2 Explaining the International Relations of Ethnic Conflict

Why do states support some ethnic groups but not others? Why do states support some states resisting secessionism, i.e., host states, but not all? The conventional wisdom is that states that are vulnerable to ethnic conflict are inhibited from supporting separatists in other states, and that this weakness will cause states to develop and then respect international organizations and norms. This argument has at least two significant flaws: it fails to explain why a state would support a secessionist movement and some do; and, many vulnerable states have supported separatist movements, as case studies in the subsequent chapters demonstrate. A likely alternative argument would be that the search for security motivates states, so a state will consider whether supporting a particular separatist movement is likely to improve its security. The neorealist focus on balancing behavior suggests that a state will support secessionist movements in those host states that threaten it, and oppose separatists in its allies. This book proposes a different argument, focusing on domestic politics. I develop a theory of ethnic politics and foreign policy, arguing that the interaction of ethnicity and domestic political competition produce incentives for politicians to support one side or another of ethnic conflicts in other states. According to this argument, the existence of ethnic ties between decisionmakers' supporters and the combatants in conflicts in other states will greatly determine the foreign policies of states. Consequently, this chapter presents competing explanations based on, respectively, international norms and organizations, security, and domestic politics. After discussing each approach, the last section of this chapter presents the book's research design.

The Conventional Wisdom: Vulnerability Inhibits States

"The greatest deterrent to territorial revisionism has been the fear of opening a Pandora's box. If any one boundary is seriously questioned, why not all the boundaries in Western Africa?"[1] This is the heart of conventional understandings of Africa's boundary politics and beyond. Saadia Touval stresses the vulnerability of African states to separatism to explain why they have not supported secessionist movements. "Since most states are vulnerable to external incitement to secession, it was obvious to the majority of states that reciprocal respect for boundaries, and mutual abstinence from irredentism,[2] would be to their advantage."[3] Touval goes on to argue that Somalia was the exception that proved the rule. Somalia's relative invulnerability to ethnic conflict, due to its homogeneity, explains its exceptional irredentism.[4] While the rise of clan conflict in the early 1990s and the de facto secession of Somaliland (northern Somalia) demonstrate that Somalia is currently vulnerable to ethnic conflict, an examination of its history indicates that secessionism and ethnic conflict have plagued Somalia since independence in 1960.[5]

Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg argue that the norms of international society preserve African states lacking the empirical requisites of statehood.[6] Empirical statehood, as defined by Max Weber and others, requires centralized control of the means of force and an ability to exercise control of a territory. Jackson and Rosberg assert that most sub-Saharan states have lacked these attributes at one time or another without ceasing to exist. Instead, the juridical nature of statehood explains why such states have continued to exist and remained intact. The argument stresses international society, which supports the rights of states, including the right to noninterference and territorial integrity. Consequently, they argue that African states and outside actors have been unwilling to support separatist movements, because of the international society's prohibition against changing existing boundaries.[7]

Jackson and Rosberg's application of Grotian theory contains keen insights into the nature of sovereignty, but one of their central points is problematic.[8] Jackson and Rosberg assert that "there is a *common interest* in the support of international rules and institutions and state jurisdictions in the African region that derives from the *common vulnerability of states* and the insecurity of statesmen."[9] Thus, they make one very important, but very questionable assertion: that vulnerability to ethnic conflict and separatism presents African leaders with similar opportunities and constraints. Astri

Suhrke and Lela Garner Noble argue, "This may well be too facile an assumption."[10]

Rather than basing his argument on Grotian theory, Jeffrey Herbst applies Robert Keohane's neoliberal institutionalism to explain why African states have been able to maintain their boundaries, developing a vulnerability argument similar to Jackson and Rosberg's.[11] He compares the formation of African boundaries by the colonial powers to the newly independent African states' recognition of those boundaries.[12] He argues that politicians in both situations faced similar interests and obstacles: the motivation to avoid war and the problems of defining boundaries in a continent without clear dividing demographic, ethnographic or topographic formations. Herbst argues that both the Berlin Conference of 1885 and the Organization of African Unity [OAU] designed simple decision rules to overcome the problems of administration and weak institutionalization. After decolonization, African leaders found control over the capital city of a territory, surrounded by colonial boundaries, to be sufficient.[13]

Herbst's argument offers an excellent explanation of why African states chose particular rules and institutions. However, his analysis of African leaders' motivation to cooperate is flawed. He argues that African states were too weak institutionally to exert control over territory within their own boundaries, not to mention administering territories beyond the existing borders. Therefore, they were not interested in expansion. In addition, the costs and uncertainties of war were too great, especially the possible "echo effects" of other states also forcing changes in their boundaries.[14]

While African leaders did seek to avoid war, this did not necessarily inhibit them from supporting secessionist movements in other African states. Herbst seems to consider only Somali-like irredentist invasions as boundary changing behavior or violations of territorial integrity rather than support for secessionist movements, such as diplomatic recognition or the provision of military equipment. Yet aiding secessionist movements in other states would not require the material or institutional resources needed for war nor would it necessarily engender the grave costs that war may entail.

