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The Dialectics of Discrimination in the Twenty-First Century

SUMMARY

This article explores some of the latest developments in the scholarship on race relations and nationalism that seek to address the impact of globalization and the changed geo-political relations of the first decade of the twenty-first century. New patterns of identification, some of which challenge existing group boundaries and others that reinforce them, can be seen to flow from the effects of global market changes and the political counter-movements against them. The impact of the “war on terrorism”, the limits of the utility of hard power, and the need for new mechanisms of inter-racial and inter-ethnic conflict resolution are evaluated to emphasize the complexity of these group relations in the new world disorder.

KEY WORDS: racism, ethnonationalism, inequality, transnationalism, globalization, terrorism, conflict resolution

“Even in the most severely divided society, ties of blood do not lead ineluctably to rivers of blood.”

(Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, 1985, p. 684)

“Combine the characteristics of European football hooligans, American gun lovers, and security policemen from across half of the world into a single paramilitary unit and license them to pursue ethnic cleansing – especially against people more privileged than themselves – and wild murder and rape might ensue in many countries.”

(Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*, 2005, p. 427)

Scholarship on ethnonationalism and research on race relations intersect in important and interesting ways (Conversi, 2004).^{*} Although nationalism is often associa-

^{*} This paper is the result of the research project “Social integration and collective identity in multiethnic areas

ted with regions of the world possessing long established state systems, like Europe, Japan and China, the scholarship on ethnic and racial conflict tends to focus more prominently on the societies of immigration, like the United States, Canada, Argentina and Australia. The developing regions of Africa and many parts of Asia and Latin America fall somewhere between the two. However, like so many crude generalizations this one tends to fall apart on closer examination for the simple reason that there are so many exceptions that undermine the utility of the divisions. Such a conclusion is reinforced as we consider some of the special characteristics of the evolving world in the twenty-first century: the hegemony of global capitalism; the changing nature of migration that takes on a variety of forms in addition to the major South-North movements – trans-nationalism, diasporas, illegal migration and professional multiple migrants, to cite just a few examples – and the new trends in industrial production, commercial relationships and financial networks that are reshaping the power realities of modern global society. Nevertheless, other forces are being generated that represent counter-reactions to these wider developments: anti-globalization alliances, social movements that seek to restore traditional values increasingly being threatened, if not undermined, by the impact of post-modernity, and fundamentalist religious and political mobilization that attempts, in a similar manner, to challenge the direction of global inequality in an era when the nation state is either considered to be an anomaly or an anachronism.

Within this wider framework, new emerging patterns of race and ethnic relations are developing in a complicated manner that defies simple explanations. If the way we treat each other depends on the basic distribution of power resources among individuals, at the micro-social level, and among groups, at the macro-societal level, then a key to understanding these new patterns lies in charting the redistribution of global power in all its many manifestations. However, social scientists have long realized that even the definition of power is a complex problem and one about which there is continuing and unresolved debate (Lukes, 2005; Swartz, 2007). A hallmark of the postmodern turn was the attempt to extend the insight that self-definition is a basic human trait into a wider relativistic social philosophy. While, on the one hand, it is impossible to deny the importance of the Thomas theorem (Merton, 1995), that “if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences”, on the other hand, this subjectivist social philosophy can only be raised to a universal law by ignoring the reality of many the other dimensions of social power. The Tank Man at Tiananmen Square could well represent the will to human freedom in its starkest form, but his personal fate, and the long term outcome of the cause that he so bravely but idiosyncratically championed, remains a mystery. Suppressing the images and eradicating the memory of this iconic act of defiance represents another side of the power equation in an era of information technology and the global impact of the World Wide Web.¹

of Croatia” which has been carried out with the support of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports of the Republic of Croatia.

¹ See, for example, the collaboration of Western media and high tech companies with the restrictions imposed by the Communist Party leadership on the free flow of ideas within China, e.g. “Google in China: Search No Evil” at www.joyoftech.com.

The analysis of ethnic conflict, and its attempted resolution, draws on a broad and eclectic field of disciplinary knowledge. For sociologists, the idea that conflict is endemic in human society has been recognized since the beginning of the discipline. The issue is less the removal of conflict *per se*, something that Simmel and many others regarded as a futile quest, but more the challenge of how to channel the conflicting forces found in all societies in a less destructive and, hopefully, more positive direction. Such a search applies as much to the tensions within groups as it does to the conflicts between them. And this is another important illustration of where race and ethnic theories intersect with the analysis of nationalism. The additional twist that more recent events have given to these debates is the question concerning the viability of some of the many smaller states in a world increasingly dominated by multi-national conglomerates and the new threats to more established and powerful states resulting from the pressures generated by non-state actors like global terrorist networks. But even on these questions, some theorists point out that this is nothing new. Viewing the “world system” as an essentially inter-connected whole for at least the past five centuries is a perspective that has had much appeal. The authority of dominant world powers has frequently been challenged by a variety of “predators and parasites” – drug traffickers, pirates and terrorists – when indeed these same powers have not been co-opting such non-state actors for their own ends (Lowenheim, 2006). After all, Lord Palmerston, the architect of Britain’s “Opium Wars” against China during the middle of the nineteenth century, could be regarded as a Pablo Escobar of the nineteenth century, but an even more dangerous individual as this drug lord controlled a military super-power. However, every non-state actor need not be seen as necessarily negative, as global environmental, medical and human rights organizations often act as counter-weights to the short-sighted interests of particular states or other global power blocs.

