

Minorities at Risk

Minorities at Risk
A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts

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with contributions by

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Foreword

Some twenty million refugees are currently fleeing from communal or ethnically based conflicts around the world. Ethnic conflict has devastated Yugoslavia and threatens the stability of many of the successor republics of the Soviet Union. There are protracted conflicts in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Many countries in Western Europe are beset by antagonism toward immigrant groups of Third World origin. Indeed, conflicts between ethnic groups or with the states in which they reside are a serious and growing challenge to domestic and international security.

As this monumental study makes abundantly clear, ethnically based conflict is a pervasive worldwide phenomenon, one that often erupts into brutality and violence. This violence frequently crosses national borders and the conflict becomes entwined with larger regional or global issues. It is only natural, therefore, that the subject of ethnopolitical conflict has been a major interest of the United States Institute of Peace. Among other projects, we supported Ted Robert Gurr's pioneering research with a fellowship from the Jennings Randolph Program for International Peace and with a subsequent award from our Grant Program to help him complete this volume.

The resulting book, *Minorities at Risk*, is an ambitious and unprecedented effort to identify the multiple expressions of ethnic conflict in the contemporary world. Some of its statistically based findings have important policy implications. For example, deliberate discrimination by dominant groups is a much more important source of minorities' disadvantages and grievances than are the cultural differences that divide minorities from majorities. Moreover, economic inequalities are more resistant to change than are political inequalities. Other findings challenge

accepted notions. For instance, rebellions by ethnonationalists have increased steadily in every decade since the 1950s, not just in recent years. The source of the most rapidly rising type of communal conflict is neither nationalism nor religious fundamentalism, but the demands of indigenous peoples for protection of their lands and rights.

But Professor Gurr does more than just compare the disadvantages and conflicts of ethnic groups. In a lengthy chapter on settling ethnopolitical conflicts, he demonstrates that few of them are completely intractable. His evidence confirms the view that open governments are more likely than authoritarian ones to accommodate the interests of minorities, yet he notes that some autocratic regimes have also made serious efforts to achieve equality among groups and have granted substantial concessions to regional minorities. Communal conflicts of all types, from every part of the world, have been restrained or transformed by political accommodations and reforms, including governmental arrangements such as autonomy, pluralism, and power sharing. That's good news for those of us in the conflict resolution field, but, as *Minorities at Risk* clearly shows, we have plenty of work left to do.

Samuel W. Lewis, President
United States Institute of Peace

Preface

The Bosnians, the Kurds and Shi'is of Iraq, and black South Africans are among the most visible of more than two hundred ethnic and religious minorities and subordinate majorities throughout the world who are contesting the terms of their incorporation into "the world order."¹ Politically active communal groups, most of them disadvantaged, in 1990 numbered some 900 million people, about one-sixth of the world's population. Since 1945 more than fifty of these peoples have fought protracted campaigns of protest, terrorism, and rebellion against the states that govern them. Ethnonationalists such as the Eritreans and the Québécois are on the verge of independence and ten others have secured some regional autonomy. Ethnoclasses such as African Americans in the United States and Muslims in Western Europe have won greater civil rights and are vigorously advocating cultural pluralism. Other groups, such as the indigenous Maya of Guatemala and Palestinian nationalists in the Middle East, have suffered badly from internal wars and repression but continue to support risky campaigns for greater political rights and autonomy.

This book is the first comprehensive report of the Minorities at Risk project, a global survey of 233 politically active communal groups. Chapter 1 defines, identifies, and categorizes the groups. Chapter 2 analyzes the traits that differentiate them from dominant groups, giving special attention to material and political inequalities and discrimination. Chapter 3 examines the connections between minorities' objective disadvantages and their grievances. Those grievances have driven upward trends in political protest and rebellion on behalf of communal interests in every world region and every type of group since 1945, as is demonstrated in chapter 4. The evidence is integrated in

chapter 5 in a theoretical framework, which sketches an explanation of why disadvantaged minorities mobilize to assert their interests, and how development, democracy, and international circumstances shape their choices of protest or rebellion. Chapters 6 through 9 provide in-depth assessments of the status and prospects of communal minorities in the western democracies and Japan, the former Soviet bloc (by Monty G. Marshall, University of Iowa), North Africa and the Middle East (by Barbara Harff, U.S. Naval Academy), and Africa south of the Sahara (by James R. Scarritt, University of Colorado). Outcomes of ethno-political conflicts are evaluated in chapter 10, which contends that few of these conflicts are completely intractable and shows that many have been settled or restrained by political accommodations and reformist strategies. The concluding chapter summarizes the principal findings of the study.

