in which Islamic dissidents were responding to a secular state, dissidents like bin Laden in Saudi Arabia emerged in a country with a government that supports a strict, fundamentalist version of religious doctrine. Yet Saudi Arabia's relationship with the United States—its alliance with the United States in the Gulf War against Iraq and its continued logistical support of the U.S. presence in the Middle East—angered many Saudis, including groups like the Saudi Hezbollah. Attacks on U.S. military personnel in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in 1995, and on the Khobar towers in 1996 reflected this anger.

Al Qaeda's political motives behind the September 11 attack are presumably related to these objections to U.S. policy:

> The reasoning behind the September 11 attacks was expressed primarily in a statement from bin Laden broadcast in Qatar on October 7. . . . The statement referred specifically to 80 years of humiliation of Islam. It thus apparently dated the period of humiliation to 1921, the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, and the establishment of Britain's Palestine Mandate that provided

> for a Jewish homeland. Specific references to Palestine and Iraq were made, as well as more vague allegations that countries that believe in Islam had been turned against bin Laden by the United States. Bin Laden cited United States retaliation against Afghanistan in 1998 as another grievance.[148]

How new the mix of religion and politics is in the motivations behind current terrorism is unclear. It is certainly the case that

> Osama bin Laden is no more representative of Islam than Timothy McVeigh is of Christianity, or Japan's Shoko Asahara is of Buddhism. Still, one cannot deny that the ideals and ideas of these vicious activists are permeated with religion. The authority of religion has given bin Laden's cadres what they believe is the moral standing to employ violence in their assault on the very symbol of global economic power. It has also provided the metaphor of cosmic war, an image of spiritual struggle that every religion has within its repository of symbols: the fight between good and bad, truth and evil.[149]

What does seem to be new about contemporary terrorist acts is that they are supported by well-organized and global networks.[150] The coordinated attacks against two U.S. embassies, in Kenya and Tanzania, in 1998 was one

U.S. soldiers stand guard in front of the American embassy in Nairobi, Kenya, after it was bombed in a terrorist attack in 1998. (Robert Patrick/Corbis Sygma)

of the first signs that a new, transnational, well-organized network of groups was operating. Subsequently, in the trials of suspects in these attacks, the degree of organization, sophistication, and scope of Al Qaeda was revealed:

> United States government officials estimate that bin Laden's organization . . . has thousands of operatives who are active, or suspected to be active, in dozens of countries. . . . Many groups, such as the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Algerian Armed Islamic Group, are closely affiliated with al Qaeda. . . . The al Qaeda organization, and others like it, have branches that handle finance, documents, public relations, and intelligence. They run businesses. They conduct surveillance of enemy targets. They cultivate journalists to ensure favorable coverage in the press. They have sophisticated web sites for both fund raising and recruiting.[151]

After September 11, 2001, Al Qaeda has become even more transnational, and more decentralized. With the invasion of Afghanistan and the destruction of the Taliban government, Al Qaeda relied more on "associated groups to advance their territorial aims, as well as support Al-Qaeda's universal jihad. To this end, its organizers, trainers, financiers and human couriers have dispersed and are moving around the world to provide support to these groups."[152] "The result is that today there are many al Qaedas rather than the single al Qaeda of the past."[153] What is unclear is the degree to which Al Qaeda leaders such as bin Laden direct these other groups and their activities and provide them with training and resources, or simply inspire them. What is certain, however, is that the transnational character of today's international terrorist networks is undoubtedly aided by globalization[154] (see Chapter 14) and makes the design of policies to prevent terrorism more difficult.

Dealing with Terrorism

Most analysts of terrorism agree that it is impossible to prevent terrorist attacks. Yet intelligence does work at times. A series of "millennium plots," including a plan to bomb the Los Angeles airport, were foiled in December 1999 and British authorities averted an attempt to blow up transatlantic flights in August 2006.[155] Overall, however, prevention is extremely difficult, and some antiterrorism measures can in fact be counterproductive. Using data on terrorist acts from 1968 and 1988, one study evaluated the impact of various antiterrorist policies. The study concluded that

> the most effective policies were the installation of metal detectors in January 1973 and the fortification of U.S. embassies in 1976 and thereafter. Although metal detectors decreased skyjackings, they had the unintended effect of *increasing* other types of hostage missions and assassinations. . . . .No long-run decrease in terrorism could be attributed to the raid [by the United States

> on Libya in 1986]. Finally, the Reagan antiterrorism laws did not inhibit terrorism directed against U.S. interests.[156]

The U.S. raid on Libya in retaliation against terrorist activities believed to be sponsored by Libya is one approach to terrorism: relying on conventional military attacks launched against the states that support it. This attack caused a transatlantic maelstrom of controversy. Most Americans approved the action, whereas most Europeans did not. Only the British government cooperated with the attack. The controversy regarding the U.S. attack focused first on its effectiveness and second on its morality. Even officials in the Reagan administration acknowledged initially that the raid on Libya might cause an increase in terrorism in the short run. They also argued, however, that it would decrease terrorism in the long run. Ethical military operations, according to just war principles (see Chapter 9), require discrimination, that is, immunity for noncombatants. Unfortunately, U.S. bombs in Libya killed civilians. The just war doctrine also stipulates that military action must be proportional, doing more good than harm. One critic addressed the idea of using conventional military attacks as a response to terrorist activities even before President Reagan's retaliation against Muammar Qaddafi's Libya. He said that such attacks would "substitute the greater evil of full-scale war, with all its attendant death and devastation and dangers of escalation, for the lesser evil of terrorism."[157]

