Explaining third-party intervention in ethnic conflict: theory and evidence*

DAVID CARMENT

Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University,
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1S 5B6

PATRICK JAMES

Department of Political Science, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa,
50011–1204

ABSTRACT. One of the most challenging developments for students of international relations is the resurgence of ethnic strife, including secessionism and irredentism. Basic questions are only beginning to be addressed in the post-Cold War era. Why are some states more likely than others to intervene in ethnic conflicts? How can international norms about third-party intervention in ethnic conflicts be evaded or ignored by some states but respected by others? Why are some states inclined to use force rather than mediation to resolve ethnic strife? In short, what accounts for the emergence of adventurous and belligerent foreign policies with respect to internal ethnic conflicts? These questions are of increasing importance to students of international politics, yet the dynamics and internationalisation of ethnic conflict are far from fully understood.

This study focuses on the dynamics of third-party intervention in ethnic strife and implications for peaceful resolution. The first section presents a model that identifies the general conditions under which ethnic strife is most likely to lead to intervention by third-party states. The second uses four cases to illustrate, within the context of the model, different processes with respect to internationalisation of ethnic conflict. The third and final stage identifies implications for policy and theory, along with directions for future research.

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mediation to resolve ethnic strife? In short, what accounts for the emergence of adventurous and belligerent foreign policies with respect to internal ethnic conflicts?

These questions are of increasing importance to students of world politics, yet the dynamics and internationalisation of ethnic political participation are far from fully understood (Weiner 1971; Kasfir 1979: 373). Recent examples include India's 1987 intervention in Sri Lanka's protracted conflict (as a 'self-appointed peacekeeper') (Carment 1992), Russia's similar involvement in Georgia, and Indo-Pakistani confrontation over Kashmir (Carment 1994). The potential for international 'spillover', most notably intervention by states external to ethnic conflict, always exists.

Ethnic strife in neighbouring states is fundamental to the process of internationalisation and war (Van Evera 1994). Domestic ambition has recently become a prevailing factor in shaping foreign policy adventurism. Nowhere is that more evident than in the internationalisation of ethnic conflict. States under pervasive domestic pressures and elites with security needs much different from those of the populations they control become likely to intervene abroad. Such weakness can lead to inter-state conflict when an ethnically based organisation fosters and exacerbates tension for its own ends or a state loses either the legitimacy or ability to regulate a conflict (Posen 1993; Lake and Rothchild 1996). External intervention is likely in either instance. In the former case a state may intervene to support an ethnic organisation, party or militant group against the state-centre; in the latter, to prop up a government.

This study focuses on the dynamics of third-party intervention in ethnic strife and implications for peaceful resolution. In a recent study of intervention in ethnic strife, Cooper and Berdal (1993) ask whether any characteristics are peculiar to ethnic conflicts. This investigation answers that question by searching, in three stages, for features that may be specific to states that intervene in and promote ethnic strife. The first section presents a model that identifies the conditions under which ethnic strife is most likely to lead to intervention by third-party states. The second uses four cases to illustrate, within the context of the model, different processes with respect to internationalisation of ethnic conflict. The third and final stage derives implications for policy and theory, along with directions for future research.

**Intervention in ethnic conflict: basic concepts and problems**

While efforts to link comparative and international politics have proliferated since the end of the Cold War, answers to basic questions about the international dimensions of communal conflict remain elusive (Heraclides 1991). Is ethnic conflict generated internally and then projected outward, as some theories would suggest (Welsh 1993)? Do ethnic conflicts weaken state
structures, inviting external intervention (Cooper and Berdal 1993)? Or, does the process involve a more subtle and complex series of interactions? Existing theoretical arguments are twofold.

One widely held belief, especially among the media, is that the collapse of ethnically divided states and resulting diffusion of conflict signals the rebirth of ancient hatreds. Ethnic antagonisms grow and prosper, taking on numerous patterns – institutional, political and international – when states are confronted with the simultaneous tasks of political and economic liberalisation. Transformation leads to diffusion over the short term; states scramble to take advantage of the weaknesses created by the unleashing of historical antagonisms that lay dormant under the heavy cloak of centralised and dominant control (for example, periods of regime crisis and breakdown in the Balkans (Cohen 1992: 371)). The dual demons of decentralisation, namely, nationalist ideology and party pluralism, are instrumental in this process. Ethnic conflict is a violent ‘reshuffling of the deck’ in the game of deconfederation, wherein both the state-centre and ethnic secessionists seek out external support from neighbouring states. Popular appeal to dormant but long-held ethnic grievances results in seemingly irrational escalation of conflict.

Less commonly held is the view – espoused by Snyder (1993; see also Lake and Rothchild 1996) and supported here – that ethnic conflict spreads with purpose rather than inevitability. This perspective regards an evolving crisis as neither a direct and certain outcome nor a product of centuries-old hatred. By attaching a sense of purpose to political ambitions, such arguments emphasise the unfolding of opportunities in both the domestic and international arenas. Constructivists who emphasise the social origins and nature of ethnicity (Brubaker 1995) argue that ethnicity is neither immutable nor completely open. In their view, ethnicity is not an individual attribute but a social phenomenon, and leaders mobilise their members against threats posed by other ethnic groups (Lake and Rothchild 1996). Such mobilisation creates cohesion against other groups, external states and ethnic enemies, and results in greatly strengthened collective capacities (Brubaker 1995).

In brief, political leaders respond to international opportunities to promote their domestic interests, most explicitly the security and power of the ruling party elite (Meadwell 1991, 1993). Leaders will use violence if it can secure or increase their share of power. Although rather pessimistic, this view follows from the observation that, in many emergent states, political participation and opportunities are defined along narrow bands of ethnic sensibility. Coupled with the deliberate suppression of multiple (non-ethnic) issues and unfolding international opportunities, the result is a perceived narrowing of policy options, leading to inter-ethnic confrontation, intervention and war.

From this perspective, foreign policy motivations are explained by military-security interests and ethnically derived political pressures and
opportunities. Accounting for intervention in ethnic strife requires finding the balance between these two factors as motivating forces. Although instrumental considerations (such as military–security interests) provide much of the explanation for external state involvement in ethnic conflicts (Suhrke and Noble 1977; Heraclides 1991; Cooper and Berdal 1993), affective motivation (where ethnicity is the predominant factor) also is relevant (Smith 1986: 75; Chazan 1991; Connor 1994). These motivations include historic injustice, identity, religion, principle, a degree of inchoate racial-cultural affinity and humanitarian considerations (Fox 1997). Some scholars even see the two classes of motives as mutually reinforcing (Heraclides 1991; Suhrke and Noble 1977: 1–15).

Consistent with the priorities just outlined, the following explanation of intervention in ethnic conflict takes into account instrumental and affective factors. The model we use specifies the role played by ethnic composition in determining a state’s propensity to intervene in communal conflicts abroad. It incorporates political constraints as another major influence on the likelihood of a third-party role in ethnic conflict. The model then develops a typology that is based on interaction effects involving ethnic composition and political constraints. Finally, transnational ethnic affinities and cleavage, along with international power relations, are discussed in the context of opportunity and willingness for third-party intervention.

**Ethnic composition: domination and diversity**

Whether a state is democratic or not, political structures influence, but do not determine, the formation of a decision maker’s preferences regarding ethnicity in foreign policy (Meadwell 1993). Decision making involves risks and sources of uncertainty that are internal to the state, as well as external factors that include a state’s capabilities, alliances and national power. Preferences arise from a decision maker’s role as leader within a specific institutional framework, which links structure and orientation (Maoz 1990). However, this study goes further by suggesting that affect is an additional enabling condition in shaping foreign policy decisions within ethnic conflict settings, because it provides a crucial link between elite and mass behaviour.

