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## Ethnicity, Minorities, and International Conflict

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While the resurgence of ethno-nationalism throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union has refocused the attention of international relations scholars on the ethnic dimensions of international conflict, a linkage between ethnicity and international conflict has yet to be generally accepted within the discipline. In this chapter, we examine the impact of ethnic conflict within states on the occurrence of conflict between states. Using a cross-sectional study of all geographically contiguous dyads in the international system (circa 1978), we examine foreign policy behavior to see if dyads in which there is a minority at risk exhibit different conflict patterns than the system norm. Further, we examine whether state-communal group ethnic affiliations across dyads influence the level of state-to-state conflict within the international system. Finally, we probe the impact that common ethnic ties within dyads have on dyadic interactions.

There are two bodies of literature germane to our inquiry. First, a number of studies have focused on the impact of ethnic conflicts on the behavior of other states. Most of these works are contributions to edited volumes and focus on the impact of a particular ethnic conflict on the foreign relations of the state (e.g., Suhrie and Noble 1977a; Shields 1984a, Boucher et al. 1987; Chazan 1991). Some of these collections are more theoretical than empirical (such as Rosenau 1964), while others mix theory and evidence (for example, Mialarsky 1992b). Other work on the international relations of ethnic conflict focuses explicitly on the role of third parties as mediators (Halpern 1964; Modelski 1964; Luard 1972a; Suhrie and Noble 1977b; Touval and Zartman 1989;

Stedman 1992; Licklider 1993; McGarry and O'Leary 1993; Haglund and Pentland 1996; James 1996; Kaufman 1996; Ryan 1990a). Finally, some studies explicitly seek to test hypotheses concerning the relationship between ethnic conflict and foreign policy behavior (Heracles 1990; Mialarsky 1992a; Carment 1993a; Carment et al. 1993a; Carment and James 1994b; Moore and Davis 1994). There is also a small body of literature on the impact of the international system on ethnic conflict within states (Nagel and Whorton 1992; Rasler 1992).

A second body of literature we consider directly relevant focuses on ethnic groups and their conflicts with nation-states (e.g., Young 1982; Horowitz 1985; Gurr 1993a, 1993c; Posen 1993). In these studies, no explicit effort is made to link the conflict with the behavior of other states in the international system, though linkages are often recognized. It is also interesting that many of the case study essays in the edited collections fail to make explicit reference to international linkages, though they often refer to the behavior of one or two key states in the international system that played a role in supporting one side or another in the case at issue.

Unfortunately, in both sets of literature, little effort has been devoted to specifying theoretical linkages between these two types of conflict. As one reviews the descriptive-historical case studies that dominate the literature on ethnic conflict, one cannot help but note that in every case the behavior of other states in the international system is relevant to the tale. From this observation, one might conclude that there is necessarily a linkage. And indeed, we believe it is precisely this conclusion that has led to the publication of some of the edited works. However, we find that Suhrie and Noble (1977c, 230-31) reject the contention that "internal ethnic conflict constitutes a major source of international conflict." Shields (1984b, 263) describes the international system as relatively immune to the turmoil caused by ethnic strife, but notes that ten as relatively immune to the turmoil caused by ethnic strife, but notes that for the handful of states that are involved in a given case, "ethnic separatism can be a very persistent and thorny problem indeed." Assessing the ability of international bodies to regulate internal wars, Luard (1972b, 215) concludes that "the record of international organizations in dealing with civil-war situations so far has been very mixed. Some would even dismiss it." Nevertheless, Heracles (1990) and Carment (1993a) begin their studies by arguing that the topic has not been given the attention it deserves. In this chapter, we attempt to rectify that neglect.

While it seems clear that in specific instances of ethnically driven domestic conflict, a small subset of international actors can play an important role, we wonder whether the conclusions drawn by Suhrie and Noble, Shields, and Luard are generalizable. Put simply, no one will contest that a few states in the international system choose to support one side or another in a given ethnic conflict. However, can we take the larger step and argue that ethnic conflicts

have a widespread and important effect on the behavior of states toward one another? In other words, states or domestic actors may support a particular rebel group; but are ethnic conflicts a significant driving force for the pursuit of conflictual foreign policies? More important, can we find such a relationship across a substantial sample of cases?