To buttress his argument, Herbst uses the notion of *specific reciprocity*, as developed by Robert Keohane.[15] "The reciprocal agreement followed by the independent African states is the same as that followed by the European colonialists: one nation will not attack or be attacked as long as minimal domestic administrative presence is demonstrated."[16] The behavior of each African state is contingent on the behavior of the other states: each will

cooperate as long as the others cooperate. However, "specific reciprocity is not a sure-fire recipe for promoting cooperation."[17] Specific reciprocity can lead to either cooperation or mutual recrimination. The interesting question is why cooperation develops, as in Africa generally, rather than a feud, as in South Asia between Pakistan and India; specific reciprocity cannot predict which outcome will occur or explain why.

The difficulty lies in one of the main assumptions of specific reciprocity: "the extent to which the players have interests in common."[18] Assuming common interests begs the most important and interesting question: why do particular states have common interests and are willing to cooperate, while others do not? Herbst, like Jackson and Rosberg, argues that all African leaders confront a similar threat, Balkanization, and that this threat gave these leaders a common incentive to cooperate.[19]

Still, even if we assume that states have common interests, they must solve a collective action problem, as Herbst admits. "However, in the case of the state system that protects African boundaries, the large number of states is not a problem, because each state still feels at risk from secession, conquest, or some other boundary change."[20] Although elites face many threats, for Herbst, vulnerability to secession overrides the collective action problem. "Since all countries are at risk from disgruntled minority groups, there is a general sense that all states gain crucial protection from the current system."[21]

Herbst's approach does not adequately solve the problem that he seeks to address. Why do states still cooperate despite the temptation to free ride? Given the logic of collective action,[22] vulnerability is not sufficient for explaining cooperation; the existence of common interest is insufficient for explaining cooperation—the temptation to free ride continues to exist. The move that Herbst and others make is that there is no free riding because a single violation of the boundary regime may undermine the entire system. "Precisely because all parties know that once African boundaries begin to change there would be an indefinite period of chaos, the grave danger of not cooperating is clear to all."[23] Thus, since any boundary change, such as a successful secession, would reverberate throughout Africa,[24] no country would have any interest in supporting such behavior.

In these arguments, analysts treat vulnerability to ethnic conflict in general and secessionism specifically as a sufficient condition for explaining why a state would not support a separatist movement. Yet, vulnerability fails to explain why a state would want to support a secessionist movement, sug-

gesting only that a state that was invulnerable to secessionism could do so if it wanted. Because states do help secessionists, the vulnerability argument only accounts for one value of the dependent variable. Further, mutual vulnerability does not necessarily mean that states will pursue identical solutions to shared problems, for vulnerability may present different politicians with varying interests. Vulnerability by itself says very little about how leaders choose to deal with their fragile positions and divided states. Leaders may opt for external aggression to unify a divided society,[25] or they may opt to acquiesce, depending on the nature of the internal conflict they face and their political interests.[26] The third flaw in vulnerability thinking is that mutual vulnerability may cause states to try to engage in preemptive behavior—one state may support separatists in a neighbor since the nearby state may do so. Thus, rather than deterring states from supporting secessionists, vulnerability may compel fearful states to support such groups.[27] This is similar to the problem faced by Herbst—reciprocity predicts that states respond in kind, but fails to address why mutual cooperation rather than mutual recrimination is the expected outcome. The fourth major problem with vulnerability arguments is that states under attack by secessionist movements have supported similar groups in other states, which the next four chapters prove.

Despite the vulnerability argument's weaknesses, it remains popular today as analysts apply it beyond the African context. Radmila Nakarada refers to Pandora's Box, arguing that the disintegration of Yugoslavia might threaten to cause ethnic conflict throughout Western Europe[28] while others argued that it might spread to the Soviet Union.[29]

The heart of the vulnerability argument is that vulnerable states do not support separatist movements, and they actively support the creation and maintenance of international organizations and norms to maintain existing boundaries at the expense of self-determination. From these arguments, particularly those of Jackson and Rosberg and Herbst, we can derive the following testable hypotheses:

V1. *States that are vulnerable to ethnic conflict and separatism are less likely to support secessionist movements.*
V2. *The existence and specification of international norms prohibiting assistance to secessionists decreases the likelihood of states supporting secession.*
V3. *The involvement of international organizations trying to limit external support to secessionist movements should reduce the likelihood of such support.*

V4. *A state sharing a history of cooperation with a host state will not support separatists within the host state.*
V5. *A state sharing a history of conflict with a host state is more likely to support separatism within the host state.*

The first three can be derived from either Jackson and Rosberg or Herbst as each assert the importance of vulnerability, norms, and international organizations. The latter two are logical implications of Herbst's application of specific reciprocity.

Table 2.1 summarizes the most important predictions of the vulnerability argument.

In sum, the vulnerability approach predicts that states vulnerable to secessionism will support host states and oppose secessionists. The vulnerability assumption by itself makes no predictions about the behavior of invulnerable states. However, the larger arguments associated with the vulnerability assumption suggest that international norms and international organizations may constrain even invulnerable states.