For example, foreign policy elites often draw on nationalist identities, political symbols and ideologies to manipulate mass sentiment. To determine when (and if) affect will be salient to elite decision making, however it is necessary to examine the ethnic structure of the state in relative rather than absolute terms. Mass support is crucial when inter-elite competition is intense. Under certain conditions it is reasonable to assume that leaders may even focus on a subset of identities (depending on a society’s institutions) when forming preferences about foreign policy. In transitional societies, where demography can determine changes in political power, the potential for ethnic mobilisation along new politically based identities is high. A single
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ethnic group may dominate the policy-making process at the national level and be challenged by groups from either within or other states.

Although it is tempting to make the inference, ethnicity's emotional roots do not make it wholly irrational (Connor 1987: 204–7; Horowitz 1985: 132–5; Gurr 1992, 1993). It is difficult, of course, to reconcile identity-based behaviour that contains an affective component with instrumental theories of third-party intervention. How are affective and instrumental motivations presumed to interact within irredentism and secessionism? The answer is that affect creates both constraints and opportunities for elites. Furthermore, it is not just a primordial drive within the elite, but is distributed among the larger group (Meadwell 1991). In the foreign policy domain — assuming that decision makers are acting rationally — elite–mass behaviour is regarded as a 'two-way street'. Elites prefer to formulate foreign policies that appeal to their ethnic constituency even at the expense of other groups. This is intended to mobilise followers and potentially increase relative power.

Mass-based affective politics sometimes can constrain leaders, while in other instances it provides elites with an additional tool for political mobilisation (Smith 1993). In either case, as positional players at the domestic level, elites try to optimise outcomes (for example, staying in power) that are favourable relative to any potential counter-elite. They rely on affectively derived bases of political mobilisation to achieve both foreign and domestic goals.

Ethnic composition can take several forms. A state may contain a number of ethnic groups and also exhibit the characteristics of cleavage, that is, highly divisive conflict (e.g. Ethiopia). Similarly, some states may feature only a few ethnic groups but divisions may be fractionalised (e.g. pre-secessionist Yugoslavia). Two ideal-types are presented: ethnic domination (a) and diversity (b).

When a single ethnic group claims control over the decision process on issues concerning other groups, institutional mechanisms for inter-group conflict management may remain underdeveloped. Ethnic issues related to foreign policy take on special significance in the domestic arena. Agenda setting and jurisdiction over issues usually end up in the hands of an elite who tries to connect issues of concern to them and their ethnic group. When competition within a dominant ethnic group is high, an elite may introduce new issues that discredit opponents and create avenues towards securing power. In other cases elites will try to manipulate mass sentiment, which otherwise may dictate the choice of strategy. When leaders can improve the standing of their ethnic group without depending on others (through force or democratically), that represents dominance within the state. Redistributive policies that are optimal for the preeminent ethnic group will be the result, even on issues that primarily concern others.

When the setting is ethnically diverse, intra-ethnic, elite–mass configurations become more important. Processes similar to the case of group
dominance are likely to take place, but the results will be different. In a setting of diversity, elites who face ethnic competition may rely extensively on support from other groups. Mobilisation is pursued on the basis of ethnic and cross-cutting identities, so compromise becomes more likely. Elite–mass arrangements within these societies are relatively efficient, because an attempt is made to improve the condition of virtually every group.

Political constraints: institutions, leadership and control

For the purposes of this inquiry, political constraints refer to neither the government in power (that is, the members of the elite who make authoritative decisions) nor democracy, but instead to the broader, underlying patterns of authority and constitutional structure (Gurr 1974, 1990; Morgan and Campbell 1991). A state’s internal political limitations greatly influence the kinds of opportunities and limitations that leaders face. Thus political constraints on decision making refer to existing institutional arrangements, that is, the way in which an elite makes decisions and depends upon a constituency for political support.

Analysis of foreign policy formation in the context of institutional configurations might seem superfluous; unlike domestic policy, it presumably is more resistant to the vagaries of public opinion, especially during periods of interstate conflict and war. But if elites must play in the electoral arena as constituted by federal or consociational arrangements, for example, then the masses will be influential in the decision-making process, regardless of the area (Tsebelis 1990: 167). Two ideal types of political institutionalisation are considered: (i) low levels, commonly referred to as authoritarian political structures; and (ii) high levels, meaning that leaders are supported more directly by a political constituency through the electoral process.

Political constraints are low in some states by virtue of elites not being elected to office by popular vote or having seized power through force or coercion. These polities include military one-party regimes. In a state with low constraints and little or no experience in managing ethnic tensions, a statist response – intended to manage the overt aspects of intergroup ethnic conflict – is not unusual (Lustick 1986; Rothchild and Chazan 1988). Elites bargain over distribution of resources and control the population through patron–client relations. When present, electoral politics are less influential in influencing elite conduct. Specific ethnic groups within the military can come to dominate it through several means, notably skewed recruitment and when the ethnic composition of military and civilian leadership is congruent. The key problem is that soldiers who remain on the sidelines will have difficulty in putting ethnic affiliations aside. The inability of democratically elected governments to manage internal ethnic tensions may become a primary reason for the armed forces to support ethnic leaders who promise to address their concerns, especially in relation to status. Ethnic
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leaders receive obvious political benefits. In either case the military may be pulled into civilian affairs until the point at which the ethnic base of the regime contracts and one or two groups come to dominate the rest. Eventually the boundaries between military and sociopolitical spheres become fragmented.

Where political constraints are more institutionalised, the relationship between elite and masses becomes a two-tier game that involves parliamentary and electoral politics (Kaufman 1996). The same cannot be said of low-constraint states, because the masses play a less direct role. Elite-generated conflict is concentrated within the military regime itself, rather than between the masses and the rulers. For obvious reasons, elites with a monopoly of power in low-constraint situations can be expected to rely on non-institutional devices for control and management of conflict between groups (Lustick 1986).

Political constraints, in sum, refer to more than the basic representation of a state through its constitution. A case such as the Soviet Union is sufficient to establish that point. Factors such as the observed range of political participation and civil-military relations also should be consulted in assessing whether constraints are high or low.

**Intervention in internal ethnic conflict: identifying general conditions and interaction effects**

What kinds of states are likely to develop belligerent and adventurous foreign policies? Ethnically based foreign policies and decisions to intervene in ethnic strife often arise when environmental constraints are too great for effective coping by political institutions. However, an exclusive focus on penetration of the state and resulting tension between the need for strong authority (and institutions) and increased demands for participation may be incomplete. An intervening state often may account for, rather than merely respond to (or resolve), ethnic crises in other states (Brass 1991; Kohli 1991).

Frequently the state is the leading force behind ethnic political mobilisation, in order to provide differential advantages to regions and ethnic groups even when these extend beyond a state's borders. Highly diverse plural states (Lebanon, Ethiopia) experience special problems in maintaining internal political coherence. Within such states, individuals typically are loyal to their subnational units, which differ profoundly over the appropriate role of the state in development of domestic and foreign policies. In other instances the state is not an autonomous actor and reflects the interests of a dominant ethnic group (e.g. Syria, Somalia). Indeed, the propensity towards interstate ethnic conflict increases with the ethnic uniformity of the intervening state (Horowitz 1991; Carment and James 1995). The reasons for this pattern of behaviour and resultant state interactions are considered below.

First, when politics is highly institutionalised competition among elites
for public office heightens their responsiveness to the aspirations of the masses. In emergent states (and especially those experiencing post-revolutionary trauma), an elite sometimes comes to represent a single ethnic group. When states lack strong institutions and class divisions, ethnic composition will influence behaviour more directly—bypassing institutions in favour of patron-client relationships. For example, the emergence of modern authoritarianism in parts of Africa and Asia stems from a series of interrelated phenomena that arose out of the colonial legacy: violent origins for most states, little transformation in the economy, and low commitment among the local ethnic elite to Western-imposed structures. The absence of confrontations and conflicts between classes prevented the growth of liberal ideology, most notably its legalistic emphasis on individual rights and liberties. European models of democracy came to be perceived as alien arrangements and dissolved quickly. When interests did converge between the newly emergent political leaders it was to end colonisation, but ethnic loyalties stood in the way. Pre-colonial social, economic and political arrangements led to patron-client relations and the development of personal rule, which in turn produced states based on a ruler’s authority and coercion.