As mentioned, one study indicates that there was no long-term effect and "the American bombing of Tripoli apparently led Libya to seek revenge by organizing the midair bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in December 1988."[158] Yet the suspects for this bombing were eventually indicted, with one convicted, and Libyan sponsorship of terrorist groups does seem to have decreased. How much Libya's change in policies can be attributed to fear of another military attack, however, is debatable, as many analysts believe that these changes were motivated more by Libya's desire to end sanctions and improve its economy.[159]

The raid against Libya is not the only example of military attacks against states accused of sponsoring terrorists. More recently, the United States attacked a pharmaceutical company in 1998 in Sudan, believing there was a connection between the company and Osama bin Laden, who was suspected in the bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. At the same time, the United States launched attacks in Afghanistan against suspected Al Qaeda training camps. The decision to attack Sudan and Afghanistan was controversial. "In particular, critics disputed the link between the pharmaceuticals plant, chemical precursors, and bin Laden. The retaliatory attacks may have been a signal of American resolve, but they inflicted no serious damage on Al Qaeda's capabilities."[160]

After the September 11, 2001 attacks, the United States, backed by a large coalition of states, again pursued military options as one way of dealing with terrorism. Within weeks, the war against the Taliban government in Afghanistan was launched and eventually succeeded in dismantling the state that had given sanctuary to Al Qaeda leaders. But

even after the fall of the Taliban, it was unclear if the military campaign caused any significant, long-term damage to the Al Qaeda network. In addition to the military strikes, the United States and other countries froze economic assets believed to be linked to Al Qaeda, arrested numerous suspected Al Qaeda associates, attempted to heighten security, and increased monitoring of suspected individuals. Of course one justification offered for the military intervention in Iraq in 2003 was the Iraqi regime's suspected links with Al Qaeda, although this justification is criticized for being based on faulty and exaggerated intelligence (for a summary of the debate prior to intervention, see the Policy Choices box in Chapter 3).

Many fear that military attacks, such as those on Afghanistan in 1998 and 2001, against terrorist groups can be counterproductive:

> If the terrorists are militarily destroyed, the legitimacy of their cause may still exist and even become stronger, depending on how the operation is perceived. Dramatic cruise missile attacks, for example, play into the mindsets of developing countries (and even of some U.S. allies) affirming the belief that the U.S. is too powerful, takes too many unilateral actions and has too much sway in the world. The ironic result is an overall increase in political sympathy for the terrorists or their cause.[161]

Along this line of thinking, many argue that it is U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan *after* the defeat of the Taliban and in Iraq *after* the war against Saddam Hussein's regime that is most critical to its antiterrorist goals.[162] If Afghanistan, for example, falls from the international agenda and reverts back into economic despair and civil war, it once again may provide sanctuary for terrorists, and it will serve as an example to those who oppose U.S. policies. Similarly, with regard to Iraq, many argue that the civilian casualties, the rise in sectarian and criminal violence, and the abuse of both prisoners and civilians by the U.S. military are counterproductive if the campaign against terrorist groups involves a "battle for hearts and minds."[163] The treatment of terrorist suspects at the U.S. base in Guantánamo Bay (discussed in Chapter 9) may have also failed in this regard.

Relatedly, another approach to dealing with terrorism is to address the grievances of the terrorists. Many of the most spectacular terrorist incidents, especially those involving Americans and Israelis, have been carried out by Palestinians or groups sympathetic to Palestinians. Providing Palestinians with more support might deprive at least some terrorist organizations of an important source of volunteers for their plans and projects. This was presumably one motive behind the signing of the Oslo Peace Agreement in 1993, but the process of implementing this agreement was accompanied by, and perhaps even provoked, several terrorist incidents in the decade that followed. Beyond addressing specific grievances in the Middle East, a broader strategy may be appropriate. According to one observer,

> much more needs to be done to create a peaceful and stable world order; the major powers must not only cooperate in the fight against

This former Al Qaeda training camp in the outskirts of Kandahar, Afghanistan, was heavily bombed during the 2001 U.S.-led attack against terrorist targets.
(Apichart Weerawong/ AP Photo/AP Images)

> terrorism but also deal with its root causes. . . . We are locked in a struggle for ideas and beliefs that demands greater attention be paid to such issues as poverty. . . . A robust global economy is a condition sine qua non in the battle against terrorism. By destroying a root cause of frustration—namely grinding poverty—a healthy economy denies terrorists a fresh source of recruits.[164]