Most of what scholars know about communal conflicts, and most policy guidance for responding to them, is based on substantive studies of one or several cases. The cumulative knowledge is extensive but before now there was no firm basis for generalizing a set of findings beyond the groups or region examined in each particular study.² This study differs in one fundamental way from virtually all previous work on communal conflict: it is based on the analysis of information and coded data for *all* the politically significant communal groups that meet the general criteria described in chapter 1. Thus there is a systematic, empirical core to the Minorities at Risk study that heretofore has been lacking from the literature on this topic.

The inherent limitation of broad comparative research is that it does not capture the details and nuances of each particular communal group's traits, grievances, and conflicts. The data we have coded on 233 groups are numerical abstractions of complex social situations, perceptions, and political actions. Yet we are closely familiar with many of the details and complexities of ethno-political status and actions, because the coding is based on our compilation and interpretations of voluminous scholarly and journalistic materials on each of the groups in the study. This substantive material is used selectively in chapters 1 through 5 to provide examples and interpretations of the general relationships observed in the coded data. Chapters 6 through 9 offer more fine-grained descriptions and analysis: each of these chapters identifies patterns of minority status and conflicts that are distinctive to countries in one world region, then uses comparative case studies to illustrate and amplify the

generalizations. Chapter 10's analysis of the settlement of communal conflicts is based almost entirely on substantive comparisons of strategies and outcomes observed among the 233 groups.

In short, this book attempts an integrated substantive and empirical analysis of communal status and conflict since the end of World War II, with special attention to the decade of the 1980s. Area specialists may conclude that too little attention has been given in this project to some features of the groups and countries with which they are intimately familiar. In most cases the explanation is that hard choices had to be made about which details to include. The justification is that some simplification is necessary for the kind of general mapping reported here. Empirical social scientists may object that the indicators used for comparative analysis are "soft" or imprecise: they are derived by coding nonstandardized source materials and have not been fully tested for reliability and validity.³ But there are no standard sources of statistical or substantive information on communal groups. Such groups have only recently and gradually been recognized as a major type of actor in domestic and international politics. Therefore it is better to have coded data on some of their most important social and political traits than to plead statistically self-righteous ignorance. We also concede fallibility. It is inevitable that some errors of fact and questionable judgments have intruded, and we invite specialists to criticize and correct our substantive observations and the group codings reported in the Appendix.

Acknowledgments

The author began what became the Minorities at Risk project in 1986 at the University of Colorado's Center for Comparative Politics. The encouragement and advice of my colleagues Barbara Harff and James R. Scarritt played a major role in shaping the project. An initial list of groups was derived from previous work on group discrimination and separatism⁴ and cross-checked against reports of the Minority Rights Group (London) and Cultural Survival (Cambridge, Massachusetts). Extensive background files of materials on each group then were compiled, evaluated, and coded. Monty G. Marshall surveyed and coded Asian, Soviet, and East European groups, with contributions by Steven Kurth, and developed the Minorities data base.

Detailed studies of protracted Asian conflicts were prepared by Scott McDonald and Shin-wha Lee at the University of Maryland, with contributions by Amy Hwang. Latin American groups were analyzed by Michael Hartman, then a research assistant at the United States Institute of Peace. Middle Eastern minorities were coded by Monty G. Marshall and Deina Ali AbdelKader, with contributions by Christina Perlioni, at the University of Maryland. Most African groups were identified and coded by a research group directed by Professor Scarritt at the University of Colorado, Boulder, whose members were Martha L. Gibson, Keith Jagers, Kook Shin Kim, Michael Obert, and Joshua B. Rubongoya. The author coded groups in Western Europe, North America, the Horn of Africa, and South Africa, with assistance from James Atkins, Douglas Emory, Sean Keller, Christopher Moore, and Goitom Telahun. The statistical analyses reported in this book were carried out by Scott McDonald with the assistance of Shin-wha Lee. Sean Keller played a key role in establishing the project's information management system and prepared the graphics and maps reproduced in this book.

The research was supported by the United States Institute of Peace, which awarded the author a Jennings Randolph fellowship in 1988–89 and provided a subsequent grant for continued work on the project at the University of Maryland's Center for International Development and Conflict Management. Support for the project also has been provided by the Academic Support Program of the U.S. Department of Defense. This book was written during a semester's leave awarded by the University of Maryland's General Research Board.

Special thanks are due to colleagues who have tried to save us from the risks, unavoidable in a project on this scale, of factual error, oversight, and oversimplification. Working papers for this book have benefited from the comments of Oystein Gaasholt; John Harbeson; Barbara Harff; Martin O. Heisler; Edy Kaufman; Herbert Kelman; David Little; Hugh Miall; John M. Richardson, Jr.; Donald S. Rothchild; William Safran; Stanley Samarasinghe; Peter Wallensteen; and several anonymous readers of a draft of the book manuscript. Our assistants and graduate students have also read and commented on a number of chapters.

This volume incorporates some evidence and interpretations from three papers published elsewhere.⁵ Three other published papers extend or build upon some of the analyses reported here.⁶