Second, if politics is highly institutionalised, then politicians must be ready to act on the preferences among their constituency (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 1992). This allows citizens to separate foreign policies that they consider legitimate reflections of their values from those that are not. Thus, a foreign policy cannot be considered successful if it contradicts the preferences of a decision maker’s constituency. A national leader must retain some minimal degree of support among the constituency to stay in power.

Third, interactions between the two aforementioned domestic variables—ethnic composition and political constraints—will determine the final foreign policy choice. Both the choices of elites and masses, and their interaction effects, are relevant in this equation. When the range of choices is extended into the international arena, elites must locate and act on strategies deemed appropriate for additional constraints and opportunities. Thus leaders are constrained rational actors, limited by both domestic and external forces. This kind of decision-making process is known as a two-level or ‘nested’ game, because constraints and opportunities are important at both the domestic and international levels (Putnam 1988; Tsebelis 1990).

How do institutional constraints interact with ethnic composition in the formation and implementation of foreign policy? Since elites play politics at two different levels—domestic and international—the incentive structures at both must be considered (Putnam 1988: 434). It will be assumed that a state can be represented by a single leader with independent policy preferences, in search of a foreign policy that is attractive to constituents. Depending on the interaction effects between variables, certain leaders may prefer policies that lead to confrontation because of anticipated domestic payoffs. In other
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Figure 1. Which states and why? The interaction effects of ethnic composition and institutional constraints on the preference for intervention instances, the configuration of domestic variables will inhibit such tactics and shift the elite towards more peaceful measures.

Figure 1 shows how the incentive to intervene in ethnic conflict varies on the basis of interaction effects. It is minimal for high-constraint, ethnically diverse states, and maximal for low-constraint, ethnically dominant states. Each cell conveys, respectively, a profile of institutional constraints and ethnic composition (i.e. type) and potential for intervention in ethnic conflicts. The four profiles are assessed generically, in turn.

Consider first the interaction effects involving low political constraints in dominant and diverse settings, or Types I<sub>a</sub> and I<sub>b</sub>, respectively. (The analysis begins with these arrangements because of the presumed simplicity of the relationship between elite and masses.) In cases where political constraints are low, it is not costly to eschew involvement in ethnic conflict. The only formal constraint on elites in these cases is the bureaucracy or military. Assuming that the elite came to power through force (e.g. Somalia), it will depend on a narrow band of support from groups (i.e. the military or bureaucracy) that are comparatively free from domestic pressures. The relationship between the military and the elite is therefore an important, but not enervating, limitation. Relative to politically constrained elites, leaders in a low-constraint setting are more free to shape foreign policies. For example, in a Type I<sub>a</sub> case a dominant ethnic group will control an ethnically homogenous military that can manipulate group symbols to mobilise the population. Consensual procedures in the development of foreign policy, if present, are likely to be 'rubber stamp' operations. Power tends to be concentrated and the elite relatively immune to domestic pressures.
Type I_a settings essentially mean that the elite leads and the masses follow. Ethnic issues, including those related to foreign policy, are portrayed as redistributive (meaning that any benefits accrue to the dominant ethnic group), but not in a way that could threaten the elite's power base. This occurs primarily because interactions with the masses are used to promote elite interests. When constraints are low and ethnic composition is uniform, an elite is unlikely to face legitimate or significant criticism at home for external confrontation. So, pursuit of an ethnically oriented foreign policy becomes an optimal strategy for the elite.

Although economic penetration may be high (e.g. IMF), Type I_a states most closely approximate the unitary actors characterised by realism. The resulting foreign policy, however, need not be inherently aggressive. Elites will take into account a number of factors, including absolute and relative capabilities, alliance structure and so forth. In other words, leaders are anticipated to behave as rational, maximising egoists as represented in the game of prisoner's dilemma (Axelrod 1977, 1984), which approximates realist accounts of state behaviour.

More specifically, within Type I_b states, issues important to a specific ethnic group are unlikely to generate interest, because the anticipated political gains are small. If the military is of a different group than the majority, or the elite represents more than one ethnic group, then it normally is impolitic to pursue a confrontational, ethnic foreign policy. (The exception occurs when both international and domestic benefits can be expected.) Type I_b states usually are inhibited; granting ethnicity a central place in foreign policy is dangerous because it may incite potential enemies within the state to seek support from neighbours. If no such risks are present, an ethnic foreign policy is more likely.

Strategies in high-constraint situations are explained through more extensive interaction effects. Leaders are constrained simultaneously by the ethnic affinities of their constituency (that is, the supporting coalition) and political institutions and related forces. Decisions about secessionism or irredentism are particularly acute in democratic societies, where internal constraint is expressed in terms of party formation, electoral politics and cabinet composition (Bueno de Mesquita and Lalman 1992). Belligerence is a more risky strategy because, in order to be considered successful, an ethnically oriented foreign policy must satisfy the preferences of many more domestic interests.

Type II_a cases include high institutional constraints and a dominant, 'like-minded' ethnic group. Like-minded refers to those cases in which even political opponents offer 'all purpose' backing for an ethnic foreign policy. The elite is expected to go along with the ethnically oriented sentiments of the masses because replacement is quite possible. The main problem is to manage the discrepancy between expectations of political friends and enemies on one hand and the outcome on the other. A leader must be ready for opposition tactics that are influenced heavily by ideology, a sense of
historical injustice, perceived grievance or a threat to values that form the basis for a future society. Concerns about involuntary pursuit of conquest will be paramount; as opposed to either Type I_a or I_b, the elite does not lead.

Variants of Type II_a arise when a leader is faced by a constituency composed of one part of an ethnic group that transcends national borders. Intense political competition may take the form of multiparty ethnic factionalism. This support is crucial to expanding a leader's claim on power. Indeed, if it promises domestic payoffs to all elites, leaders may adopt an ethnic foreign policy even if that appears to be costly in the international arena (below a certain threshold) (Putnam 1988). When multiparty systems strive to accentuate ideological product differentiation (Downs 1957: 141), outbidding can occur. Thus factions that stress an aggressive, ethnically oriented foreign policy may emerge when two leading moderate parties are very similar. All other things being equal, multiparty systems will facilitate involvement in ethnic strife. The initial set of feasible policies is small because of institutional constraints, but elites often will seek to increase its size by initiating inter-elite confrontation (Horowitz 1985). Elites may go along with the ethnically oriented sentiments of the population out of fear that they otherwise will be replaced. A kind of extreme hypernationalism is likely to emerge from leaders interested in 'outflanking' other political parties.

Type II_a outbidding may be the result of shift towards a one-party state. This can occur, for example, when a democratically elected party succumbs to political zealotry. Single-ethnic parties make it possible that the original, democratic party, unable to satisfy either extreme, will be left with a diminished base. Special interest ethnic parties are most prevalent where there are internal and external imperatives of the ethnic group in relation to others (Horowitz 1985; Tsebelis 1990). To maintain support, leaders may strive to represent a single group (Horowitz 1985). In general, the political party with the greatest interest in an ethnic foreign policy also will have the most extreme position on that issue. If other parties (including those in power) are in a position to oppose fanaticism, then an ethnic foreign policy can be prevented. In other words, the more autonomous the state, the greater its ability either to oppose – or impose – an extreme ethnic foreign policy.