Two further developments in recent thinking about ethnicity, race and nationalism should also be evaluated in a critical manner. These may be encapsulated in the arguments of two sociologists, Rogers Brubaker (2004) and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (1997, 2006), which although derived from the two different bodies of literature and research – ethnicity/nationalism and race relations – arrive at interesting, but contrasting, conclusions. As the paradoxical titles of their two books might imply – *Ethnicity without Groups* and *Racism without Racists* – these are arguments that suggest a radical deconstruction of the assumptions underpinning much of both areas of scholarship. Brubaker’s essays make the claim that ethnic conflict is a catch-all term that encompasses far too much to have any analytical power. Ethnic or national groups do not have the cohesiveness that the leaders of these movements seek to promote while the conflicts that are labeled “ethnic” ignore the fact that passionate nationalists are usually a small minority of “the group” and that much conflict that is falsely categorized as “ethnic” is often the result of tensions generated by individual, family, class and other factors. While there is considerable validity in Brubaker’s central claim – that much of the scholarship on ethnic conflict does indeed focus on those who foment such conflicts rather than on those who ignore or oppose them (2004: 19–20) – the basic thesis does seem to be a clever, but somewhat contrived, way of throwing out the ethnic baby with the conflict bath water. This becomes clearer if we substitute “organizations” or “political par-

ties” for “ethnic groups”. Are we then suggesting that all members working in these organizations or parties necessarily think alike or act in the same manner? Recognizing the diverse motives and beliefs of the membership of groups, however, does not invalidate the structural reality of so many outcomes and certainly does not demand a reductionist approach towards social dynamics. We have had more than enough of this type of analysis from simplistic rational choice models and the imperialistic claims of sociology to the current fad of neuroscience (Stone, 1985, 2004; Coulter and Sharrock, 2007).

Bonilla-Silva’s argument works in the opposite direction. His assessment of American race relations suggests that the apparent move away from state-sanctioned, racial discrimination in the post-Civil Rights era is a myth, or more precisely an adroit re-positioning of those forces seeking to preserve the racial boundaries in the United States. By turning the universalistic claims of non-racialism against those seeking to implement policies designed to create greater racial justice, policies that are *de facto* segregationist can hide behind the fig leaf of non-racialism. The counter-attack against affirmative action, school desegregation, open housing and fair employment is based on a denial of the legitimacy of monitoring, planning or acting with any recognition of racial difference. Thus the Blackmun doctrine, derived from the 1977 *Regents of the University of California versus Bakke case*, declaring that “in order to get beyond race we need first to take race into account”, is replaced by a refusal to countenance any consideration of race in public policy. As a result, an absolutist non-racialism is espoused by some conservatives, which almost guarantees that existing racial inequities will be preserved indefinitely.

These two approaches to recent developments in the studies of nationalism, ethnic affiliation and racism point to the new types of changes that are taking place in different parts of an increasingly inter-connected global society. It is important to understand that not all conflicts should be seen as being based on national or ethnic divisions, despite their labels, just as it is crucial to recognize that long-standing racial boundaries may well be re-created in a political environment that purports to be actively trying to consign them to the dustbin of history. Let us now consider the specific literatures in greater detail.

Recent Trends in Race Relations Literature

Since the new millennium, or perhaps more precisely, after the events of September 11, 2001 and all the related developments flowing from, or in reaction to, this first attack on American soil since Pearl Harbor sixty years before, the analysis of race relations has been in a state of flux. In the United States, the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s has run its course displaying certain undeniable progress in several arenas, but also a stubborn persistence of much basic racial inequality. What Massey and Denton aptly termed *American Apartheid* in the mid-1990s remains as one of the critical realities of life in the United States in the first decade of the twenty-first century – persistent racial segregation. If an Englishman’s home is his castle, for the American where one lives is the pathway to the American Dream. This is because of the fact that, in so

many different ways, residence reflects access to the type of educational options available, and these in turn control other crucial opportunities and life chances. The June 2007 Supreme Court ruling that further restricts the use of race in school integration plans – in what many observers view as a mixture of cynicism and Alice-in-Wonderland logic – by following Chief Justice Roberts' conclusion that: "the best way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race". This combination of historical amnesia and blindness to social reality may well represent a new judicial Reconstruction that will stop dead, if not reverse, much of the critical progress towards greater racial justice achieved in America since the 1960s.