Realism and the International Relations of Ethnic Conflict

Alexis Heraclides argues that states support secessionist movements abroad to improve their international political positions. "Most important among instrumental motives and instrumental restraints were considerations

TABLE 2.1 The Vulnerability Argument's Predictions

	State is Vulnerable to Secessionism		Existence of International Norms, Involvement of International Organizations	
Predicted Policy:	Yes	No	Yes	No
State Supports Secessionists	No	Indeterminate	No	Indeterminate
State Supports Host State	Yes	Indeterminate	Yes	Indeterminate

of an international political nature, namely the international political configuration of the region, strategic gains, position of allies, great and middle powers and friends, and relations with the state (government) threatened by secession."[30] Unfortunately, Heraclides does not develop a theory or a model of international political interests and secession.[31] Indeed, no realist or Neorealist has applied their approach directly to the international relations of secession.[32] We can apply realism by extending its logic to this issue area. The problem, of course, is that realism is not a single approach, but a set of approaches, with contrasting assumptions and conclusions. Specifically, defensive realism asserts that states balance power or threats; while offensive realism suggests that states engage in predatory behavior.[33] Since defensive realism is the more widely accepted realist theory of foreign policy,[34] the case studies will test the essential argument of defensive realism—that states balance threats,[35] while the quantitative analyses will evaluate both defensive and offensive realism. In this section, I extend the balance of threat argument to develop testable hypotheses for the international relations of ethnic conflict, and then I briefly discuss the implications of offensive realism.

A. Balancing Threats by Supporting Ethnic Conflict

The essence of realism is that states seek to maintain their security in a dangerous world. For defensive realists, this means that states will respond to threats through the creation of alliances. Stephen Walt asserts that states will generally ally to balance against the greatest external threats.[36] For this book, I extend Walt's approach, suggesting that there is an additional way to balance threats: supporting efforts, particularly those of secessionist movements, to weaken one's adversary by promoting its dissolution. States can improve their relative position and security by abetting efforts that would reduce the aggregate power of their adversaries and the threats they pose. The most general hypothesis that can be derived from the realist viewpoint, then, is that *when threatened by another state, states will support secessionist movements in that state* (in addition to, or instead of forming alliances).

The most important aspect of Walt's approach is the perception of threats. Walt considers the most important variables affecting "the level of threat that states may pose: aggregate power, geographical proximity, offensive power, and aggressive intentions."[37] The latter three components are Walt's innovation, and he adds them to the core of the traditional and Neorealist balance

of power model,[38] which concentrates on the relative capabilities of states. The greater a state's power is, holding all else constant, the more threatening it is. *The stronger a state is, the more likely others will support secessionist movements within it.*

Likewise, when a state increases its offensive capability, it poses a greater danger to other states. While Walt's notion of offensive capability is very traditional with his focus on the relative advantage of the offense or defense, he considers offensive power as "the ability to threaten the sovereignty or territorial integrity of another state at an acceptable cost."[39] Recently, he has expanded his notion of offensive capability to include ideological subversion.[40] His approach therefore might be stretched further to consider the ability to support a secessionist movement, i.e., the ability to threaten the territorial integrity of a state, as an offensive capability. *A state able to support secession then will pose a severe threat, causing others to support secession within that state*. The problem here is that this will not vary much among states, since all states can grant diplomatic recognition, and nearly all states are capable of giving other forms of assistance.

The third aspect of threat, geographic proximity, is clear—the closer an adversary is, the greater the threat is poses. States will respond more strongly if the potential adversary is nearby than if it is far away, often resulting in checkerboard patterns of alignment.[41] Obviously, for this project, geographic proximity plays a role as it allows states to provide assistance such as arms and equipment to separatist movements more effectively. One would expect that states would react most strongly to the activities of and crises within their neighbors, as opposed to states on another continent.[42] Therefore, *states will be more likely to support secession in their neighbors than elsewhere*.

The fourth, and most complicated, component of threat, is perceived intentions. "States that are viewed as aggressive are likely to provoke others to balance against them."[43] Of course, a state with aggressive intentions is more threatening than a state without such aims. The focus on perceived intentions raises two difficult issues. How do states perceive intentions? Why does a state develop particular intentions? For Walt's work, the question of how states perceive different threats is problematic. "Perceptions of intent are likely to play an especially crucial role in alliance choices. . . . One cannot determine a priori, however, which sources of threat will be most important in any given case; one can only say that all of them are likely to play a role."[44] This difficulty leaves Walt's work with a significant hole. He cannot predict the alignment of states if he cannot suggest how

states will generally perceive intentions or weigh the different components of threat.

Walt's argument also leaves open the question of why states develop aggressive intentions.[45] Why be hostile if this will cause counter-balancing alliances, as Walt argues? Regardless of this problem, it does produce the following hypothesis: *a state perceived as willing to use the ability to disrupt the territorial integrity of other states will provoke increased support by other states for secessionist movements within its own territory.*[46] Briefly put, where Walt would expect alliance formation, this book expects support for separatists attacking the perceived adversary. States support secessionist movements in those states that threaten them.

Walt does an excellent job of explaining why states react as they do to perceived threats, but he does not really develop a theory of threat formation or perception. One source of this weakness is Walt's interest in avoiding the inclusion of domestic politics in his argument. Steven David explicitly incorporates domestic politics in his theory of omni-balancing.[47] For David, leaders are concerned about both domestic and international threats, and often choose to ally externally with whatever states are likely to help them in their domestic battles. This book goes further than David's: arguing that leaders are primarily worried about domestic politics, causing them to engage in foreign policies that can run strongly against their country's security concerns.

