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Trends. An Implosion of Ideology: Bosnia, Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Palestine, the Soviet Union, and Beyond

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Multiethnic, representative democracies (MRDs) often promulgate and effect foreign policies that are founded on the ideological premise that instilling MRDs throughout the world is necessarily the optimal road to Good--global, regional, and local. Ironically, many bearers of the MRD colors exist more in the abstract than on the ground. Socioeconomic inequities, racism, sexism, nepotism, and corruption are just some of the factors mitigating against a de facto MRD.

Even if the MRDs were, indeed, the real thing and were experiencing political, economic, and sociocultural bliss, one need not ascribe to an ideology that all political entities must follow suit. For it seems to be amply demonstrated through the behavioral sciences laboratory, as well as through history, that nurturing interaction among different peoples--e.g., as to race, ethnicity, geographies, histories, or even the arbitrary placement into different groups--may largely foster cooperation or competition and, ultimately, peace or war. Moreover, consequences may change through time.

The classic work of the Sherifs and their experimental descendants bear out the consequentialist variability of social interaction. The one consistency borne out in such work as the summer camp experiments from 1949 through 1954 is that interactions generate and influence attitudes--not specific sorts of attitudes and not inevitable consistencies of behavior following attitudes.

Thus, one finds that a peace in Bosnia--as it tenuously exists--stems from the creation of segregated enclaves and may have bearing on what may induce peace in Kosovo--viz., a functional separation of Kosovar Albanians from Kosovar Serbs. One school of analysts suggests that peace in Northern Ireland will only occur when political power is devolved to local governments with minimal Unionist-Republican interaction. The seemingly encroaching peace between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority seems to be tending towards two independent entities with extreme segregation in the latter, less in the former.

A related ideological issue is the need to foment more awareness of a government's human rights violations perpetrated against various ethnic minorities and to instill pressures to change the situation from within and without. As implementors of United States President Carter's covert action initiatives targeting human rights violations in the Soviet Union can attest, the gains of disestablishing the so-called "Evil Empire" came with the losses of exacerbated sectarian violence in Chechnya, Ingushetia, Georgia, and Tajikistan, among other locales.

The quest of MRDs for MRDs certainly has merit to which many individuals of the former eastern Bloc can attest. However, when the quest becomes ideologically set, as opposed to based on the interaction of careful analysis and political need, as much evil as good can result. Social scientists--including political psychologists--have much to offer to this ongoing discourse in resolutions of political violence from Rwanda and Burundi, through Chiapas, Mexico, to East Timor (See Gates, R. (1996). *From the shadows*. (p. 94). NY: Simon and Schuster; Hamberger, J., & Hewstone, M. (1997). *Interethnic contact as a predictor of blatant and subtle prejudice: Tests of a model in four West European nations*. *British Journal*

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