Type II_b settings, in which the constituency is composed of different ethnic groups, create different incentives and constraints. The constituency is diverse and the preference for intervention will be the minimum among the four types examined. This is particularly true if force is used against an adversary with which some members of the constituency have an ethnic affinity. Institutional constraints further reduce opportunities for pursuing risky foreign policies. Elites can be expected to promote self-policing policies that downplay ethnicity as a source of foreign policy. Decisions to intervene are likely to produce greater factional conflict and a general lack of...
consensus about an appropriate foreign policy. Type IIb states are relatively vulnerable; their multiethnic character, in combination with political responsiveness, discourages them from intervention.

Relative preferences for involvement in an interstate ethnic conflict are summarised in Figure 1. Since states of Type Ia can choose from a broad range of options that would be satisfactory to the masses, belligerence may be preferred. Differences between Types Ib and IIa are difficult to predict; each is expected to fit between extremes. Type Ib states are inhibited because of diversity, while IIa states are constrained by institutions. Both are labelled as moderate, although outbidding can increase IIa's propensity toward an ethnic foreign policy. Options contract as the interactions between ethnic composition and institutional constraints take full effect. Thus a Type IIb state, under normal conditions, is least likely to find an outcome that is acceptable to its constituents. Intervention will not be attractive.

From the typology presented in Figure 1, a general hypothesis emerges:

$H_1$: The potential for intervention in ethnic conflicts varies with the type of state involved: Type Ia states have the highest disposition toward intervention; Type Ib and IIa states are moderately disposed; and IIb states have the lowest disposition.

**Evidence from interstate ethnic conflicts**

Evidence from four cases will be used to reach an initial assessment of the viability of the general hypothesis. The first case is the Somalia–Ethiopia conflict, where the irredentist impulses of Somalia, a Type Ia state, gave way to secessionist strategies. The second is intervention by Syria, a Type Ib state, in Lebanon. Syria's involvement in Lebanon, which has varied in intensity, reached a maximum during the Civil War of 1976 and continues to be significant. In such cases ethnically motivated, third-party intervention is crucial to escalation and diffusion of the conflict (Carment 1994; Cooper and Berdal 1993; Suhrke and Noble 1977). The third case is that of post-Soviet Russia as a Type IIa state. The fourth and final case focuses on the involvement of Great Britain, a Type IIb state, in the conflict over the Ruhr occupation during the early 1920s.

When placed in the context of later analysis, these cases illustrate the range of possibilities with respect to internationalisation of ethnic conflict (Carment and James 1996, 1997; Carment et al. 1997). Thus the cases are not put forward to test the preceding hypothesis (or the other one that appears later in the exposition); a rigorous assessment would go beyond the scope of the current study. At the same time, the four cases do combine to exhaust the typology and become especially useful for generating hypotheses. Furthermore, the cases include elements of both most-similar and most-different systems design. The former refers to the inclusion of cases
that appear very similar in order to highlight differences between them, while the latter stresses the need for cases that are very different in order to identify similarities (Przeworski and Teune 1970; see also Saideman 1998). The ability to make both kinds of comparison is desirable and that becomes feasible with the four cases included here.

Consider first the two states that are similar in having low institutional constraints: Somalia and Syria. These states are located in different regions and have entirely different cultures and ethnolinguistic composition. Each differs from the other in geostrategic salience to the major powers and exhibits a different level of economic development and military capability. The differences between post-Soviet Russia and interwar Great Britain, the two states with institutional constraints, also are striking. Russia’s involvement in the near abroad has reflected a tenacious yet always moderated claim to fully supporting ethnic brethren. Dire predictions about Russia’s efforts to reclaim lost territory and peoples through outright force have not yet proven wholly accurate. However, it is clear that Russia has pursued an ethnically oriented foreign policy in ways that are consistent with the model: a policy that is neither altogether belligerent nor fully benign. By contrast, Great Britain’s concerns about new and existing irredenta in interwar continental Europe reflected a combination of domestic urgency and expediency. Recognising that full recognition of ethnic minority claims in Germany and elsewhere would establish an uneasy precedent at home, Britain in concert with its allies pursued a conservative and cautious course of action.

The two states with a dominant (Somalia and Russia) and diverse ethnic composition (Lebanon and Great Britain) also could be compared to produce notable differences. In other words, the illustrations collectively include elements of both similarity and diversity: two states are similar in institutional constraint and two are similar in ethnic composition. Yet these same states differ in many other ways. The inclusion of a state that might be characterised as ‘extreme’ in ethnic composition, such as the unusually homogeneous Somalia, becomes a strength rather than a weakness when viewed in this context.

From irredentism to secessionism and collapse: Somalia versus Ethiopia

When granted independence in July 1960, Somali leaders faced the task of uniting two vastly different colonies. To cite just two important considerations, each had its own language and judicial systems (Drysdale 1964; Gorman 1981; Sauldie 1987; Henze 1991; Moynihan 1993). Six main Somali clan-families – the Darod, Hiwiya, Ishaak, Dir, Digil and Rahwein (Saideman 1998) – also had to be reconciled with each other to at least some minimal degree in order to govern. In an attempt to overcome these difficulties and the particularities of a clan-based culture, Somalia’s leaders framed a constitution that made the nationalist struggle the defining
characteristic of its political and social history. The elite hoped to extend the boundaries of the new state to include the missing Somali communities in Ethiopia, the French territory of Afars and Issas (Djibouti) and northern Kenya. Claims against Ethiopia held special significance for Somalia’s new leaders. The constitution of Somalia contained the eventual realisation of what came to be called ‘Greater Somalia’ as one of its objectives (Sauldie 1987: 17). Somalia thus agreed to give de facto recognition to existing boundaries, although not within its constitution (ibid.).

When the Somali Republic came into being in 1960, Prime Minister Abdirashid Ali Shermarke declined to accept the rights and obligations described within various UN agreements. Shortly after Somali independence, border clashes broke out between Somali tribesman and Ethiopian forces and the first of five interstate crises got underway (Brecher and Wilkenfeld et al. 1988). These failures made the Somali leaders realise that irredentist claims should not be pursued in light of the objections raised by the OAU and UN. Instead, Somalia nurtured secessionist movements (i.e. the Western Somalia Liberation Front (WSLF)) with the goal of ‘self-determination’ rather than unification. Since both the UN and OAU recognised self-determination as a legitimate basis for struggle, the Somalis hoped for greater success on the diplomatic front. Somalia would continue to pursue its irredentist goals but hide support behind the guise of ‘anti-colonial’ struggle on all fronts. While providing essential support, Somali leaders continued to deny direct involvement in supposedly domestic ‘struggles for liberation’.

Pan-Somali nationalism, which is externally divisive but internally beneficial, constitutes a unifying and legitimising principle, and ‘every Somali leader has been judged by his willingness and ability to pursue the goal of a “Greater Somalia”’ (Makinda 1992: 26). Somali leaders compete on the basis of nationalist credentials and legitimacy is derived in part from achieving the goal of uniting all Somalis, which in turn has implications for clan-based unity. This system became particularly effective during Somalia’s early democratic phase because political leaders could obtain at least a minimal degree of cooperation among the clans, which reduced the need to use foreign policy objectives in pursuit of internal unity. Political parties formed along regional clan fissures, which compounded the problem of national unity. For example, only one year into independence, a Darod clan leader allied with Ishaak clan members to depose the president, himself a member of the Hawiya clan (Laitin and Samatar 1987). In addition, an unsuccessful 1960 coup led by northern middle-rank officers indicated disunity within the army. (Since independence, southern clans had occupied most of the senior government posts, including positions in the military (Makinda 1992).) The linkage between Somalia’s political and ethnic configuration and its belligerent activity is primary. Most notable is the changing face of Somalia’s institutional structure and its confrontational policies. Somalia’s post-independence experimentation with democracy
resulted in a series of border clashes with its neighbours. In contrast, after the rise to power of the Somali military in 1969, confrontations with Ethiopia take on a decidedly more aggressive tone.

