1 The Problem: Why Do States Take Sides in Ethnic Conflicts?

After the Cold War ended and the nearly unanimous effort to defeat Iraq during the Gulf War, scholars, policymakers and publics expected that countries would able to cooperate to manage crises and conflicts around the world. The European Community, as it transformed into the European Union, tried to develop a common foreign policy, hoping to play an important role in post–Cold War international relations. Yugoslavia's wars dashed these hopes because European states could not agree on how to handle them. Germany's efforts to recognize and support Slovenia and Croatia frustrated Britain and France. Russia's support of Serbia, and, by extension, the Bosnian Serbs, limited what the United States could do. Greece's policies toward Macedonia increased regional instability. Albania's support of the Kosovar Albanians increased the power and will of the Kosovo Liberation army, which, in part, caused Serbia to react violently, bringing NATO into a new war. Because the international community failed to cooperate effectively during the Bosnian conflict, analysts fear that unfortunate precedents have been set and that we need to develop new understandings of ethnic conflict so that we can manage future conflicts.[1]

Previous efforts to understand the international relations of ethnic conflict failed to help predict the dynamics surrounding Yugoslavia's demise. Therefore, analysts have argued that things have changed, so that the various institutions and norms that constrained states before are no longer as relevant.[2] There are two problems with this argument: first, it assumes that the old conventional wisdom was correct in explaining the past; and, second, as a

result, it implies that past ethnic conflicts are not useful for understanding today's. Briefly, the conventional wisdom argues that in the past the mutual vulnerability of states to ethnic conflict inhibited their foreign policies, restricting support for secessionist movements and creating the Organization of African Unity and a norm of territorial integrity.[3] Now, it is argued, the norms these states developed have broken down, threatening the stability of boundaries in Africa and perhaps elsewhere. As this book will show, more states, including many that were vulnerable to separatism, supported secessionist movements even in Africa than usually suggested, but that we can still learn from the past to understand today's conflicts.

The purpose of the book is to address these difficulties. To be clear, the focus of this book is on the foreign policies of states toward ethnic conflict—the support they give to an ethnic group or the state it is battling—and not directly on the outcomes of these disputes. While the policies of external actors matter a great deal in shaping their outcome,[4] this study concentrates on the causes of these policies rather than their consequences. By asking why states take sides in ethnic conflicts, especially secessionist crises, past and present, I hope to show why the old conventional wisdom is wrong not only for today's conflicts but for yesterday's as well. In addition, I hope to demonstrate that the international dynamics of current ethnic conflicts are similar to those of the past. The answer this book poses is that the domestic political concerns of leaders, as determined by the interaction of ethnic ties and political competition, cause states to take one side or another (or both) of ethnic conflicts elsewhere. Consequently, getting states to cooperate over such disputes is much more difficult than generally argued.

In this chapter, I suggest why this question is important for both policy and academic debates, sketch out briefly the potential answers, and then present a brief outline of the book.

Relevance For Policymakers

Leaders throughout Europe, North America, and even the Middle East have focused their attention on the Yugoslav conflict, expending considerable political, military, economic, and diplomatic resources. Obviously, they must think the conflict is important. There are many reasons why policymakers cared about the Yugoslav conflict. There are the humanitarian concerns, as the conflict has produced atrocities reminiscent of Nazi war crimes.

Refugee flows have caused resentment and conflict in Germany and elsewhere. Economic sanctions have disrupted economies within the region, particularly hurting Macedonia and Romania. During the Bosnian war, leaders feared that the conflict might spread to Macedonia, perhaps causing a new war between Turkey and Greece. Many also argued that, as the first conflict after the end of the Cold War, the Yugoslavia conflict might set unfortunate precedents, encouraging demagogic politicians elsewhere to play the ethnic card. Finally, many politicians cared about the conflict because their supporters did. These same reasons also drew the attention of many states to ethnic conflicts in Rwanda, Chechnya, Sri Lanka, and Nagorno-Karabakh, among others.