By explaining states' foreign policy preferences, derived from elites' interests, the theory of ethnic politics and foreign policy may aid in comprehending why some threats are perceived as such and why some states develop "hostile" or "aggressive" intentions. Ethnic politics cannot explain all the adversarial relationships in the world. However, when considering relations toward separatists and the desire to support the enemy of one's adversary, the definition of enemies and threats may be better understood if ethnic rivalries within and between states are taken into account.

B. Maximizing Power and Predatory States

Recently, scholars have engaged in a lively intra-realism debate about whether states pursue power or security. Those arguing that states maximize power consider themselves offensive realists.[48] Schweller argues that "What triggers security dilemmas under anarchy is the possibility of predatory

states."[49] States that seek power are the cause of insecurity, Schweller asserts. Labs goes further, suggesting that all states are opportunistic, and will expand power if they can do so with relative little cost.[50] For this study, Labs makes an important prediction: "Stronger states are more likely to purse expansion than weak states, because, all other things being equal, they are more able to do so."[51] This suggests *that stronger states will support secessionists in weaker states*, and this will hold true not only for great powers, but also for weak states, as they prey upon even weaker states.[52] Further, weaker states may be deterred from supporting ethnic groups in stronger states since such states are more dangerous. Thus, offensive realism predicts the very opposite of defensive realism's predictions.

The difficulty we face in the case studies is that a secessionist group may get support from states that are stronger than the host state as well as those that are weaker. Without a good theory of why some states may be predatory and others not, it will be hard to conclude that either realist variant is on target. Ultimately, it may be hard to tell whether power and security issues matter at all. The quantitative analysis should provide more conclusive results about which variant of realism better explains the international relations of ethnic conflict.

In sum, realist accounts produce the following testable hypotheses:

R1. *When threatened by another state, states will be more likely to support secessionist movements in that state.*
R2. *The stronger a state is, the more likely others will support secessionist movements within it.*
R3. *States are more likely to support secessionists in a state able to support secession.*
R4. *States will be more likely to support secession in their neighbors than elsewhere.*
R5. *States supporting secession are more likely to encounter much opposition internationally, and their secessionist movements will get more support.*
R6. *Stronger states are more likely to support secessionists in weaker states* (offensive realism).

Table 2.2 summarizes the most important realist prediction for the case study. States will respond to threats by supporting secessionists, but if a host state poses no threat, then predictions become less clear. As the case studies

TABLE 2.2 Defensive Realism and Expected Foreign Policies

	Host State:	
Predicted Policy:	Is Threatening	Not a Threat
State Supports Secessionists	Yes	No
State Supports Host State	No	Indeterminate

reveal, figuring out how to combine the various components of threat consistently is a difficult task.

Ethnic Ties, Political Competition and Foreign Policy

Ethnic politics does not always inhibit foreign policy as the vulnerability arguments asserts, but serves as a critical dynamic compelling some politicians to support secession elsewhere while constraining others.[53] The theory of ethnic politics and foreign policy builds upon a few basic assumptions and deductions about the motivations of politicians, the interests of their supporters, and their influence upon foreign policy. First, politicians care primarily about gaining and maintaining office, the prerequisite for most other goals attainable through politics.[54]

Second, each politician requires the support of others to gain and maintain political offices—the supporters forming the politician's constituency. How the constituency supports a decisionmaker varies, depending on the regime type and on existing political institutions. In a democracy, the constituency's support primarily comes through voting, though campaign contributions also matter. In an authoritarian regime, the leaders' constituencies generally consist of those who control the means of repression, such as the officer corps of the military as well as the security apparatus. Regardless of the particular support mechanisms, incumbent politicians care most about preventing these supporters from leaving their coalition, i.e., exiting.[55] The degree to which the politician is threatened—the intensity of political competition—depends on existing political institutions, particularly as these institutions affect the alternatives available to potential defectors. For instance, if there is only one party, or if existing parties are unable to exert influence

due to the particular electoral system, then the politician does not need to be as concerned about the loss of some constituents.

Third, ethnic identities influence the preferences of potential and existing constituents, and, therefore, who might wish to exit and why.[56] Ethnic groups are "collective groups whose membership is largely determined by real or putative ancestral inherited ties, and who perceive these ties as systematically affecting their place and fate in the political and socioeconomic structures of their state and society."[57] These ties usually are related to race, kinship (tribe or clan), religion, and language. There is a long-running debate about whether ethnic identity is a given in society (primordial) or created by politicians as they see fit. I follow the moderate position: multiple ethnic identities frequently co-exist, and the political context determines the salience of particular identities.[58]

From these assumptions, we can deduce that the ethnic ties of potential and existing constituents to external actors influence politicians' preferences. If ethnic identity influences individuals' preferences toward domestic policies, these same identities should influence constituents' preferences toward foreign policies. Scholars have found that ethnic ties influence states' behavior. Davis and Moore find that the existence of ethnic ties between an advantaged group in one state and a nonadvantaged group in a second state increases the probability of interstate conflict.[59] Henderson finds that, since 1820, the existence of religious differences between states increases the probability of war.[60] Carment and James find that ethnic conflicts are different from other kinds of conflicts.[61] Consequently, we have some reason to believe our deduction that ethnicity plays some role in the foreign policy decision making process.