However, these developments are hardly surprising given the other forces gathering momentum in American society since the attack on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon in 2001. Increasing *racial* inequality can be seen as part and parcel of a wider package that has witnessed the erosion of social equality in a society driven by the mantra of market economics completely disengaged from the fetters of social obligation and regulation. *The Wealth of Nations* has become divorced from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* in a manner that would have surprised and shocked Adam Smith. Furthermore, the paradox that the free movement of capital is acceptable while the free movement of labor is not, lies at the heart of the conservative dilemma. What is fundamental to "unfettered" market economics, however, is an increasing trend towards greater inequality and a rolling back of many decades of attempts by the State to act as a mediator and moderating force between entrepreneurial *laissez-faire* and social justice. For a period during and immediately after the 1990s, market solutions trumped state limitations in many parts of the world, but signs have begun to emerge in Russia and Latin America, to take two major examples, of the pendulum starting to swing back to a more balanced position along the continuum between capitalist and socialist economics (Hou, 2007).

This economic backdrop acts as an indispensable context within which to assess the redirection of global ethnic and race relations. It is true that in theory, and sometimes in practice, certain pressures within a market-driven enterprise are largely colour-blind and tend to break down categorical distinctions, but other forces have the opposite impact (Massey, 2007). "Opportunity hoarding", to use Shapiro's (2004) perceptive term – rather than the more opaque jargon of social and human capital or network analyses – provides a huge advantage in tipping the playing field in favor of the established participants in the game. It is like a transatlantic boat race in which two yachts start in opposite ports and the one sails with the prevailing winds and the other against them. The distance is the same but the outcome is virtually certain, even if the yachts and the crews are identical at the outset. So much for stressing "merit" when one is blind to the fundamental injustice of the comparison. The increasing economic inequality of both the United States and global society is likely to have repercussions for the progress, or lack of it, found among different racial and ethnic groups. Of course, this may not always lead to a similar impact on *all* racial and ethnic groups, or *every* member of such categories, but the probability is that it will enhance the pre-existing inequalities unless there is some special mitigating factor – like regional concentration or occupational specialization – that may sometimes off-set or reduce the inertia of privilege.

While it is generally accepted that “race” is a social construct, an idea – in this case a scientifically erroneous one – that is in the minds of men and women, whose enormous variability from one society to another, and in different historical periods, demonstrates that it has little intrinsic importance but is rather a powerful legacy of cultural tradition and social solidarity. How long it will take white Americans to accept their fellow black citizens not only as governors, top officials and serious presidential candidates, but as residential neighbours and marriage partners for their children remains to be seen. The evidence, for all the high-profiled media coverage of Condoleezza Rice following Colin Powell as Secretary of State in 2005, and Senator Barack Obama’s meteoric rise to celebrity status in the presidential primaries during 2007, is that a disproportionate number of African Americans are still struggling to emerge from generations of oppression and economic disadvantage.

A century and a half after the era of slavery, the impact of racial divisions lives on as seen in the continuing discrepancies in the income and wealth statistics that regularly demonstrate the deprived status of so many African Americans (Shapiro, 2004).² Drive through the heart of any major, or for that matter minor, American city; examine the student populations of so many of the worst American public schools or the elite private universities; or simply consider the statistics describing the inmates of the American penal system,³ and the reality of the continuing significance of race is hard to deny. Perhaps the most striking illustration of the pervasive and insidious nature of racism in the contemporary United States is the March 2007 vote by the Cherokee Indians to exclude the Black Freedmen – African slaves who became a part of the Cherokee nation by the Treaty of 1866 – to deny these historical co-victims from joining in the benefits of tribal economic regeneration.⁴

To focus on the North American case is but part of the problem. However, because of its high ideals – crafted by the slave-owning proponents of democracy for the “civilized” minority – the United States has been at the centre of a storm of ethical debates about who should be granted full membership, and who should be excluded, from

² Thomas M. Shapiro (2004) develops the concept of “opportunity hoarding” – passing on assets between generations that favours whites over blacks at a ratio of 10:1. See also: Ira Katznelson (2006) who links white “affirmative action” to the New Deal and to policies to assist white veterans, notably the G. I. Bill after World War Two. The idea that *apartheid* in South Africa, between 1948 and 1990, was another form of affirmative action for the dominant (white) political group, and its demonstrated effectiveness in raising the lower classes of Afrikaners – the *bywoners* – out of poverty, is a similar argument (Stone and Rizova, 2007: 537). And yet another illustration of the same theme – preferential treatment for the children of wealthy white alumni and donors to American elite Universities – see: Peter Schmidt (2007).