Clearly, ethnic conflicts pose grave threats to the lives, livelihoods, and well being of everyone involved. Many articles and books have documented the costs of ethnic conflict imposed upon civilians as well as combatants. Ethnic cleansing has now entered our vocabulary, referring to the forced expulsion of members of an ethnic group to purify the region for another one. The strategy includes using artillery, selective executions, rape and other forms of terror to "encourage" civilians of the targeted ethnic group to flee. Many have documented the horrors committed in the name of ethnic nationalism in Bosnia.[5] When journalists reveal particular atrocities, leaders and publics in other countries are likely to desire an end to the conflict.

Since the early 1980s, ethnic conflicts have generated more refugees than any other kind of phenomena, natural or man-made, short of interstate war.[6] Refugee flows draw international attention and cause states to seek an end to the conflicts that spawn such movements for humanitarian, economic, and security reasons. When people flee a conflict, they usually suffer a great deal in the process, again causing outside actors to seek an end to the suffering. Refugees also impose costs on the countries to which they flee, since the host countries have to pay for food, shelter, clothing, and more. This is particularly troublesome since the poorest countries tend to bear the most severe burdens,[7] as the recent plight of Albania and Macedonia illustrates. Refugees cause economic dislocations as they compete for jobs and scarce goods.[8] The problem of civilians fleeing ethnic conflicts now affects more developed countries as nearly a million people fled to Western Europe from Yugoslavia.[9] Refugees may also threaten the security of countries. They can disturb the internal political balance of the host state by changing its ethnic composition. Refugees may also challenge the sovereignty of a country by

controlling the territory they inhabit.[10] They may also increase tensions and conflict with the state from which they fled. To end the flow and return the refugees, the conflict that caused them has to end.

Refugee flows are not the only dynamic causing economic problems. States frequently rely on economic sanctions to compel various combatants to negotiate. While the debate about whether this strategy works is a lively one, there is much less controversy about the costs the sanctioning states must bear.[11] While economic sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro (the rump Yugoslavia) have had little impact on the economies of the United States and other major powers, they have cost Romania and other neighbors of Yugoslavia quite dearly.[12] Although sanctions are supposed to end a conflict, over time the desire develops to end the war so that the sanctions can stop.

Perhaps the most important reason why leaders care about ethnic conflict is the threat such conflicts pose to international peace and stability. "Saying the threat of ethnic violence today is 'no less serious than the threat of nuclear war was yesterday,' the Russian Foreign Minister today called for expanded United Nations peacemaking and peacekeeping, especially in the troubled republics of the former Soviet Union."[13] In his first speech at the United Nations, President Bill Clinton considered regional ethnic conflict to be one of the three most important sources of international instability.

The wars of Yugoslavia's disintegration provided the international community with a dramatic example of how ethnic conflict can promote regional instability. These conflicts remind us of other crises in the history of the region, highlighting the enduring relevance of ethnic conflict for international politics. Conflict between the Serbs and their neighbors occurred at the turn of the last century, leading to the assassination of Austria's Archduke Ferdinand by a Serbian irredentist, an event that triggered the First World War. While the Croatian and Bosnian conflicts remained within the boundaries of "Yugoslavia," the war in Kosovo threatened the stability of Macedonia, as well as increasing the likelihood of war among Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, and Turkey. Separatist conflicts have spawned other wars, including the Ethiopia-Somalia war of 1977–1978 and the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971.

Ethnic conflicts may also spread to cause ethnic tensions to rise within other states. This chapter has thus far focused on some of the direct mechanisms through which ethnic conflict may diffuse—refugees and international intervention, but ethnic conflict may also indirectly cause

more conflict elsewhere through demonstration effects and learning—contagion.[14]