Why does ethnicity matter for foreign policy? First, ethnic identity, by its nature, creates feelings of loyalty, interest, and fears of extinction.[62] International boundaries do not cause members of ethnic groups to ignore the condition of those who are similar to themselves—their ethnic kin.[63] Constituents will care most about those with whom they share ethnic ties, or those with whom a history of ethnic enmity exists. Ethnic enmity matters as much as ethnic ties, because ethnicity is partially an attempt to define who one is by who one is not.[64] Second, ethnic ties influence foreign policy-making because support for ethnic kin abroad can be a litmus test for a politician's sincerity on ethnic issues at home. Politicians lack credibility if they take symbolic stands on ethnic issues, but do not follow up when an ethnically charged foreign event develops.

Politicians care about the ethnic composition of their supporters, as this may determine who might exit and over what issues. Thus, politicians avoid certain issues and embrace others to prevent their supporters from exiting and to attract their competitors' constituents. For instance, if a politician needs Muslims for political support, then the role of religion in the state will be a prominent area of interest for both the politician and his/her supporters. If a politician's supporters are predominantly African-American, then the constituency of that politician will prefer policies benefiting African-Americans. The ethnic identities of potential defectors not only restrain politicians, but they can also provide opportunities.

Politicians can use the circumstances of ethnic kin to emphasize certain ethnic identities at the expense of other identities and other issues. When constituents become focused on economic problems or on a particularly problematic ethnic identity, a politician can use a foreign event to increase the salience of a specific ethnic identity domestically, creating unity—at least for the short term.[65] Consequently, if ethnic ties determine the foreign policy preferences of constituents, then such ties also influence the politician's foreign policy choices—both as constraint and opportunity. The constituents may compel the politician to follow a particular foreign policy, the politician may anticipate their demands, or the politician may use foreign policy to emphasize particular identities and de-emphasize others. To be clear, the theory here does not specify whether politicians are manipulating the public or are being pushed by public opinion. Ethnic politics can produce top-down or bottom-up dynamics. While one dynamic may produce different policies than the other, it may be hard to distinguish the two in practice.[66] Therefore, I do not develop these distinctions here. Either way, if the politician can influence foreign policy, the existence of ethnic ties and antagonisms between the politician's supporters and external actors will shape the state's foreign policy.

Table 2.3 presents the predictions that a focus on the ethnic ties provides. Specifically, states will assist the side with which the ruling politicians' constituency shares ethnic ties. Because constituents care about those with whom they share ethnic ties, they prefer for their state to take sides in ethnic conflicts elsewhere, supporting the side with which they have ethnic ties. Politicians, because they need support and fear its loss, take the preferences of their supporters seriously, and push for policies assisting the ethnic kin of their constituents. Ethnic enmity will work in ethnic politics like realism does in international relations insofar as the enemy of my enemy is my

TABLE 2.3 Ethnic Ties and Expected Foreign Policies

	Ruling Politician's Constituency Has Ethnic Ties With:		
Predicted Policy:	Secessionists	Both	Host State
State Supports Secessionists	Yes	Yes/No*	No
State Supports Host State	No	Yes/No*	Yes

* If constituency has ties to both sides of an ethnic conflict, the state is likely either to support both sides (ambivalence) or neither (neutrality).

friend. A politician's constituents want not only to support their ethnic kin, but also to oppose those with whom they share a history of ethnic enmity. Ethnic enmities cause politicians not only to oppose those actors with whom ethnic enmity exists, but also to support ethnic groups fighting the ethnic adversary of their constituents.

A. Heterogeneity and Competition

One complication is that the constituencies of politicians are not always homogenous. The constituency of a politician may consist of multiple ethnic groups, with each having ties to different sides of ethnic conflicts in other countries. For instance, a hypothetical politician's constituency consists of both Muslims and Jews. When dealing with conflicts between these two religious groups in other states, that politician has a hard time choosing which side to support. The politician prefers to avoid taking a position on the conflict—neutrality. The politician may also try to satisfy both groups by supporting both sides of the conflict—ambivalence. Alternatively, politicians depending upon multiple ethnic groups for support may develop non-ethnic ideologies to bind their constituents together and to deemphasize the role of ethnicity in politics. Civic nationalisms may have less clear implications for foreign policies than ethnic nationalisms, as the content of the particular civic nationalism varies from state to state.[67] The content matters as it shapes the definition of friends, enemies, and acceptable

policies. For instance, Indian nationalism requires an independent, anti-colonial foreign policy.[68]

Because political competition drives this process, we should expect behavior to vary as competition varies among states.[69] Generally, all politicians should care about their supporters, even if they face relatively less competition because all politicians are "running scared."[70] That is, more support means more power, and although the defection of supporters may not mean the immediate loss of power, their departure generally leaves politicians weaker than if they had not defected. Still, politicians facing less competition are somewhat more autonomous than those who must worry very much about the defection of a few supporters. Hence, while ethnic ties should influence the foreign policies of all states having such ties, the states most likely to develop policies that run counter to the ties of the leader's constituents are those where competition is relatively less intense. In other words, we should expect all politicians facing high competition to support the side with which they have ethnic ties, and we should expect *most, but not all,* politicians feeling less competitive pressures to behave similarly.