³ See the figures quoted in the *Boston Globe*, 23 September, 2007: The annual cost of maintaining America’s correctional institutions is \$60 billion with approximately 2.2 million inmates comprising the prison population. Thirty per cent of black males born in the late 1960s who did not attend College have served time in prison and 59% of the same cohort who did not finish high school have also served time in prison.

⁴ In March 2007, an amendment to the Cherokee Constitution to limit citizenship to “those who are Indian ‘by blood’” was approved by 77% of Cherokee voters. The Freedmen, descendants of former slaves owned by the Cherokee, represent barely one percent of the tribe. A similar vote by the Seminole nation in 2000 was subsequently overturned when the Federal government cut off funds to the tribe and the decision was successfully challenged in Federal Court. Most commentators expect a similar outcome.

the land of the free. The problematic nature of this debate can be seen in the decision of so many black slaves to join and fight with the British colonial oppressors in the 1770s against the advocates of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (for white property-owning males) based on a rational calculation that London was more likely to end the “peculiar institution” than the slave-owning “democrats” meeting in Philadelphia (Schama, 2006). This is not to glamorize the motives of the British, who no sooner had they lost the fight in North America went on to pillage Africa, Asia and any other parts of the exploitable globe as they scrambled to “civilize” the rest of humanity. Just as the American Dilemma lived on to plague the descendants of black and white Americans, so the irony was to come full circle when, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the British employed an “internal colonialism” analogy – the so-called “salt water fallacy” – to try to defend the persistence of empire against the anti-imperialist arguments of their American allies.

Nevertheless, it would be quite wrong to conclude that racism is confined to the Anglo-Saxon World. The evolution of rather different types of racial hierarchy and group processes can be seen in Latin America, Africa and Europe. As Edward Telles has argued in *Race in another America* (2004), Brazil can be considered to be plagued by a powerful tradition of racial distinctions although the dynamics of race relations follow a different logic from that underlying the pattern found in the United States. Despite the ideology of “racial democracy”, formulated in its classical manner by Gilberto Freyre in *The Masters and the Slaves* (1933), few would seriously deny that Brazilian society is permeated by considerations of colour. The fundamental difference is, in some cruel paradox, that dark-skinned individuals under the rules of the Brazilian system, can, so to speak, “change their race”, while, conforming to the pressures of the one drop rule, blacks in America cannot. Individualism, which is a prized trait in the United States and embedded in a philosophy of social mobility, nonetheless has the greatest difficulty trying to breach the colour line. The very fluidity of the Brazilian system makes it a more subtle and complex problem to solve,⁵ just as declaring “mission accomplished” in a conventional military campaign is an altogether different proposition than trying to “win” a war on terrorism.

The value of comparing different racial systems has long been appreciated; the temptation to view one situation from the perspective and assumptions of another is a persistent danger. As Telles notes, the dominant academic interpretations of Brazilian race relations seem to oscillate between two models, the one suggesting that there are virtually no differences between the United States and its Southern hemisphere neighbour as far as the outcomes are concerned: in both states a social hierarchy persists in which whites remain at the top of the economic pile and blacks stay at the bottom. The alternative scenario stresses that the differences are in fact profound and persistent, as witnessed by the ideology of miscegenation and social relations that celebrate close and

⁵ According to Winant’s assessment: “In the racial future, I venture to predict, there will be a combination of greater flexibility in the understanding of racial identity on the one hand, and a deepening structural racism on the other. That is to say the global racial crisis will intensify, not diminish” (2006: 999). This is not unlike Bonilla-Silva’s prediction of the growing “Latin Americanization” of the United States (2006: 183–198).

intimate inter-racial bonds. In an attempt to resolve these contradictory interpretations, Telles proposes that a more nuanced analysis is called for, so as to reveal the complex combinations of similarities and differences between the two societies. Clearly, interpersonal relations appear to be far more fluid in the Brazilian case, a blurred boundary along the range of a colour continuum that distinguishes between blacks, browns and whites, but also recognizes a kaleidoscope of variations within and between these categories. If many Brazilians in the United States attempt to “dance around the one-drop rule”, as one sociologist has argued (Fritz, 2007), in their society of origin it is a positive carnival of colours that stands in the way of rigid social segregation. That said, when it comes to evaluate the economic winners and losers of the system, the pattern in either hemisphere looks remarkably similar.

Some of the explanation can be found in disaggregating the statistics from different parts of the two continental-sized states. Just as historians and social scientists recognize how a diverse legacy has framed the enduring structures of segregation and integration in the North, South and West of the United States, so in the “other America” regional differences in population mixes, wealth and immigrant histories have influenced the subsequent patterns of inter-group relationships in a crucial manner. In the same way that few scholars of North America would fail to appreciate the diverse legacies of Mississippi and Massachusetts, so, too, it is equally important to understand the contrasts between Sao Paulo, Minas Gerais or Pernambuco. It is also important to remember major demographic differences between the two societies and the fact that Brazilians with African ancestry represent a far greater ratio of the total population (46% in 2000) compared to the relatively small size of African Americans (13% at the same time). However, slavery persisted in Brazil for several decades longer than it lasted in America, which should caution us from drawing over simple conclusions about the meaning of the “racial democracy” promulgated by Freyre and his followers.