Because of these consequences, which are likely to hurt many countries, analysts generally assume that the priority is to end such conflicts and to prevent a crisis from becoming an ethnic war. Barbara Walter argues that outside states need to mediate and provide credible security guarantees so that the combatants will agree to stop fighting.[15] Frank Harvey, among others, has argued that states need to make credible threats to compel the actors to stop fighting and to deter future fighting.[16] Jarat Chopra and Thomas Weiss argue that international organizations should subcontract to major powers to intervene in ethnic conflicts.[17] Chaim Kaufmann has argued that the best of all the bad solutions is to partition states that have deep ethnic conflicts, and that the international community should intervene on behalf of the weaker side.[18] A group of scholars, led by John Davies and Ted Gurr, has considered early warning systems so that states can act preventively.[19] Stedman takes more seriously the problem of getting domestic actors to cooperate, but he, too, overlooks the difficulty of getting states to cooperate.[20] The flaw in these approaches is that decisionmakers may actually care more about who wins and who loses. They may prefer the conflict to continue, rather than have their preferred combatant lose. If this is the case, then the problem of international cooperation is less about which mechanism is best for enforcing peace agreements,[21] and more about getting states to cooperate despite their disagreements.

Therefore, it is crucial that we examine whether and why states take sides in ethnic conflicts. It is logically prior to considering which mechanism should the international community use to deal with a conflict, since there needs to be some agreement among the relevant states for nearly any mechanism to work. This book evaluates explanations for why a state might choose to support one side or another—an ethnic group or its host state, because this question has been overlooked in the rush to develop conflict management tools to deal with such crises. Again, the Yugoslav conflict is quite instructive. Much frustration existed within the domestic politics of all of the states in the Contact Group (Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States), as states failed to agree on solutions to the conflict. There was much criticism of President Clinton's inability to follow through on his campaign promises and other statements to do more for Bosnia. Perhaps the most important obstacles to American foreign policy toward Yugoslavia were the opposition of American allies, France and Britain, and

sensitivity toward President Yeltsin's plight. The nationalists within Russia demanded support for their fellow Slavs, the Serbs, and criticized both the West and Yeltsin for failing to defend the Serbs.[22] I address the problem of cooperating over the Kosovo conflict in the concluding chapter.

It is important to realize that the Yugoslav experience is not unique. There have been other secessionist conflicts where states disagreed about whom they should support and about the mandate of international organizations. Rather than just trying to derive lessons from the most recent conflict, we need to compare the Yugoslav conflict to other similar conflicts to determine which patterns and dynamics are common to ethnic conflict in general. This book, by comparing the Congo Crisis of 1960–63 to the Nigerian Civil War and to the wars of Yugoslavia's disintegration, will provide some insights about how states react to such conflicts. Policymakers should not be surprised when states disagree, particularly when the leaders of various states depend on constituents who have ethnic ties to different sides of a conflict. By considering the three most likely explanations of the international relations of ethnic conflict—vulnerability, realism, and ethnic politics, I hope to clarify what policymakers should expect when ethnic crises develop in other states and what can be done to get states to cooperate to manage them.

Implications for Theory

This book also will have important implications for foreign policy analysis and international relations theory as it relates to the likelihood and consequences of international cooperation. Specifically, there are at least three different debates to which this book may relate: (1) diversionary theories of war—under what conditions will leaders use foreign policy for domestic political purposes; (2) preference formation—determining interests is essential for understanding international relations;[23] and (3) the relevance of international norms and international organizations—do international norms and organizations constrain the behavior of states, and if so, how and under what conditions?

The recent movie *Wag the Dog* and the coincidence of Clinton's impeachment with the use of force against Iraq have made the diversionary theory of war perhaps the most widely discussed hypothesis in public debates of all of foreign policy analysis. The essence of the argument is that external conflict tends to cause groups to become more united,[24] so politicians, in-

tuitively understanding this, will engage in aggressive foreign policies when they want to increase unity at home.[25] The diversionary debate continues as analysts produce contradictory findings. This book hopes to refine the diversionary debate in two ways. First, it would address issues other than war or militarized interstate disputes by focusing on policies toward ethnic conflicts. Second, this book will suggest that the choice of target for a diversionary foreign policy is not random, but depends crucially on the domestic political challenges facing leaders.

