

WILSON CENTER DIGEST

Summaries of recent papers and discussions at the Wilson Center

“Borders and Ethnicity—Solutions in the Balkans.”

A panel discussion, Oct. 28, 1999, moderated by Martin C. Sletzinger, director of East European Studies. Principal speaker: *Gale Stokes*

The past decade's warfare and "ethnic cleansing" in the former Yugoslavia are not the radical departure from the European norm that some would like to think. On the contrary, argued Stokes, a historian at Rice University, the brutal efforts to redraw state borders in the Balkans along ethnic lines fall squarely in the "grand" European tradition. [Stokes's essay, "Containing Nationalism: Solutions in the Balkans," in *Problems of Post-Communism* (July–Aug. 1999), prompted the panel discussion.]

Building on the powerful ideas of popular sovereignty, equity, and liberty, introduced by the French Revolution, nationalists in 19th-century Europe decided that the sovereign people were "we who recognize each other by some historical, religious, cultural, [or] linguistic characteristics," Stokes said. Moreover, "we the people" were "all equal in our we-ness"—and different from "those who are not us." Historically, nationalists seeking rights for their people have "routinely trample[d] on the rights of those who are not part of their nation."

For nationalists, Stokes explained, freedom is a matter not of individual rights but of "the community—we." And a community becomes free by creating an independent state that is recognized as authentic by other states. That "is the only way that all of these notions created by the French Revolution fit together in the nationalist redaction of them."

Creation of such independent states has been "a fundamental trend of European history, ever since the French Revolution," he said. Think of the unifications of Italy and Germany, and the creation of Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania in the late 19th century; World War I, from which emerged "all of those new states in . . . what we used to call 'Eastern Europe'"; the population exchanges among Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkey in the 1920s; and the "major readjustments" after World War II. "Poland is moved over 150 kilometers to the west, 'cleansed,' if we think of it in that

way, of its minorities, the most horrendous example of which [being the mass murder of] its Jews." From these violent events (with perhaps 50 million lives lost in the world wars), he observed, came "more or less ethnically homogeneous states," including Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria.

Despite all the violence, Europe has managed to achieve periods of stability, first for at least 30 to 40 years after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, and then, in a much bigger way and more securely, in the decades since World War II. Stability was achieved, Stokes said, through the creation of "buffering mechanisms" such as the International Monetary Fund and the European Union. Today, when European nations find themselves in conflict, he observed, they "send their negotiators off to Strasbourg or Geneva or Brussels with their cell phones and laptop computers, and they fight it out with faxes." The alternative, Stokes suggested, is "World War III."

In the long run, he believes, the only solution for the Balkans, and for Eastern Europe in general, "is to find a way for those peoples to enter into those buffering mechanisms. And, of course, it is happening, in places like Poland, the Baltics, and the Czech Republic"—but not yet in the Balkans, particularly the former Yugoslavia. Multiculturalism cannot be imposed there, in his view, but only approached indirectly. "By that I mean the new boundaries of the states need to be drawn along ethnic lines, so that those people can create their own entry into the buffering mechanisms."

Offering a different view, panelist John R. Lampe, a historian at the University of Maryland, argued that redrawing borders along ethnic lines would present enormous problems. Macedonia, for instance, "is a multiethnic state or it's no state." The key to a solution, he said, is to encourage the peoples of Southeastern Europe to develop "multiple identities," as Western Europeans have done since World War II.

Before that can happen, however, contended panelist Andrew Michta, a political scientist at Rhodes College, “a process of ethnic consolidation” needs to take place, so that democratic institutions can become sufficiently well-established to let “minorities feel secure.” The question, he said, is “How do we get there?”

“Professor Stokes may well be right historically and even predictively, but it just doesn’t form a decent basis for a policy prescription,”

said Daniel P. Serwer, director of the Balkans Initiative at the United States Institute of Peace and a member of the audience. “What you’re talking about in redrawing borders is war, ethnic cleansing, and unacceptable behavior by our own troops, if need be.”

“I feel very fortunate that I do not have . . . to make policy decisions,” Stokes responded. “Because I think you’re right: we cannot be inhumane, whatever our historical understanding might be.”

“Population, Urbanization, Environment, and Security: A Summary of the Issues.”

A paper written for the Wilson Center’s Comparative Urban Studies Project. Author: *Ellen M. Brennan*

Growing “megacities” (with more than 10 million inhabitants) once loomed as a major global problem. But growth “has been slowing down, in some instances quite dramatically,” reports Brennan, chief of the UN Population Division’s Population Policy Section.

Mexico City, which had 11 million people in the mid-1970s, is a case in point. The United Nations and World Bank then projected a population of 27 to 30 million by 2000. But the megacity was under 17 million in 1995, with only 19.2 million now projected for 2015.

Ten of the world’s 14 megacities are in developing countries, and a dozen more cities are expected to reach “mega” status within the next 15 years—to give Asia a total of 16, Latin America four, and Africa two. Africa has

the least urbanized population (only a little more than a third), and the fastest urban growth (4.4 percent annually); city dwellers are expected to be in the majority by 2030. In Latin America, almost four out of five people now live in cities. Asia, though only a little more than one-third urbanized, has nearly half the world’s urban population.

Environmental degradation in many developing-country megacities is growing worse, Brennan notes, with most rivers and canals in them “open sewers.” But the “mega” size is not necessarily the problem. Megacities such as Tokyo “are seemingly well managed and, therefore, not too large.” What the developing world’s megacities urgently need, she says, is good management and economic growth.

“Civil Liberties in Wartime”

An excerpt from remarks by Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist concerning the forced relocation of people of Japanese descent during World War II, at a Director’s Forum, Nov. 17, 1999.

(For full text, see <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/NEWS/speeches/rehnquist.htm>)

The Supreme Court reluctantly upheld this program during the war, but the judgment of history has been that a serious injustice was done, because there was no effort to separate the loyal from the disloyal. As often happens, the latter-day judgments, in my view, swing the pendulum too far the other way. With respect to the forced relocation of Japanese Americans who were born in the United States of Japanese nationals—and were therefore United States citizens—even given the exigencies of wartime it is difficult to defend their mass forced relocation under present constitutional doctrine. But the relocation of the Japanese nationals residing in the United States—typically the parents of those born in this country—stands on quite a different footing. The authority of the government to deal with enemy aliens in time of war, according to established case law from our court, is virtually plenary.