Telles’s interesting attempt to resolve the problem rests on a distinction between what he calls vertical and horizontal relations. On the former, whites are at the economic and political summit of society and blacks are at the bottom. Thus the two societies mirror each other as far as racial stratification is concerned. On the latter, in relation to close personal bonds and mixing at the most intimate levels, the two systems could not be further apart. Such a formulation is difficult for the observer of North America to understand since the logic of US group relations does not accept such a “contradiction”. In virtually all instances where minorities have mingled, and particularly in the wake of large scale and persistent intermarriage, the inevitable result has been the rapid assimilation of the minority group into the mainstream core. Thus, according to Milton Gordon’s (1964) classic formulation of American assimilation theory, intermarriage is seen as the final and irreversible dimension in the overall process. The concern of some rabbis and community leaders about the high levels of inter-marriage prevalent among American Jews – some seeing intermarriage as a greater threat to group survival than crude anti-Semitism – is a reflection of a similar assumption about the *inevitable* outcome of such relationships. The persistently low levels of black-white intermarriage, and the high rates found between many young Asian Americans and whites are seen as accurate predictors of radically different future trajectories for the two groups. Thus, to

return to the “horizontal” openness of the Brazilian relationships across the colour line, such a pattern simply does not translate for most North American analysts, whose society of study maintains a stubborn hierarchy of whites at the top and blacks at the bottom, with very restricted social intercourse.

The Brazilian case can be seen as a cautionary tale concerning the strengths and weaknesses of a comparative perspective. On the one hand, viewing the patterns in one society in isolation from a wider lens invites a form of myopia that greatly diminishes the value of the exercise. On the other hand, embarking on elaborate comparative analyses without a close understanding of the complexities of each situation generates another type of bias. Nevertheless, trying to place rather different systems within a wider framework has become increasingly necessary as the forces of globalization continue to foster closer links between virtually all societies being bound together by the ties of an inter-linked global system. The exercise becomes even more challenging when one recognizes that there are “many globalizations” (Berger and Huntington, 2002) and that no society is ever static as far as group relationships, or indeed most other aspects of its structure and culture, are concerned. In many of the most perceptive attempts to formulate such broadly comparative models of racial conflict – from Pierre van den Berghe (1967) to Anthony Marx (1998) – the United States, Brazil and South Africa are often the key reference points. But in the South African case, to cite perhaps the most dramatic recent example, a radical re-definition of race relations of a truly fundamental kind has taken place within the last two decades (Stone, 2002).

From being the bastion of racial oppression under the *apartheid* regime, South Africa has been regenerated as a society where non-racial democracy is the dominant political consensus. The full implications of this profound and in many respects surprising transformation of a rigid racial hierarchy will be the subject of debate and interpretation for years to come. It has already been the source for many scholars and practitioners exploring the theories and techniques of conflict resolution and some of the lessons guided the political strategies in Northern Ireland. These in turn have been applied to the continuing violence arising out of the Basque region in Spain, so creating an international information exchange and peace network to counter the continuing growth of global terrorist collaboration as exemplified in the case of Al Qaeda.

Understanding the nature of social change and the extent of its effect on the lives of most citizens in the new South Africa, is an important illustration of the dynamic nature of most racial systems over time.⁶ It is also an excellent way to develop insights into the generation of racial conflict by analyzing those situations where, despite the presence of so many of the characteristics that are often associated with violence, it

⁶ Perhaps the best use of the historical evidence to demolish racial theorizing can be found in Alexis de Tocqueville’s response to the central theme of Arthur de Gobineau’s influential book *On the Inequality of the Human Races* (1856). Citing the case of the dominant world power of the nineteenth century, Tocqueville sarcastically observed: “I am sure that Julius Caesar, had he had the time, would have willingly written a book to prove that the savages he had met in Britain did not belong to the same race as the Romans, and that the latter were destined thus by nature to rule the world while the former were destined to vegetate in one of its corners!” (Stone, 1977: 62; Stone and Mennell, 1980: 320–322)

simply did not take place on the scale and in the manner that most experts, politicians or lay observers predicted. Other parts of Africa have been less fortunate when confronted by racial, ethnic and national conflicts. Some of the worst examples of inter-ethnic strife in the past few decades can be found on the continent, with Rwanda and Burundi, The Congo, Uganda and Nigeria, together with the recent mass killings in the Darfur region of Sudan, being notable tragic cases.