The importance of this political transformation is twofold. In effect, the rise to power of the Somali military meant the temporary cessation of any form of peaceful resolution of the conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia. Barre's generals (also his clan allies) pressed for a military solution to the issue. Earlier defeat at the hands of the Ethiopians had led to an upsurge of clan antagonisms within the army as each group looked for scapegoats to explain its past failures (Makinda 1992). An astute political player, Barre knew that pan-Somali nationalism would provide the appropriate vehicle for assuaging the military's concerns.

After the Ethiopian anti-monarchical revolution of 1974 had stimulated competing regional nationalisms, fourteen Ethiopian states experienced armed insurrection, which afforded Somalia the opportunity to realise the long-held aim of liberation (Brecher and Wilkenfeld et al. 1988). By early 1977, Somali secessionist forces took advantage of the movement of Ethiopian troops from the Ogaden to Eritrea. That conflict also started to boil over and Ethiopia now faced a potential war on two fronts. On 21 February 1977 independent sources in Nairobi reported that hostilities had broken out in the disputed Ogaden frontier but could not confirm whether Somali forces were involved, which Somalia denied. By May 1977 Ethiopia blamed 'Somalia trained infiltrators for attacks on the Addis-Ababa-Djibouti railway' (Legum and Lee 1979: 69). In mid-June the WSLF reported that it had killed 352 Ethiopian soldiers and captured 176 in a skirmish in the mountains near Harar. Several small towns in the Ogaden subsequently were captured, but Ethiopia had yet to react to what was already in evidence: Somalia's forces, not just the WSLF, had been carrying out these attacks. On 23 July 1977 Ethiopia claimed that Somalia had launched an all-out attack against its territory. Although Somalia continued to deny involvement (until 13 February 1978 when it openly committed regular forces), US spy satellites later confirmed that 'this was no simple desert skirmish on the order of previous Ethiopia-Somali confrontations' (Legum and Lee 1979: 32). An unprecedented number of tanks, aircraft and army battalions were in evidence, although it is difficult to reconstruct the exact numbers involved. Ethiopia responded in two ways: representatives appealed to the United Nations and again to the OAU to halt the fighting in the Horn of Africa and the Ethiopian leader Mengistu appealed for external military assistance.

Eight months after the war had begun, the Somali regime announced on 15 March 1978 that all its regular forces, which had been badly defeated by the Soviet-supplied Ethiopian army, would be withdrawn and that it was willing to accept a cease-fire. In response, the Ethiopian Dergue refused to accept a cease-fire until Somalia (a) publicly renounced for all time any claims to the Ogaden, Kenya and Djibouti, and (b) confirmed with the
OAU and UN its recognition of the international border between Ethiopia and Somalia (Sauldie 1987: 55).

The WSLF also refused to accept the cease-fire; while defeated in battle, it had not surrendered. WSLF leader Abdullah Hassan Mohammed asserted that the ‘masses will continue to wage war until complete success, no matter how long or how many sacrifices it takes’ (Legum and Lee 1979: 35). Despite assertions to the contrary – designed primarily to shore up support for Somalia at the impending cease-fire talks – the war had ended (ibid.: 35).

The recurring ability of Somali elites to unite divided clans to pursue irredentist claims is nothing short of profound. To the extent that external confrontation becomes a basis for consolidation of power rather than a constraint, Somalia’s ethnic homogeneity provided an opportunity that is unavailable to leaders of most multiethnic societies. In contrast to Ethiopia, Somalia is homogenous in religion and language; its clan-based struggles for identity shift according to external pressures placed upon the country. While the political system has experienced persistent internal turmoil, in the face of external adversity Somali elites until recently have mobilised clans successfully on the basis of a national identity (Makinda 1992).

**Syrian intervention in Lebanon**

Syria is diverse in ethnic composition, with low institutional constraints on its leader. Approximately 85 per cent of the Syrian population is Muslim, 80 per cent of those are Sunni and 20 per cent are Shi’a, including the Alawi sect to which Hafiz Asad belongs. The figure for Christians is 10 per cent (which includes eleven sects) and the remaining 5 per cent are Jews, Yazidis or Druze. Syria is a one-party, military state. Syrian government follows the structure of the Ba’ath Party right down to the local level. The organisation of this party is most easily envisioned as a pyramid, with Asad at the top (Hinnebusch 1990: 169; see also James and James 1997).

The willingness to take an extreme action depends on a state’s internal ethnic composition and institutional arrangements. Thus it would be expected that low-constraint states like Somalia are more likely to utilise force in exploiting the opportunities presented by cleavage and affinity. Varying levels of willingness distinguish different responses to the opportunity – and danger – represented by ethnic cleavages and affinities. Is an increased level of direct involvement by an external state to be expected in all such cases? Judging from the evidence, intervention by a third party in support of ethnic insurgents also is linked to perceived potential gains or losses on the broader foreign policy and domestic fronts. To conclude whether a crisis will ensue, it becomes necessary to consider foreign policy motivations that include domestic and international political considerations – economic gain as well as military interests (Carment 1994; Heraclides 1991).
Since Asad’s Syria is a Type I\textsubscript{b} state (and also fit that description in 1976), involvement in external ethnic conflict would be expected to remain limited without the anticipation of both international and domestic benefits. The intervention in the Lebanese Civil War qualified on both fronts. Syria clearly wanted to exert an element of control over Lebanon. Prior to the formal intervention, Asad took advantage of the civil disarray by providing support to several hostile factions, including the Maronites, PLO and Druze, in addition to socialist and communist political parties. Asad hoped to extend his influence: initially engineered to appear as a humanitarian mission, Syria entered Lebanon with 12,000 troops to ‘protect’ two Maronite villages following an ‘official’ Lebanese invitation, subsequently denied by officials. Within Lebanon, proponents of the Syrian action asserted that an end to hostilities would permit a negotiated peace and even as evidence of plans to partition Lebanon. The worst scenario for Asad was the possibility of a Muslim victory over the Christians, since Israel then might become involved. The ability to establish a military presence in Lebanon overshadowed any negative sentiments expressed at home, even among more eminent political figures who ardently espoused Ba’athist, pan-Arab, secular ideals (James and James 1997). The Arab Deterrent Force, authorised by the Arab League and composed of 20,000 to 30,000 Syrian troops, occupied the center of Beirut on 15 November 1976. Conflict between the factions in Lebanon, with Syria reverting to its traditional pro-Palestinian position, continued for many years to come (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 1997: 647).

Over a decade later, Lebanon still staggered along as a state under effective political partition. Syria undermined external Arab efforts toward a national reconciliation agreement for Lebanon in 1989. Asad succeeded in ousting the new Lebanese president, Michel Aoun, and after a few other complications replaced him with the pro-Syrian Elias Hrawi. The deposed president, however, would not recognise Hrawi. In response, Syria geared up for a military intervention intended to drive Aoun out of Lebanon once and for all. This activity provoked Israeli threats and general international disapproval, so Asad backed away from the planned intervention (James and James 1997). Consistent with behaviour expected for a Type I\textsubscript{b} state, Syria limited its involvement in Lebanon when anticipated international costs exceeded any political benefits that might be derived at home.

Closer to the present, events in 1997 show that the puzzle of Syria and Lebanon is yet to be solved. One minor event sums up where things stand more than two decades after the outset of the civil war. When the Lebanese government arrested five members of the Japanese Red Army in February 1997, Japan’s envoy visited Damascus, not Beirut. Syrian involvement in Lebanon, put simply, is all-consuming but also highly sensitive to other international factors and subject to rapid change if deemed necessary by Asad. Thus the current situation resembles the past (James and James 1997).
Russian involvement in the 'Near Abroad'

The break-up of the Soviet Union simultaneously produced two effects. First, in particular, dissolution of the Soviet Union transformed some 25 million ethnic Russians living outside the Russian Federation into a new diaspora while increasing the overall preponderance of ethnic Russians in Russia proper. Second, the break-up of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union marked the beginning of a sporadic and piecemeal transition towards democratisation. The combination of an increase in political constraints on leaders along with an increase in ethnic homogenisation resulted in an inconsistent foreign policy on the part of Russia's military and its civilian leaders: a need for restraint along with a desire to maintain and pursue low-key support for ethnic brethren.

