

Reflections on the 20th Anniversary Issue

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by

David A. Charters

Twenty years ago, the Centre for Conflict Studies came into existence, and with it this journal. Such anniversaries are useful points for reflection, and this one is no exception. Much has changed in the last two decades, not the least in this journal, and it may be useful to consider where we have come from, and where we might be going.

First, it is important to recognize that the world - reflected in the pages of the journal - has changed dramatically in the last 20 years. The journal was founded during the Cold War; we now live in a post-Cold War world. While this gives some reason for optimism about the future, that does not mean it is a safer, more peaceful world. The decade since the end of the Cold War has been remarkable for widespread conflict and violence: genocide, ethnic conflict, major inter-state wars, massacres and mass casualty terrorism. Low Intensity Conflict (LIC) has changed in character and in locale. But, as the Centre's and the journal's field of study, it remains as relevant today as it was two decades ago.

But, the focus of LIC studies has shifted and broadened, and the journal with it. International terrorism peaked at the end of the 1980s and had been a topic of much scholarly and public policy interest during that decade. Not surprisingly, the journal published 40 articles on terrorism in its first ten years. Since then, the number of international terrorist incidents has dropped dramatically, although they have become more deadly. As a result, terrorism as a subject does not command the attention it once did, and the journal reflects this. Only about a dozen articles on terrorism appeared in the 1990s, but the focus had shifted as well: to mass-casualty weapons and concern about domestic extremist groups. As the peace process has moved forward in the Middle East, that region has lost some of its intensity, and the number of articles in the journal focusing on that area has dropped by about half. By contrast, the prospects for peace in Northern Ireland has generated a great deal of scholarly interest, resulting in eleven articles. Conflict, specifically ethnic conflict, has dominated the foreign policy and military agendas in the 1990s. This, and the responses to it - intervention, peacekeeping and conflict resolution - drew the attention of many scholars, resulting in 23 articles. Increasingly open discussion of intelligence activities and issues has yielded 17 articles, the same number as in the first decade.

The content of the journal has changed in other ways. In addition to 120 articles - an average of twelve per year - the journal has devoted much greater attention to the literature of the field. This has produced 68 review essays since 1990, and 284 book reviews - a four-fold increase over the previous decade. This task has become sufficiently large to require the assistance of a Book Review Editor. Professor Francis Coghlan, of UNB's History Department, held the post for the first two years, and Professor Peter Woolley of Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey has carried on since. As well as

adding a Book Review Editor, we have expanded the Editorial Board more than three-fold, thereby broadening the range of expertise needed to cover the increasingly diverse and complex conflict-related topics that confront us in the twenty-first century. They have helped to ensure that manuscripts are rigorously refereed, and that the journal maintains its reputation for high standards of scholarship.

The journal has changed in format as well as in content; indeed, the mid-1990s saw dramatic changes in this regard. The first was the shift to twice-yearly publication, a decision forced upon us by both time and financial constraints. This, of course, required a name change, since the journal was no longer a quarterly. The second was to begin publishing the journal in electronic form. We were the first UNB journal to do so, and among the first in the strategic studies field, thus putting us on the cutting edge of the electronic publishing revolution. While the journal's print circulation remains small, on-line publication has greatly extended the journal's visibility and reach. During the last year, the journal's website received in excess of 40,000 visits from more than 50 countries. The time may come when it appears only in electronic form, but there are no immediate plans to make that change.

Global trends do not suggest an early end to conflict, so neither policy nor scholarly interest in the subject are likely to disappear. Thus, The Journal of Conflict Studies will have a niche to fill in the strategic/security studies field for the foreseeable future.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of the journal, the members of our Editorial Board, and the many authors, reviewers, and referees who have worked to make this journal a respected scholarly publication. And to our readers, thank you for your support. We will endeavor to serve you well in the new millennium.

David A. Charters

Executive Editor