Recent Trends in Scholarship on Nationalism

Just as the field of race relations has undergone significant changes in the post-Cold War era, so much of the scholarship on nationalism has also altered significantly as a result of the same structural, political and cultural transformations associated with the geo-political shifts of the decades surrounding the new century. A stable bi-polar military stalemate has given way to the dominance of a single super-power with all the consequences that could be predicted from such an unbalanced concentration of power. The break-up of the former Soviet sphere of influence and the revitalization of nationalism and religion in many of the erstwhile satellite states of the USSR, to fill the vacuum left by a discredited ideology and a crumbling economic system, has seemed to vindicate Walker Connor's prediction that "when the chips are down" nationalism would trump socialism in much of the Communist bloc (Connor, 1984, 1994). At the same time, the spread of unfettered capitalism in systems ill-prepared for such a dramatic change of economic gears has resulted in huge disparities of wealth and income, and the corresponding political counter-movements resulting from the *anomie* and alienation of massive social dislocation. Furthermore, in the case of China, a global industrial revolution of truly historic proportions has been effected by the uneasy coalition of rampant capitalist production and sustained centralized political control, challenging the conventional wisdom of so much Western political, economic and social theory that free markets and liberal democracy are inevitable bed-fellows.

The field of nationalism in the twenty-first century is still the object of a major debate about the ethnic origin of nations and the so-called "primordial versus constructivist" controversy still persists. Anthony Smith's recent studies (2003, 2004) document the "antiquity of nations" and argue that the common theme of "chosen peoples" is often linked to the sacred sources of national identity. He suggests that "pure 'invention of tradition'" is likely to be ineffective in the longer run (2004: 230) and notes:

"(While) we speak readily of an age of nations and nation states succeeding one of feudal or tribal kingdoms and superseded by one of continental unions or of globalization. But these are blanket evolutionary terms, extrapolated from one region of the globe to others, which fail to differentiate between different examples and varied cultural areas of 'strong' and 'weak' national identities, just as they tend to over-generalize the extent and depth of continental or global interdependence.... Above all, we need to reconsider the place of the sacred in a secularizing world" (Smith, 2003: 261).

Other scholars of nationalism have shifted the debate from the "when is a nation" theme to include more elaborate discussions of the consequences, as much as the

origins, of ethnonationalism and ethnosymbolism (Leoussi and Grosby, 2007). Thus John Hutchinson (2005) has focused on the differences between “hot” and “banal” nationalisms and how they contribute to our understanding of nations as “zones of conflict”. However, he also argues that “what we call globalization in the contemporary period is likely to lead to the intensification of nationalism and national identities rather than to their erosion” (2005: 7).⁷

Another study with a related message is Michael Mann’s *Dark Side of Democracy* (2005). Mann revives many of the issues explored by Leo Kuper in the early 1980s (1983, 1985) by examining the nature of ethnic cleansing and analysing the dynamics of genocide. This scholarship fits within the tradition of research pioneered by Hannah Arendt’s famous insight, derived from her observations of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, into the “banality of evil” and this has been elaborated on by such scholars as Fred Katz (1993, 2004) and Jessica Casiro (2006). The structural “normalcy” of so much evil, as well as a surprising amount of “altruism”, according to Casiro’s case study, provides grounds for both continuing concern but also for some hope for the future. If routine patterns of social organization and individual behaviour can lead to such horrific outcomes, then it is equally plausible that fairly mundane strategies may prove to be an effective antidote to them as well.

A number of studies of nationalism outside the European background provide us with further insight into its interface with ethnic and racial diversity. Jonathan Eastwood’s research on the early rise and crystallization of nationalism in Venezuela traces a development towards a pattern of civic nationalism, rather than ethnic nationalism, which is clearly based on the French model. As he also points out, the Venezuelan variety of nationalist sentiment was collectivist and not individualistic in character generating a political culture that “remains potentially predisposed to authoritarianism”.⁸ However, an interesting consequence of this conceptualization is that despite documented “discrimination against those of indigenous or African ancestry over various periods in Venezuelan history ... one is no less Venezuelan for being indigenous or black or, for that matter, of Spanish or even German ancestry” (Eastwood, 2006: 154).

Conflict Generation and Conflict Resolution

So much of the writing and research in both fields – race relations and nationalism – emphasizes how the developments in global society have impacted the traditional divisions between groups, and created new bases for social cohesion and conflict. The switch between the Cold War assumptions of a bi-polar world to the subsequent

⁷ This is one possible answer to the questions raised by Conversi: “Does nationalism reinforce globalization or can it rather represent a challenge to globalization? Is globalization reinforcing nationalism or can it in some way be channeled in the opposite direction? What kind of nationalism is most likely to emerge with, or as a response to, globalization? Is globalization a causal factor in the explosion of ethnic conflict, xenophobia and racism?” (2002: 281).