Given that at least three significant and potentially explosive spots exist outside of Russia -- the so-called Dniester Republic, the Ukraine and the Baltic States -- the extent to which Russia has managed to avoid getting bogged down in supporting its minorities through outright intervention is compelling. Consider in particular that the new-found Russian minorities in neighbouring states exist side-by-side with the remnants of the Soviet armed forces and the explosiveness of the situation becomes clear. Furthermore, the danger of ethnic clashes is not restricted to these areas. Antagonisms within Russia proper -- i.e. Tartarstan, North and South Ossetia, Donbass and the Crimea and the Trans-Dniester region -- are ongoing.

The danger of pro-Russian separatism in Crimea is highly destabilising for newly independent Ukraine: in 1992 pro-Russian forces pushed the Crimean parliament to declare independence from Ukraine. The declaration was subsequently withdrawn under heavy pressure from the national government, but revived in a 1994 vote that restored the 1992 Crimean constitution. In 1995 the national parliament annulled the constitution and abolished the Crimean presidency. Assisted by a decline in support for the Russian separatists (the result of internal power struggles and a failure to fulfil economic promises), later in 1995 a coalition government was able to reach a new deal that conferred the status of 'autonomous republic' upon the peninsula, including a constitution that conforms to national legal norms. Tension, however, remains high, and frequently is exacerbated by the tendency of Russian politicians like Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov to make populist claims over the Crimean region.

In the Baltics the matter of citizenship is acute and the potential for Russian involvement remains fairly strong. Between 1959 and 1989 the growth rate of the titular nationalities in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania was far outpaced by non-Balts. In Latvia, for example, Lats constitute only 53.5 per cent of the population (Opalski et al. 1994: 3; Kipp and Thomas 1992). Even though Lats constitute an absolute majority of the citizens, most non-citizens are Russian speakers. Unlike Lithuania and Estonia, Latvia only recently passed laws determining the legal status, rights and obligations of
non-citizens. Yet, restrictions have been imposed on the economic, social and property rights of non-citizens (Opalski et al. 1994). Latvia’s leaders are steadfast in their efforts to dismantle the demographic legacy of the Soviet rule, including the ‘repatriation’ of non-Latvians (Crow 1994).

This situation represents a potential threat to stability among and within the Soviet successor states. Right-wing political groups in Russia still pose as defenders of the national rights of the diaspora and may pressure the Russian government to act on these linkages. To this extent, the main use of Russian Federation armed forces in armed conflicts and local wars has been the prompt containment of anti-Russian sentiment in these regions and the suppression of military escalation at the earliest possible stage. Russian involvement in Moldova, Georgia and Chechnya is illustrative.

Within the scope of these three regional conflicts, the main operational goal has been to create the preconditions for settling a regional ethnic conflict peacefully through conditions that agree with the interests of the Russian Federation. In essence, Russia’s foreign policy stresses renewed status as a major regional power to the extent that it is prepared to use its armed forces to exert such influence and defend the interests of Russia both within and beyond its borders. Alongside responsibilities related to defence, the Russian armed forces also have sought and obtained international support for conducting peacekeeping operations in these conflicts, with the exception of the war in Chechnya.

Great Britain and the Ruhr occupation: the politics of benevolent passivity

Great Britain in the 1920s is a clear choice for designation as a Type IIb state. Reform bills had widened the franchise to a high level of inclusiveness, controlling for the time period in question. Great Britain also featured a significant level of ethnic diversity, with minorities of Irish, Scottish and Welsh descent being most noteworthy.

Recovery from the War to End All Wars, along with concern for political stability on the European continent, made Great Britain a cautious observer of ongoing conflicts. As a Type IIb state and a status quo power, Great Britain would not be expected to view ethnic conflicts elsewhere as opportunities for action; instead, such developments normally would be interpreted as dangerous and undesirable.

British involvement in the generally unsuccessful occupation of Germany after World War I bears out the expectation of prudence in involvement with ethnic conflict. British, French and Belgian occupation of significant parts of Germany spanned more than a decade and produced numerous crises. The specific focus of the brief account that follows is on the conflict over the Ruhr in the early 1920s, a period sufficient to bring out the properties of Great Britain's conduct as a Type IIb state reluctantly involved in an ongoing ethnic entanglement (Williamson 1991).

From the beginning of the occupation of Germany – an action on which
the Allies had agreed prior to the end of World War I – Great Britain occupied an uncomfortable position between France, its wartime ally, and Germany, the state that it knew would have to recover in order for Europe to prosper and escape the grip of nascent radicalism from both the left and right wings of the ideological spectrum. The French wanted to weaken Germany and hoped to do this by limiting its recovery from the war through reparation payments, and even encouraging separatist movements in the occupied Rhineland. France, supported by Belgium, saw prevention of German use of the Rhineland as a staging area for invasion of Western Europe as a vital interest; occupation became a means towards that end (Holsti 1991: 205). The Germans, as might be expected, resented the occupation by their wartime adversaries and engaged in a number of actions intended to encourage in-fighting between the British and French and, if possible, their withdrawal.

Tensions came to a head towards the end of 1922 over French dissatisfaction with inconsistent German compliance with reparation payments. French and Belgian troops moved into the Ruhr during January 1923, ostensibly to facilitate the delivery of coal (Cienciala and Komarnicki 1984: 210; Brecher and Wilkenfeld 1997: 240). Faced with a hardening of positions on both sides, the British adopted a policy of 'benevolent passivity': an attempt to minimise the adverse effects upon Anglo-French (and more generally, inter-Allied) relations as a consequence of actions by France. The British attempted to pressure the French toward compromise while also expressing disapproval of passive resistance by the Germans to the occupation. Tensions subsided in September when the new German government called off passive resistance.

Conflict began to rebuild from September 1923 onward and placed the British in an awkward position once again. The most extreme position in policy-making circles within France favoured the creation of new Rhineland states that would be allied with France and help to create a buffer with a reinvigorated Germany. The French occupiers actively encouraged separatism in the Ruhr and sporadic acts of violence ensued. A new crisis erupted in April 1924 when Germany accepted a five-year schedule of reparation payments but also insisted on immediate withdrawal by France and Belgium from the Ruhr (Brecher and Wilkenfeld 1997: 242). Great Britain continued its difficult role in mediating the conflict; its diplomacy ultimately produced a plan for withdrawal of the French and Belgian occupation troops by August 1925 that all parties found acceptable.

When summing up British views on the Ruhr occupation, the frequency with which leaders expressed an interest in limiting or preferably ending involvement is especially worth noting. British leaders clearly did not regard the Ruhr occupation as an opportunity for more sustained intervention in Germany. Here it is possible to see an indirect role for ethnic diversity – in particular, experiences with the ongoing Irish conflict clearly came into play in shaping the very highest levels of British decision making. Two examples
of the views expressed by British leaders are sufficient to reveal that they perceived the situation in the Ruhr as risky and did so from the perspective of those used to dealing with ethnic diversity at home. During the height of the Ruhr crisis, Bonar Law, leader of the Conservatives, compared the tensions brought about by the occupation to the ongoing inability of the British to achieve conciliation with the Irish. Prime Minister Lloyd George joined with Bonar Law in comparing the French desire for satellite states in the Rhineland to the protracted conflict over Alsace-Lorraine after it fell into German hands. On the basis of these observations, British equation of the Ruhr occupation with other costly ethnic conflicts, along with their desire to do as little as possible to stir things up, could not be more obvious. In particular, Lloyd George had to be wary about potential criticism from a parliament and general public sensitised to the costs and risks of ethnic entanglements.