The role of competition here separates this theory of ethnic politics and foreign policy from approaches focusing purely on the power of nationalism without considering how ethnicity plays out through the political process.[71] Such approaches assume that all countries with a given ethnic identity will give support to ethnic kin elsewhere because of the emotional bonds of their citizens. However, these arguments ignore the political process. Leaders facing less competition or cross-pressures may be less interested in supporting the population's ethnic kin.[72]

For ethnic ties to matter in political competition, the most likely folks to exit one politician's constituency and enter another's have to possess an identifiable ethnic character. If a politician has to worry about the Socialist Party exiting and they have no ethnic appeal, the threat of exit is unlikely to produce an ethnic foreign policy. However, if a party or group of important constituents can be identified by its ethnicity, particularly if it makes ethnic demands, then ethnic ties come into play.

B. Perceiving Ethnic Ties and Enmities

Because ethnicity is a perceptual, rather than objective, phenomenon, the crucial question becomes: why are ethnic ties or enmities perceived in

each particular case? Whether some ethnic bonds are more important depends on the political and social contexts. It is difficult to predict a priori which ethnic ties will be perceived as more salient than others. For the case studies, three factors help to explain why some ethnic identities are perceived as being important and at stake, while others are not: the combatants' ethnic composition; the secessionists' strategies; and the particular group's history.[73]

The ethnic composition of the secessionists and of their host state are the most obvious factors influencing the perception of ethnic ties between the secessionists and the constituencies of elites in other states. If a secessionist movement is religiously homogeneous, and the movement is seceding from a state of consisting of members of another religion, then religion will most likely be perceived to be the salient ethnic division of the conflict. However, a secessionist movement is rarely homogeneous and often multiple kinds of ethnic identities may be salient. Which of these identities influences the perceptions of outsiders depends on other factors.

Some secessionist movements will try to define themselves in certain ways, thus shaping the perceptions of themselves and their adversaries. As politicians within states seek to emphasize particular identities, so do leaders of secessionist movements to gain more support from those inhabiting the secessionist region. Because international support is so critical to the success of secessionist movements, these efforts to emphasize ethnicity may be aimed at both domestic and international audiences.[74] A politician seeking the support of a racially homogenous but linguistically heterogeneous region will seek to define the conflict as one of race rather than language. The policies that this politician might follow would then influence the perceptions of those in other countries. Further, to increase international support, leaders of secessionist movements may emphasize wider identities, such as race or religion, rather than language or kinship. Consequently, politicians leading secessionist movements may follow policies and make statements that cause the constituents of politicians elsewhere to perceive a particular ethnic identity to be at stake.

Past behavior influences current perceptions. The past behavior of the secessionist movement will influence which ethnic identities are perceived by outsiders to characterize the conflict. If the groups leading the secessionist movement have emphasized a particular identity in the past or have engaged in conflict with other ethnic groups previous to this conflict, then that will affect which ethnic identities and enmities are perceived. If a leader of a secessionist movement has criticized a particular religion in the past, mem-

bers of that religious group will feel ethnic enmity whether they live in the secessionist region or not. The conflict may become perceived as a religious conflict. History is not a very parsimonious variable, but the interactions of the past certainly influence present-day perceptions.

The theory of ethnic politics and foreign policy focuses our attention toward the ethnic identities of the combatants in each conflict. From the various assumptions and deductions, the theory makes the following predictions:

E1a. *States are more likely to support actors with which important constituents share ethnic ties.*
E1b. *States are more likely to oppose those actors with whom the decisionmakers' constituents have a history of ethnic enmity.*
E1c. *States are more likely to be neutral or ambivalent toward those conflicts where decisionmakers' supporters have ties to both sides.*
E2. *Leaders facing less competition are more likely to act contrary to what ethnic ties would suggest.*
E3. *Ethnic groups are likely to define themselves by broader identities to maximize their domestic and international support.*

Before moving on, some clarifications are required. First, this approach does not suggest that supporting secessionism is without costs. Indeed, one of the argument's implications is that politicians' domestic interests may cause them to engage in foreign policies that hurt their country by undermining the national interests. Supporting secession may alienate valuable allies, offend potential trading partners, and perhaps even cause the direct backlash that vulnerability theorists predict. Because this approach begins with politicians rationally pursuing power and position, these other interests may matter and may dissuade politicians to pursue ethnically based foreign policies if politicians calculate that the supporters they gain through such policies offset the number of constituents who exit. Still, the basic prediction holds—that ethnic politics will trump other interests.

Second, obviously, an approach based on ethnic ties cannot explain the policies of countries lacking ethnic ties or enmities between one's own constituency and the combatants, other than to say that states without ethnic ties are less likely to support secessionist groups. This is similar to the vulnerability argument's weakness—it cannot explain the behavior of states that are not vulnerable to ethnic conflict. While this may seem to be a glaring

weakness, it is not that damaging. Ethnic conflict is present in most states, and is the central focus of politics in more than a few. According to one analysis of ethnic conflict, 112 out of 149 (75%) states contain minorities at risk.[75] While this does not mean that ethnic politics, as discussed above, dominates the political scene in each of these states, these figures are suggestive. Ethnic conflict is not restricted to one portion of the world. The region with the fewest ethnic groups at risk in the MAR dataset is northern Africa and the Middle East, not a part of the world usually considered free from ethnic politics. According to Gurr and Haxton, 71 percent of the advanced, industrialized states contain minorities at risk, so ethnic politics should apply to first world countries as well as third world countries.[76]

Even so, there will be some cases where this approach may not apply as politicians will not be constrained by ethnic politics nor will there be opportunities for ethnicity to be manipulated for political gain. This is a limitation of the theory. However, the broader assumptions upon which this theory is based, that the content and structure of domestic politics matters for foreign policies toward secessionist movements, may still aid in explaining the policies of these countries. Also, the other factors emphasized by the other theories (international norms and organizations, the pursuit of security, the temptation to engage in predation) may come into play more strongly when ethnic ties are absent.