This book relates to a second debate—what are the sources of states' preferences? Systemic theories have assumed that states seek to survive or maximize their power (variants of realism), or seek to maximize the welfare of their citizens (neoliberal institutionalism). Instead of focusing on what states, or their leaders, want, these approaches focus on how the structure of the situation encourages conflict or cooperation. Recently, scholars have focused more attention on how domestic politics might shape what leaders, and, therefore, states might desire. Andrew Moravcsik argues that liberalism, as opposed to neoliberal institutionalism, focuses on what individuals desire, how these desires are aggregated, and then the pattern of interests among states determines international outcomes.[26] Because this study compares argument based on domestic sources of preferences to the conventional wisdom based on neoliberal institutionalism,[27] this book should illustrate some of the distinctions that Moravcsik has drawn, and suggest the explanatory power of a preference-focused theory.

Third, the conventional wisdom of the international relations of ethnic conflict places much emphasis on the roles played by international organizations and norms.[28] By considering the limits of the conventional wisdom, this book might have implications for the growing debate about the impact of international norms. Specifically, under what conditions do norms trump domestic political incentives and vice versa? To be clear about the potential implications of this study for theoretical debates, I need to sketch out the rival arguments.

Competing Explanations

Rarely has any of the work on the international relations of ethnic conflict tested competing theories, so it has been hard to conclude which arguments provide the best explanations.[29] While I delineate the theories in the second

chapter, it is important to spell out the arguments now so that the plan of the book makes sense.

Ethnic Politics

Chapter 2 develops an explanation based on the interaction between ethnic ties and political competition, asserting that domestic political concerns drive the foreign policies of states toward ethnic conflicts. Starting with the assumption that the desire to gain and maintain political office motivates politicians,[30] the argument follows that politicians care about the interests of their supporters. When it comes to ethnic conflicts in other states, the constituents of politicians are most likely to care about the plight of those with whom they share ethnic ties. Therefore, as long as politicians care about maintaining the support of these constituents, decisionmakers will support the combatants in ethnic conflicts elsewhere that share some sort of ethnic bond with their constituents. While all politicians must care somewhat about their supporters' desires, those facing competition will be more motivated to please their constituents. Thus, we should expect when a leader relies on supporters who have ties to a secessionist movement that the state's policy should be supportive of that movement. When the constituents in one state have ties to a state from which a group is trying to secede (a host state), then the first state will assist the second state. Leaders who face little competition may not be as attentive to their followers' desires, but leaders who face strong competition will certainly give assistance to those with whom their supporters share ethnic ties.[31] In sum, ethnic ties and political competition are the variables driving this argument.

Vulnerability

The conventional wisdom, focusing originally on Africa, has argued that ethnic divisions inhibit states from supporting separatist movements. This vulnerability also causes decisionmakers to strengthen the norm of territorial integrity by building international institutions—such as Organization of African Unity.[32] Separatism is a serious threat because most African states face serious racial, religious, tribal, and/or linguistic divisions. Leaders fear that once some group successfully questions one tenuous,

artificial African boundary, then all the boundaries would be subject to challenges.

Although scholars developed the vulnerability argument to explain Africa's international relations, it has been applied to more current problems in other regions. Radmila Nakarada argues that "if the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia is compromised in the name of self-determination, then the ensuing secessions . . . will have an external domino effect. The Yugoslav precedent will reach other dissatisfied minorities (Basque, Corsica, Sardinia, Northern Ireland, Southern Tyrol, etc.) whose aspirations for independence will be encouraged. The supreme danger is that once a precedent is set, no European borders can escape re-examination."[33]

The vulnerability argument predicts that states facing their own ethnic conflicts will not support secessionists in other states for fear of encouraging either the breakdown in international norms or a direct backlash by the host state of the assisted separatists. The argument does not make specific predictions about states that are not vulnerable to secessionism. The vulnerability argument also stresses the roles played by international norms (the norm of territorial integrity) and international organizations, particularly the Organization of African Unity. By focusing on two African conflicts—the Congo and Nigeria, this book directly addresses the vulnerability argument on its home ground. If vulnerability fails to explain the behavior of African states, and if norms and international organizations do not constrain states, we should not be surprised when the vulnerability argument creates false expectations during Yugoslavia's wars.