In sum, experiences with Irish nationalism and concerns about the potentially divisive effects of involvement in a possibly escalating ethnic conflict provided the foundation for the very cautious position of Great Britain during the squabble over the Ruhr. This approach placed it in the middle of the spectrum between France and the United States on questions about how to deal with unredeemed territory and overlapping ethnic claims. France had primarily strategic objectives: to weaken Germany as much as possible by ensuring that contested territories were not returned to Germany and instead became either independent states or part of its neighbours (such as Italy or Poland). The United States, by contrast, supported solutions that stressed a combination of self-determination and compensation to Germany for lost territory.

Further support for this argument is found in the way in which Great Britain approached related problems of boundary adjustment in the interwar period. For example, Britain opposed annexation by Poland of German-speaking territories such as Danzig out of fear that relinquishing many areas would bring about the collapse of the German Republic and 'cause a major problem of confidence in German public opinion' (Chazan 1991:56). In contrast to the French strategy, which was to weaken Germany as much as possible, the British searched for a solution that would stabilise the ethnic situation through a series of plebiscites and the transfer of Germans to German territory. The British pursued similar approaches by the British in establishing Italy's and Turkey's boundaries after World War I. In both cases Britain sought solutions that would stabilise existing states and rejected proposals that would lead to the creation of new, weak states.

*International power relations and the role of affinities and cleavage*

Discussion so far has focused on domestic constraints and how these shape the willingness to intervene. However, analysis of Somalia's intervention in Ethiopia, Russian involvement in the 'near abroad', and Syria's role in
Lebanon and Britain’s involvement in the Ruhr region confirms that the transnational factors such as ethnic affinities and deep cleavage, along with international power relations, influence opportunities for development of belligerent foreign policies for states with low (and sometimes even high) institutional constraints.

For example, the presence of Somalis outside of Somalia provided the incentive for claiming territory in the case of conflict with Ethiopia. An important aspect of this case is the varying importance Somali elites have attached to different regions. For example, the Ogadeni and Darod of the Ogaden are more central than the Somalis of Kenya and Djibouti to the power structure of Somali. This fact also has shaped the interests of Somali leaders whose support derives from specific clans. Leaders of clans with a strong link to the Ogaden (e.g. Barre) demonstrate a greater interest in irredentism than those from clans that lack such affinity. Barre’s clan, from which he recruited heavily, was one of the groups with the greatest ties to the Ogaden.

Consider the Somali response to the disruption represented by Ethiopian cleavage. Ethiopia’s internal unrest does appear to be associated with a sustained, thirty-year period of Somali intervention. At least three internal conflicts erupted within Ethiopia, which facilitated repeated Somali attempts at territorial retrieval. Although both states had experienced confrontations since the 1950s, only with Ethiopia in a state of collapse did Somalia choose to intervene directly with full force.

Ethnic affinities between Syria and Lebanon are significant. The wide range of religious and social practices shared by the these states guarantee that developments in one will reach the other quickly at a ‘popular level’, especially in comparison to other dyads. As late as 1920, parts of modern Lebanon were taken from the newly formed Syria, with the new territory raising the Muslim population to a majority over the Christians. Various ethnic groups within the region were split into multiple provinces under the Ottoman Empire, but the political reality reflected unity of non-Muslim groups drawn down religious lines. Non-Sunni Muslims did not receive separate status. These ties remain even today, as evidenced by strong cross-border affinity between the Sunnis, Orthodox Christians and Armenians in particular, with Maronites and Druze to a lesser extent (Kessler 1987: 90–1).

Ethnic cleavage also is high in both Syria and Lebanon. Rivalry in Syria is rooted in established hostility among groups. Muslim antipathy toward non-believers is the norm, with those of the Jewish faith being regarded as the lowest form of citizen. Christians traditionally are seen as conspiring with Europeans against Islam, so that group tends to be the target of more overt (albeit sporadic) violence. The ‘bottom line’ is that political power is tied to religion, ethnicity and geographic location in this authoritarian state. With respect to Lebanon, failed regimes can be traced back to the 1920s, when it became a separate entity made up, in part, of territory lost by Syria (Kessler 1987).
Syria's intervention in the Lebanese civil war can be traced, in sum, to three motivations. First, Asad hoped to prevent spillover into Syria, where ethnic cleavage could be transformed into more direct and potentially regime-threatening conflict. Second, Asad believed that a Muslim victory over the Christians could provoke Israeli intervention, which would work against Syria's interests in the region as a whole. Third, and finally, Asad hoped to increase Syrian power in the region. Thus, at the level of opportunity, ethnic affinities, cleavage and international (and especially regional) power relations factored into the decision to intervene.

Affinities and cleavage, together with international power relations, combine to produce different effects for states with high institutional constraints. Within the context of Russian preponderance in its sphere of influence, the main concern for the Baltic states, like elsewhere in the region, is that Russia may find itself involved directly where Russian peoples straddling the border are the leading proponents of efforts to redraw the map. Although its leaders initially may resist the temptation, right-wing political groups in Russia pose as defenders of the national rights of the Russian diaspora and may pressure the Russian government, through democratic means associated with outbidding, to act on these linkages.

In a similar vein, Great Britain in the 1920s had to deal with significant ethnic affinities and some degree of cleavage as well in policy making. The conflict over Ireland, which had erupted in violence only a few years earlier, continued to divide opinion and intruded at least indirectly into all debates over possible intervention in foreign conflicts. Northern Ireland existed as both a part of Great Britain and a simmering cauldron of ethnically based resentment that included elements of secessionism. While less salient, Scottish and Welsh nationalism also lurked in the background during this era.

Great Britain also had a competitive and increasingly class-oriented system of politics. Labour had supplanted the Liberals as the principal competition to the Conservatives. Leaning to the ideological left, Labor tended to be more sympathetic towards ethnic groups that criticised the government for its lack of responsiveness to their demands. Thus British leaders had to cope with two kinds of cleavage: (a) direct, given conflicts among its people over the Irish question and other lingering ethnic problems; and (b) indirect, due to clashing views about how much autonomy should be granted in general to groups on the basis of ethnic identity. It would not be too extreme to characterise Great Britain in the 1920s as a state with incentives towards risk-aversion with regard to intervention in foreign ethnic conflicts, regardless of whether the disputants had affinity with any significant groups at home. Involvement in such conflicts abroad had the potential to heighten tensions at home over the general issues of imperialism and colonialism. In sum, as would be expected for a status-quo-oriented great power with a Type IIb profile, both the top
leaders in London and officials in the Ruhr expressed an ongoing desire to end the intervention.

Based on the foregoing analysis, a second hypothesis is as follows:

\[ H_2: \text{Ethnic affinities and cleavage increase the potential for third-party intervention in ethnic conflicts.} \]

\[ H_1 \text{ and } H_2 \] together respond to the basic questions from the outset of this investigation. Variation among states in propensity to become involved in external ethnic conflicts and tactics is not only possible but expected. While the hypotheses will not be tested at this point, each helps to set the stage for more comprehensive evaluation at a later point (see, e.g. Diehl et al. (1996) and Regan (1996)).

Implications for policy, theory and future research

Third-party intervention in ethnic strife results from the multiple domestic threats and pressures that elites face. These threat dimensions do not merely exist as separate entities; they are closely intertwined and generate spillover effects. Certain structural features within states may be conducive to intervention. Elites facing high levels of institutional constraint may be more sensitive to the interests of groups whose support they seek. It makes sense, therefore, that ethnic conflict and intervention will be primarily evident during periods when elites are sensitive to internal pressures – such as new regimes and new states experiencing power transitions.