Research Design

How do we test these various claims? To determine whether ethnic politics, vulnerability, or security influence the international relations of ethnic conflict, I perform both qualitative and quantitative analyses. I study particular cases of secessionist conflicts to assess the reactions of a variety of countries to the same conflict. In addition, I apply a variety of quantitative techniques to consider whether the findings in the case studies apply more broadly.

A. Selection of Cases

I chose to study how states reacted to particular secessionist crises, rather than to a variety of ethnic conflicts. This project is largely aimed at over-

turning the conventional wisdom, and the conventional wisdom focuses on secessionist conflicts. Thus, it is a much fairer test of the vulnerability argument than if we focused our attention on ethnic conflicts for which the vulnerability argument says little, such as rebellions or genocides. Further, by focusing only on secessionist crises, we can engage in most similar comparisons, which allow us to hold many things constant and focus our attention on the few factors that vary—the ones that might have a causal impact.[77] For policy relevance, we need to consider the international relations of secessionist crises since these conflicts have provoked strong reactions in many states, and have repeatedly challenged the abilities of international organizations to manage them. While the United Nations and others have been concerned with Rwanda, more attention has been paid to, and more resources expended upon, Chechnya, the wars in Yugoslavia, and, more recently, the conflict between Kosovo's Albanians and Serbia.

If we focus on secessionist crises, the question then becomes which ones and why? Since I am challenging the conventional wisdom, it makes sense to examine it on its home turf—Africa, where the vulnerability approach is most likely to work.[78] If the vulnerability approach fails to explain the international politics of African secessionist crises, we must seriously question the veracity of its claims. Rather than choosing randomly among all secessionist conflicts,[79] I chose to study two African secessionist crises: the Congo Crisis of 1960–1963 and the Nigerian Civil War of 1967–1970. Each crisis should provide strong support for the conventional wisdom, and analysts have cited each as doing so.[80]

During the Congo Crisis, African states should have behaved as the vulnerability argument predicts. First, they were most vulnerable to separatism shortly after decolonization. There was still some question as to whether the boundaries created by the colonial powers would be respected, and this was not resolved until 1964 with the Organization of African Unity's declaration recognizing the colonial boundaries as legitimate. Further, since many African states became independent shortly before or during the Congo Crisis, they had not really consolidated their regimes. Given the uncertainty about boundaries and the basic weakness of African regimes, if vulnerability inhibits states from supporting separatism, African states should not have supported Katanga.

Second, the Congo Crisis is a most likely case for the vulnerability argument, and relatively least likely case for the ethnic politics approach, because the intervention of the United Nations should have deterred states

from supporting Katanga. The conventional wisdom asserts that international organizations help to define the international norms and inhibit states from supporting secession.[81] The United Nations intervened more directly and more forcefully in the Congo Crisis than in any other secessionist crisis to date. Therefore, arguments focusing on the role of international organizations should do well here, and those that deemphasize international organizations, like the theory of ethnic ties and foreign policy, should not provide as accurate predictions or as good explanations. Likewise, the tribal cleavages that spurred this conflict suggest that the conflict would have a relatively narrow appeal beyond the Congo. Because, at first glance, such a conflict is unlikely to matter to the constituents of leaders elsewhere, an ethnic politics argument might be at a disadvantage in this case.

Likewise, the Nigerian Civil war is also a most likely case for the vulnerability argument. African states were still as vulnerable to separatism as they were a few years earlier. The Organization of African Unity was strongly involved, trying to deter others from intervening in the conflict. Most importantly, the war took place only three years after African states approved a resolution that affirmed the legitimacy of the colonial boundaries and the norm of territorial integrity. If the vulnerability arguments are correct, then African states should not have supported the Biafran separatists. I also chose the Nigerian Civil War because this case facilitates a most similar comparison. The secessionists and the host states of each conflict share many common attributes, which helps to isolate the variations that might cause behavior. Both Katanga and Biafra were mineral-rich regions, so the economic values of the seceding regions were similar.[82] Both the Congo and Nigeria, at the time of the conflicts, were potentially the most powerful states in the region. The Cold War continued through both conflicts, so we can control for ideological competition and great power interest in Africa, which could potentially influence the superpowers' allies. What does vary between the two cases are the ethnic identities at stake. For the Congo Crisis, tribal and racial identities are relevant, while during the Nigerian Civil War, tribal and religious identities were at stake, so the case selection assures variance in the key independent variable of ethnic ties—tribe, race, and religion.