Although the idea that terrorism is rooted in poverty is plausible and possible, some research fails to find a relationship between poor economic conditions and terrorist activity. What seems to be more important is the nature of the state. Weak states that are divided by ethnic and religious conflict, for example, may see more violence by terrorism.[165] Indeed, addressing the problem of failed and weak states in the international system may also be key to addressing international terrorism. As discussed in Chapter 3 and earlier in this chapter, states' lack of sufficient control over their territory stems from a number of causes, including ethnic conflict. When states fail and political vacuums arise, violence can escalate and create insecurity, poverty, and refugees. Not only are these conditions ripe for terrorist groups to form and recruit members; these countries are attractive to existing terrorist groups. Terrorist groups that can operate outside the structure of state authority can engage in various organizational activities free from interference. Thus, many weak states in the international system, such as Somalia, Sudan, and Afghanistan, might not necessarily actively sponsor terrorism, but become hosts to various

terrorist groups. The difficulty of establishing political authority in Iraq after the U.S.-led military intervention has also encouraged international terrorists, including Al Qaeda, to establish bases in Iraq and participate in the sectarian violence and attacks against the U.S. military.[166]

Border areas or "brown areas," which are often difficult for states to control, also become attractive locations for terrorist groups. According to one terrorist analyst, "the triborder region of South America [at the intersection of Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay] has become the world's new Libya, a place where terrorists with widely disparate ideologies—Marxist Colombian rebels, American white supremacists, Hamas, Hezbollah, and others—meet to swap tradecraft."[167] The Lebanese border with Israel has also sparked terrorist activities and conflict. While Israel, and others, accuse Syria and Iran of directly sponsoring the Lebanese Hezbollah, Israel accuses Lebanon of being too weak to control its southern territory, allowing Hezbollah to operate there. Israel's military attack on Lebanon in July 2006 was its response to this situation, but some charged that this action would prove counterproductive.

Many argue that if terrorism has become an international problem, states cannot deal with terrorist threats unilaterally. The coalition, however shaky, formed against Al Qaeda and Afghanistan after September 11 is an example of international cooperation, a fairly new way of dealing with terrorism. Historically, terrorism was seen as an internal issue and elicited little international, coordinated response. "Those attitudes began to change in the 1980s when a number of spectacular attacks captured the world's attention, and it became apparent that without political cooperation, all countries would be at risk. By mid-1995, there were eleven major treaties and conventions against various kinds of terrorist acts."[168]

The United Nations has recently become a forum for international cooperation against terrorism. Following the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, the Security Council passed a resolution demanding, among other things, an end to Libyan sponsorship of terrorism and Libyan acceptance of responsibility for the Pan Am attack. Later, in 1992, the Security Council imposed an arms and civil aviation embargo on Libya and followed up in 1993 by freezing some Libyan assets and placing an embargo on oil technology on Libya.[169] The Taliban government's refusal to surrender bin Laden after the attacks on the U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998 led to UN sanctions as well.

Despite instances of international cooperation, these efforts may not work, and coalitions can be quite fragile:

> Terrorism's history shows that organizations can be decimated, and . . . can be made less significant but terrorists also can invent new ways to carry out their activities. Previous international efforts were difficult to sustain and similar problems are emerging now. Members do not agree on how to apply the term, and the decision not to use it for groups in Kashmir, Lebanon, and Israel

demonstrates that the interests of states simply do not sufficiently coincide, and that some will encourage groups others abhor.[170]

SUMMARY

- Ethnic conflict, attracting major headlines and contributing to the death toll from war in the post–Cold War era, can occur between groups of people who share a collective identity based on a belief of common descent and shared experiences and cultural traits. There are many ethnic groups in the world in conflict over group rights and self-determination. These conflicts typically affect relations between states.
- Ethnic conflict is not a new phenomenon but did increase from the early 1950s to the early 1990s. During the Cold War, ethnic conflicts often became part of the East-West rivalry, but the end of the Cold War did not bring about an end to ethnic conflict. The end of the Cold War contributed to ethnic conflicts in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.
- Many factors contribute to ethnic conflict, including competition over economic resources and economic modernization, historical animosities, anarchical situations in collapsed states, ethnocentric beliefs, and leaders' manipulations of identities for political gain.
- The resolution of ethnic conflict may be as complex as the causes. Democratization can help, but democratization in places with a history of ethnic conflict is difficult to achieve. Redrawing boundaries and recognizing the right of self-determination for all ethnic groups is not feasible in most situations and would not necessarily prevent the continuation of conflict.
- Terrorism might most usefully be defined as the use of violence by nonstate actors for political purposes, typically against noncombatants. Terrorist groups are not new, but they do have new potential to wreak havoc in the international system with weapons of mass destruction. The rise of state-sponsored terrorism in the 1980s and the activity of groups associated with Al Qaeda in the late 1990s and early twenty-first century represent the most recent waves of terrorism, which are causing a higher number of deaths. The attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, brought about a new phase of terrorism and state responses to global networks of terrorists.
- Terrorist groups have a variety of political motives, including national self-determination. Recently, religious-related objectives have become more central to terrorist groups.
- Prevention of terrorism is difficult. Anti-terrorism techniques include retaliatory and preemptive military interventions. Many see military solutions as counterproductive and instead urge the international community to address the grievances and root causes of terrorist groups.

KEY TERMS