Four basic conclusions, consistent with \[ H_1 \] and \[ H_2 \], follow from the preceding case histories of third party intervention in ethnic conflict:

1. The interests of institutionally constrained and unconstrained elites diverge in ethnically diverse and dominant settings.
2. While strengthening decision makers at home, the absence of institutional arrangements can combine with ethnically homogenous constituencies to increase the potential for third party intervention.
3. Transnational ethnic affinities, cleavage and outbidding can facilitate third party intervention by providing benefits to leaders in the domestic arena.
4. Elites facing dual constraints are likely to be more cautious in confrontations with other states.

Theoretical arguments and evidence from cases suggest that ethnic uniformity and low political constraints represent a dangerous combination. By contrast, internal ethnic diversity, in combination with political constraints, should reduce third-party intervention in ethnic strife; both conditions lead to mutual vulnerability among states, so the potential for belligerence is diminished. Furthermore, the concentration of power among elites is reduced, meaning that direct involvement in secessionist and irredentist strife will be less appealing. Associated with these conclusions are at least
three more specific implications for security policy, with specific reference to management and prevention of third party intervention in ethnic conflict.

First, it appears that leaders of ethnically dominant and institutionally underdeveloped states face a different set of opportunities in pursuing foreign policy objectives than their more constrained and diverse counterparts. International policies implemented to deter these states at the domestic level (sanctions, embargoes) may be less effective. As the Syrian case demonstrates, elites can become adept at creating ethnic solidarity and manipulating mass opinion in order to bring it in line with their foreign policy objectives. Furthermore, the behaviour of Asad and other leaders included in this study, along with many further examples, suggest that they are maximising their own interests rather than those of the state they supposedly represent (Saideman 1998: 88; see also Saideman 1997).

Second, ethnically divided states attempting to make the simultaneous transition to a more economically open and democratic system face certain dangers. If the political system is arranged along ethnic lines and one group becomes dominant, it is likely to succumb to the politics of intransigence, confrontation, hypernationalism and conflict. Leaders of ethnically based political parties will lack, over the short term, the capacity to widen the policy agenda to encompass non-ethnic issues. When other bases of mobilisation are weak, ethnic elites depend on direct support from their constituency. Elites, in turn, seek to control and influence ethnic groups. Related to this expectation is the experience of the ethnic groups at peaceful cohabitation. Highly diverse states, while perhaps restrained in their pursuit of adventurous foreign policies, also are likely to succumb to internal strife. If one group should become dominant and is incapable of withstanding the pressures of outbidding, then a more belligerent foreign policy is likely. Thus the international community should consider making economic assistance contingent, to whatever degree is possible, on pluralism rather than exclusiveness in the domestic politics of ethnically divided states.

Managing political transitions is a third and related issue. States undergoing political transition are most susceptible to overt conflict. The priority here is to encourage alignments based on interests other than ethnicity and reduce disparities between groups so that ethnic pressure declines. However, for a new state, a politically salient ethnic character, compounded by internal cleavage and transnational affinities, may overwhelm fragile institutions. The point is that when cleavages and affinities are high, conventional restraints, such as international laws and norms backed by international organisations like the UN, may be ineffective at moderating interstate ethnic conflicts. In particular, national governments should be cautious about recognising the results of either secessionism or irredentism. Both an identity-based justification and economic viability would appear to be natural preconditions for sovereignty, but national governments and international institutions have yet to agree upon objective criteria for either (Carment and James 1996).
Consider the disturbing parallels between Germany in the 1920s and Russia in the 1990s: (1) both countries lost a war; (2) both established democratic republics; and (c) both face the temptation of totalitarianism. As one observer put it, since 'history is a better guide than good intentions, it would be prudent to view Russia as a potential adversary' (Lefever 1996: 56). While there are many differences in the environment surrounding Germany between the world wars and contemporary Russia – not the least of which is the existence of NATO – the similarities are significant. A focus on Russia as a problem state also would be consistent with the conclusions reached by Saideman (1998: 91) from a comparative analysis of recent ethnopolitics involving Somalia and Serbia. In looking for states with the potential for irredentism he made the following recommendation: 'We should focus our attention on states (democratic or authoritarian) where political competition is increasing, and where the relevant constituencies have significant ethnic ties to endangered ethnic groups in other states.' Given that it possesses both of these traits and considerable military capabilities, Russia emerges as the most important threat to international stability from the standpoint of large-scale irredentist conflict arising from ethnopolitics and general dissatisfaction with the status quo.

International relations theory also is affected by the importance of institutional constraints, ethnic composition, affinity and cleavage with respect to intervention. These factors appear to shape the kinds of choices available to leaders by creating additional internal and external sources of state insecurity. An implication of this conclusion is that domestic ethnic politics is very important to the generation of interstate strife. Indeed it may be possible to prevent or discourage the international aspects of ethnic strife by addressing its sources at the domestic level and by reducing the salience of affinities and cleavages. A reduction of the physical insecurities of ethnic minorities may be related to a decline in overt interstate conflict (Kaufman 1996). Much of what will follow depends on the ability of regimes to convey the perception to neighbouring states that they are capable of providing legitimate and tolerant leadership for ethnic minorities. Of course, this task is made all the more difficult by the divided allegiances that obtain among citizens in greater degree than in the past (Ferguson and Mansbach 1991). Models of ethnic conflict management such as those espoused by Horowitz (1985) and Lapidoth (1997) show potential. Some of the factors influencing the success of autonomous arrangements have already been shown to be effective in certain cases (Gurr 1993). These include the consent to political arrangements of both the minority groups and foreign states with whom the group has an affiliation; a clear division of powers; modes for settling disputes amicably; and, relatively even regional economic development. The objectives are to prevent any one ethnic group from achieving political, economic or cultural dominance over another. The central concept is to create the conditions necessary for conflict management between ethnic groups on a permanent basis. Decentralisation and group autonomy
Third-party intervention in ethnic conflict

approaches assign to different groups the right to decide on domestic issues of concern to them. This may include policy incentives for intra-elite cooperation designed to encourage policies that align non-ethnic interests and to reduce disparities between groups according to interelite agreement.

These long-term policy options complement Kaufman's (1996: 133) treatment of escalating ethnic wars. Ethnic wars can be averted when mass hostility and confrontations between belligerent elites are brought under control through a reduction of mutual insecurity. While the short-term prescription for how this is to be achieved will change from one instance to the next (such as conflict prevention and peacekeeping, see: Carment and James 1998) the long-term implications for conflict management are clear. Factors such as institutional structure, ethnic composition and affinity, and cleavage need to be factored into long-term plans for ethnic autonomy. Research and practical experience must combine to improve the means through which such challenges are met.

Notes

1 An ethnic group is ascriptive and exclusive; its continuity depends on the maintenance of a boundary based on values and identity (Barth 1969:14). Each ethnic group within a state is identified on the basis of one or more of six criteria: race, kinship, religion, language, customary mode of livelihood and regionalism (Rothschild 1981: 86–7).
3 A small potential for secession exists in Russia whose minority population is nearly 20 per cent. The potential is small because, in spite of the fact that many of the minorities are territorially concentrated groups, no group exceeds 5 per cent of Russia’s total population.
4 A pro-Russian Crimean militia, largely independent of Kiev, also has been established, and was responsible for attacks on Tatars in 1992 and 1995. More recently, the spiral of violence has progressed to the point where Ukrainian authorities have permitted the establishment of Tatar paramilitary detachments with a mandate to protect Tatars from Russian criminal gangs and other threats. Tatar rioting remains common in impoverished settlements, and the Crimean situation appears to be approaching a critical state where widespread violence could soon erupt, possibly drawing Russia into the conflict (Steingarten et al. 1998).
5 The case description that follows is based primarily on Williamson (1991).

References


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