One can understand the issue in terms of the distinction between structural and behavioral explanations of foreign policy behavior. In explaining the foreign policy of states in the international system, are we better off focusing on the structural attributes of those states or on behavioral variables? Dina Zinnes (1980, 327) argues that "international violence is probably not the result of special conditions but rather the consequence of certain attributes of nations." Nevertheless, we anticipate that ethnic division will *not* drive international conflict patterns and that Suhrke and Noble, Shiels, and Luard drew the proper conclusions. We have designed a study to systematically explore this issue.

Few of the studies mentioned above consider the following question: What implications does this research have for general theories of international politics? While we focus explicitly on the effects of ethnic conflict within states on conflict patterns between states, at a more general level we are concerned with the question of how domestic authority patterns overlap and interact with international authority patterns. In raising this question, we hope to challenge realist assumptions that have traditionally guided the study of international cooperation and conflict. In particular, we seek to examine the realist assumption that sovereign states are the fundamental building blocks of international relations. If, as we suspect, they are not, then we must ask ourselves what the competing authority patterns are that cut across territorial boundaries and influence the interaction of states in the global arena. To answer this question we posit that ethnicity provides an alternative authority pattern to the territorial state which, at least potentially, can have an impact on the dynamics of interstate relations.

Central to the realist perspective on international relations is its treatment of the "state" as a unified actor. International relations theorists argue that since the signing of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the nation-state has represented the theoretical cornerstone to understanding the political dynamics of the international system. However, "to aver that humanity is divided into 'states,' though technically correct, is also trivial because it obscures the equally important fact that humanity is divided in many other ways as well" (Ferguson and Mansbach 1991, 381). Thus, while we accept the notion that the territorial state remains the central actor in the international environment, we also concur with Ferguson and Mansbach's observation that "at best, the state is a primary symbol of identity that competes with other symbols of

identity for the loyalties of citizens. For this reason, it is . . . one of many 'polities' that compete for human loyalties and that form authority relations" in the international system (*ibid.*, 369). As Robert Slater points out (1993), with the collapse of the territorial boundaries of the cold war era, the (re)emergence of nationalist rivalries, and the "New World Order's" revitalization of international and regional organizations, the political influence of the "state" and its analytical usefulness are under considerable challenge and stress.

Stephen Ryan (1990a, xxii-xxiv) points out that beginning in the late 1960s, the "state-centric" approach to international relations came under attack from a variety of quarters, even from scholars who began to make a case for ethnicity as one of what Ferguson and Mansbach call the primary symbols of identity. With a sense of renewed vigor, intellectual challengers to the realist paradigm have begun to create a new research agenda that seeks to elaborate on patterns of authority in the international environment, patterns that either replace (Ferguson and Mansbach 1991) or rival (Rosenau 1990) the state in its authority. Recognizing the influence of both vertical (e.g., territorially defined) and horizontal (e.g., ethnic, class, gender, etc.) authority patterns in global politics, Rosenau (1990, 39) argues that loyalties can be divided among numerous authorities and that humanity should be conceived "as congeries of authority relations."

If we accept Rosenau's contention that there are competing authority patterns in the international system, how does this belief affect the way we study international conflict behavior? Most significantly, this implication forces us to look beyond "national interests" as an explanatory variable of foreign policy behavior. In addition to serving as an instrument for the accumulation of national power, foreign policy actions may also reflect more affective motivations that stem from the commitment of citizens and rulers to authority patterns that transcend national boundaries. By examining the international dimensions of ethnic conflict, we hope to gain further insight into this puzzle.

The ethnic characteristic of a state can be understood as an attribute, in much the same way that the type of authority structure within the state (regime type) is an attribute. While the impact of ethnicity on international interactions has been relatively ignored, the impact of "regime type" has been the focus of considerable recent work. In particular, scholars have found that democracies, while just as war prone as other types of states, almost never fight one another and almost always win the wars they are involved in (see Chan 1984; Maoz and Abdolali 1989; Lake 1992; Maoz and Russett 1992, 1993; Russett 1993; Dixon 1994). This set of findings poses a considerable challenge to the realist conceptual framework and its assumption that all states act in the same manner.