Security Maximization

Realists expect that the international relations of ethnic conflict are similar to the behavior of states in other issue areas.[34] Therefore, relative power and security concerns should motivate states as they react to ethnic conflicts in other states. Since balancing is "the most central pattern" in international relations for realists,[35] we ought to expect that states will tend to support the weaker states and assist separatist movements in the stronger, more threatening states. That is, states will take sides depending on whether the state in question is a threat. In chapter 2, I will extend Stephen Walt's argument[36] about why states join alliances to develop realist predictions for the states' foreign policies toward ethnic conflicts. Specifically, I will develop an ad-

justed realist account focusing on relative power, offensive capabilities, proximity, and perceived intentions to develop realist expectations of the international relations of ethnic conflict.

Plan of the Book

This study develops competing explanations of the behavior of countries toward ethnic conflicts, and then tests them through qualitative and quantitative analyses. Chapter 2 develops the competing explanations and presents the research design. First, the chapter delineates the vulnerability and realist explanations, and derives testable hypotheses from these arguments. Then, the chapter lays out a theory of how ethnic politics may affect foreign policy, by focusing on the interests of politicians and of their constituents. I draw some distinctions between how political competition combines with ethnic politics versus more simplistic approaches that focus on the power of nationalism.[37] In the remainder of chapter 2, I discuss the research design, justifying the selection of the cases to be studied in chapters 3, 4, and 5, and explaining the selection of the data to be used in chapter 6's quantitative analyses.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 examine how states reacted to three different secessionist crises.[38] Chapter 3 examines the international relations of the Congo Crisis from 1960–1963. I review how the crisis started, and then present the ethnic politics of the Katangan separatist movement, since this significantly shaped how states perceived the conflict. Specifically, I discuss how states perceived the essentially tribal conflict as a dispute between white colonists and their allies on one side and black nationalists on the other. Then, the chapter briefly assesses the United Nations' armed intervention. By focusing on Katanga's most energetic supporters, its most hostile enemies, and some states that were more ambivalent, I apply the competing arguments to the behavior of more than a dozen countries.

Chapter 4 considers the behavior of outside actors toward Nigeria's civil war of 1967–1970. Again, the chapter begins with a discussion of the origins of the conflict. The focus of the discussion is on how the conflict became one of religion: the predominantly Christian Ibos versus the predominantly Muslim Hausa-Fulani. The religious definition of the conflict influenced how outsiders reacted to the conflict, with much more disagreement among African countries than usually presented.

Chapter 5 applies the competing theories to the international relations of Yugoslavia's demise. I discuss the conflict's origins briefly, as the ethnic dynamics within Yugoslavia influenced outside actors. Because so much has been written about Yugoslavia, the discussion of the actions of various international organizations will be brief. Instead, to explain the ambivalence, confusions, and failed efforts of international organizations, the rest of the chapter will consider why states disagreed so much about what to do and whom to support. Because there are so many potential separatists to support, this chapter is structured differently, focusing first on the most puzzling behavior of outsider actors. Then, I analyze the other significant actors.

Chapter 6 presents a variety of quantitative analyses. First, I present a variety of cross-tabulations to examine the performance of the competing arguments in chapters 3, 4 and 5. Second, the chapter presents some trends in the international relations of ethnic conflict in the 1990s to consider whether the fears of vulnerability theorists have been realized. Third, I present analyses of the attributes of ethnic groups to see what causes groups to receive support—focusing on both breadth and intensity of assistance. Fourth, the chapter presents analyses focusing on states' characteristics to determine which kinds of states are more likely to support ethnic groups elsewhere.

Chapter 7 compares the findings of the case studies and the statistical analyses to determine what causes states to support particular ethnic groups. Then, I briefly discuss the 1999 Kosovo conflict to show that ethnic politics still impedes international cooperation in the Balkans. Next, I draw the book's implications for the roles of norms, international organizations, domestic politics, and security concerns in the foreign policies of states toward ethnic conflicts. Finally, I consider this book's implications for policy debates and potential directions for future research.