⁸ For the wider issue exploring the factors behind the interplay between democracy and despotism in much of Latin America see: Eastwood and Stone (2007).

reality of a single super-power, quickly overreaching itself and generating unintended consequences from its unilateral intervention in the Middle East, establishes a different environment in which both nationalism and race relations are being played out. By pursuing strategies that reflect its unrivalled military supremacy, the government of the United States under the Bush Administration has slowly learned the limits of “hard” power.⁹ Attempting to solve political and “ethno-sectarian” conflicts by involving soldiers against insurgent terrorist violence, taking place in an urban civilian environment, is a policy that rarely succeeds and often creates more, rather than less, conflict.¹⁰

Of course, the wider geopolitical setting in which these inter-ethnic activities occur is critical to the longer term outcome. The peculiar contrast between the relatively peaceful resolution of the South African racial struggle – itself a complex interweaving of racial affiliations with nationalist sentiments – and the harsh reality of warfare and ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, is a further illustration of the consequences of geo-political factors (Stone and Rizova, 2007: 535–396).

As Duško Sekulić stressed in his assessment of the violent escalation of conflict in the Balkans, “a bi-polar world held Yugoslavia together as a result of pressures from both sides; the disappearance of bi-polarity meant the collapse of the outside forces keeping Yugoslavia intact” (1997: 177). This is not to suggest that geo-political change is a sufficient explanation to account for much ethnic conflict and many other factors at a lower level often must interact in a certain pattern before the absence of structural restraints leads to violence and degenerates into genocidal massacres (Mann, 2005: 418–427; Sekulić, Massey and Hodson, 1994, 2006).¹¹

Much the same dynamic interaction of power has resulted from the removal of Saddam Hussein’s Baathist – Sunni, minority-dominated – regime in Iraq. The fall of the dictator has created a power vacuum in which the interests of Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds are seen by many as a competitive, zero-sum game, and one in which the strategic interests of external political and military forces, including those emanating from Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Turkey, complicate the picture far beyond the initial assumptions and plans of the United States and its allies. This situation demonstrates both a remarkable failure not only to understand the subtle cultural and structural pre-conditions of “democracy” even under the best of circumstances – did Tocqueville write in vain? – but also a cavalier disregard for the further complications generated by ethno-sectarian

⁹ The need for a judicious mix of approaches to solve the current crises of American foreign policy has been argued forcefully by Joseph Nye (2003, 2004).

¹⁰ It is particularly surprising that the Blair government, given Britain’s experience of military intervention in Belfast in the 1970s and its active involvement in peace-making in Northern Ireland, would not have anticipated this reaction in Iraq. The welcome initially extended by the subordinate group to external troops in a religiously divided community, the Catholic community to the British Army, rapidly degenerated into hostility once they were perceived as being part of the dominant (oppressive) political regime.

¹¹ Describing the contrasting styles of the “practitioners of violence”, Mann cites a number of sources. “They had a style and swagger drawn from Hollywood movies. Karadzic’s own daughter, stylishly dressed and sporting a Beretta pistol (‘as important to me as my make-up’), said, ‘we got our battle ethics from the movies about Mad Max and Terminator, Rambo and Young Guns’... A journalist noted that in one Croat unit ‘everyone looks as if he had been cast as a thug by a movie director...’” (Mann, 2005: 419).

divisions that would challenge and strain even well-established democratic political cultures. The shift of goals from a messianic movement for Muslim democratization, to creating a minimum semblance of stability to allow the various parties to negotiate any type of non-violent settlement reflects the playing out of these forces.

Other solutions turn to the many forms of federalism that have been adopted by multiethnic and religiously diverse societies to moderate and contain group competition and conflict. But again, the limitations of these approaches, and the often unique circumstances that allow them to function, are too often unappreciated. One only has to remember the characterization of Lebanon in the 1960s as the “Switzerland of the Middle East” to understand the fragility of such arrangements and their dependence on the tacit agreement of powerful neighbouring states to allow the federal bargain to persist. That said, it must also be recognized that there seems to be a constant dialectic of fusion and fission operating in the global environment with the collapse of the Soviet system in Eastern Europe being followed by the continuously-expanding European Union in the subsequent two decades. No one could claim that the component parts of the EU have not shared a particularly violent history of inter-state and inter-ethnic conflicts stretching back centuries, yet the current pull of the European ideal has not only drawn in the current 25 members but is also a strongly attractive option for Croatia and Serbia and, above all, Turkey.

Conclusion: Power, Conflict and the Balkan Dilemma

From this brief survey of some of the emerging trends in both race relations and nationalism, a few general conclusions emerge. First is that single explanations relying on a dominant cause only occasionally account for the complexity of actual events. While major differences in class, status and power, superimposed on ethnic or racial groups, tend to act as a general basis of conflict and violence, these are necessary, but rarely sufficient causes of racial or nationalist mobilization. In most cases it is changes, or the *perceived* fears of possible changes, in racial or ethnic privilege that act as the spark and lubricant of hostility and conflict. Thus models used by social scientists to analyze, and ultimately to predict, riots, expulsions, genocidal massacres and other forms of group oppression, all contain elements of truth, but rarely the whole truth. So in the case of the break-up of Yugoslavia, or in the relatively peaceful democratic transition in South Africa, or the final stages of a resolution of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland, multiple factors operating at several levels need to be added to the explanation. Consequently the primordial, instrumental and constructivist perspectives often incorporate arguments that are persuasive in particular situations, but the more interesting questions frequently involve the manner in which these forces interact with each other to produce a given outcome.¹²

¹² This is a parallel argument to that developed by Rizova in her analysis of the forces that shape successful innovation in research and development laboratories and their interactive basis (Rizova, 2007). For an exploration and critique of the three models as applied to the case of Yugoslavia see: Sekulić, Massey and Hodson (2006); and for the use of “Balkanization” as a term Rizova (2006).

Another important issue is the extent to which racial and ethnic polarization precedes or is largely caused by violence and war. In some cases, both causal factors may be in play, but in others the actual brutality of the conflict seems to be a primary explanation of the re-definition of neighbours as enemies. The degree to which this is brought about by the manipulation of cynical elites or generated at the mass level is another issue that demands careful empirical investigation. Playing the “race card” or bowing to popular racial prejudice, suggest two rather different political strategies that may create very different long-run dynamics. This parallels the distinction found in Simmel’s classic analysis of conflict between *divide et impera* and *tertius gaudens* (Wolff, 1950: 154–169). Similarly, nationalism by manipulation and nationalism through conviction may not follow entirely the same paths.

A third factor of note is the continuing shifts in power relations and group definitions that constantly occur as the result of social and political change. Most studies include geo-political transitions as essential elements influencing the nature and variety of inter-group relations. Thus the end of the Cold War, the impact of globalization on migrant movements influencing the ethnic diversity of societies, the consolidation and the formation of new power blocs, and the influence (or lack of it) of international organizations, all have an impact on racial and ethnic conflict. Furthermore, important changes are taking place within societies producing a number of policy shifts. The development of plans in South Africa and Brazil to institute affirmative action policies, while the decisions of Malaysia and the U.S.A. to abandon or severely curtail their own, reflect constantly changing power realities in different parts of the world.

A final point that needs to be stressed is that while conflicts among racial and ethnic groups are a constant feature of human societies, they are by no means inevitable. As Horowitz argued some three decades ago, “ties of blood do not lead ineluctably to rivers of blood”. For long periods of time, diverse racial and ethnic groups can live together in relative harmony, or conflicts may be structured along different channels, with individuals aligning themselves as members of collectivities that are not defined by racial or ethnic boundaries. The important issue for social scientists is to recognize the dangerous potential of these divisions – divisions that are shared by all mankind – and to explore the ways in which they can be institutionalized in non-lethal directions.

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DIJALEKTIKA DISKRIMINACIJE U 21. STOLJEĆU

SAŽETAK

U članku se razmatraju neka najnovija znanstvena znanja o rasnim odnosima i nacionalizmu koja se nastoje baviti utjecajem globalizacije i promijenjenih geopolitičkih odnosa u prvom desetljeću 21. stoljeća. Vidljivo je da su novi modeli identifikacije, od kojih neki osporavaju postojeće grupne granice dok ih drugi pojačavaju, posljedica promjena na globalnome tržištu i političkih kretanja usmjerenih protiv njih. Ocjenjuju se utjecaj »rata protiv terorizma«, granice uporabe čvrste moći i potreba za novim mehanizmima rješavanja međurasnih i međuetničkih sukoba kako bi se naglasila kompleksnost tih grupnih odnosa u novom narušavanju ustaljenoga svjetskog reda.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: rasizam, etnonacionalizam, nejednakost, transnacionalizam, globalizacija, terorizam, rješavanje sukoba

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LA DIALECTIQUE DE LA DISCRIMINATION DANS LE XXI^e SIÈCLE

RÉSUMÉ

L'article examine quelques développements parmi les plus récents du savoir sur les relations ethniques et le nationalisme qui cherchent à traiter des effets de la mondialisation et des nouveaux rapports géopolitiques de la première décennie du XXI^e siècle. Les nouveaux modèles de l'identification, dont quelques-uns contestent les frontières du groupe actuelles pendant que les autres les renforcent, peuvent être regardés comme une conséquence des changements du marché mondial et des mouvements politiques qui s'y opposent. C'est pour mettre l'accent sur la complexité de ces relations de groupe dans le nouveau désordre mondial qu'on évalue l'influence de « la guerre contre le terrorisme », les limites de l'utilité du pouvoir coercitif et le besoin de nouveaux mécanismes de résolution de conflits interraciaux et interethniques.

MOTS CLÉS : racisme, ethnonationalisme, inégalité, transnationalisme, mondialisation, terrorisme, résolution de conflits