Why then study the international politics of Yugoslavia's disintegration? Studying this conflict helps to disarm two potential criticisms: that the theory of ethnic politics and foreign policy only applies to the third world or to a particular period. Some non-African states played important roles in the African secessionist crises, and ethnic ties influenced their policies. Still,

analyzing the Yugoslav conflict should provide stronger evidence as to whether ethnic ties are still relevant and whether they influence institutionalized democracies and regimes making the transition to democracy. The Yugoslav conflict should be a hard test for the ethnic ties approach because European states had many other interests at stake. Among them are: building a common European foreign policy; reforming the economies of the former Soviet empire; developing institutions to govern European security; and setting precedents in the post-Cold War era. Finally, the Yugoslav conflict is an interesting anomaly. Given the web of economic and security institutions in Europe, many certainly expected a greater degree of cooperation than actually occurred.

Other secessionist crises occurred during the 1990s, so why did I choose to study Yugoslavia rather than Chechnya, East Timor, or Somaliland, to name just a few? Yugoslavia, despite (or because of) all of its complexities, is probably more similar to the Congo Crisis than other conflicts in the past decade. Like the Congo, Yugoslavia and later Bosnia faced the possibility of disintegration. Further, both conflicts challenged international organizations as they intervened and threatened to set new and dangerous precedents. Just as the Congo Crisis shaped reactions of states and organizations to the Nigerian Civil War and other subsequent secessionist disputes, the disintegration of Yugoslavia has and will shape how countries react to separatist conflicts in Russia, in the successor states to Yugoslavia, in Indonesia, and elsewhere.

B. Selection of Observations

Studying these three secessionist crises allows us to analyze more than three observations, because each case breaks down into a number of observations: each country's policy toward the conflict.[83] Thus, the number of observations grows to between thirteen to eighteen per crisis, totaling forty-six. The important methodological question then becomes by what criteria did I choose the observations. To make sure the dependent variable varies, I chose from the possible universe of observations the major actors in each conflict: those strongly supporting the secessionist movement and those strongly supporting the host state. While scholars have criticized picking observations based on the dependent variable,[84] it is necessary here since the previous approaches ignored the significant variation in the behavior of

states—that some states supported the separatist movements. The risk in choosing cases according to the dependent variable is that one can truncate the range of the independent variables. To compensate partially for this, I also chose contiguous states that were neutral or supported both sides during the conflicts. Realist arguments make assertions about proximity—closeness breeds fear as nearby states can cause more damage. Vulnerability arguments suggest that spillover and backlashes are likely, and these are probably more likely to affect neighbors of conflict than those far away. Further, studying neighboring states in all three cases provides a common basis for comparison.

While I did study countries having no ethnic ties to the combatants,[85] I do not discuss them at length since the ethnic politics argument says nothing about states that have no ethnic ties. Such states may support host states or separatists, but ethnic ties will not explain nor predict their behavior. Instead, the other explanations may have more leverage when ethnic ties do not exist. States may feel the constraints of vulnerability if they do not have a dog in the fight. Likewise, security threats may shape a state's policies when politicians are not pushed by their constituents.

C. Coding the Observations

I determine whether ethnic ties exist by considering the existing literature on the domestic politics of each country to establish the essential constituencies for the reigning politicians and to determine the constituency's ethnic composition. If the constituency is homogeneous, coding is simple—do the members of the constituency share the same race, religion, language, or kinship (tribe or clan) as the secessionist movement or the host state? Since the secessionist movement and its host may each have multiple ethnic identities, and since ethnic identity is partly perceptual in nature, perceptions of the conflict will influence the perception of ethnic ties. If the constituency is not homogeneous, the focus is then on considering the ethnic ties of each ethnic group in the constituency. Ethnic ties will exist if any group of constituents has a shared ethnic identity as one of the combatants in the secessionist conflict. Ethnic enmity is said to exist if the literature on the countries in question refers to a history of ethnic conflict between the relevant groups.

The core notion of political competition here stresses whether supporters can leave one politician's constituency and throw their support to another,

and whether such a change can influence the balance of power within that polity. By this definition, competition can exist and be more intense in an authoritarian regime than in a democracy. While I cannot readily specify exact rules for how competitive all political systems will be, there are some general dynamics to consider. Politicians in military regimes or new democracies are likely to face more competition when the military is fragmented or has a history of frequent coups d'etat. In authoritarian systems where the government controls the secret police and there is significant fear about informers, reigning politicians can worry less about whether some members of the military are disgruntled. Politicians in democracies face greater pressure if the electoral system means that a few votes change who governs or if the ruling party depends upon coalition partners to govern. Officials in democracies will feel less pressure if the electoral system guarantees them roughly the same share of seats in each election. For the case studies, the question will be—can the relevant constituency threaten the power of decision makers? As long as we determine competitiveness of the political system apart from using the outcomes of interest, we can avoid tautology.

A state is vulnerable to secessionism if:

(a) a secessionist movement actually tried to secede in recent history (the previous ten years);
(b) members of a group have organized with the goal of independence; or
(c) area studies experts view particular regions to be potentially secessionist.[86]

The last distinction should not be problematic as the vulnerability approach focuses on fears of separatism, rather than ongoing or past secessionist wars.

Coding threat is somewhat less straightforward. Relative power is the most simple to code once an indicator of power is created. In chapter 6, I discuss the creation of relative power indicators from Correlates of War data. For the case studies, I use this indicator to code each potential supporter's power relative to the host state as stronger or weaker. I then code whether the host state or secessionist group threatens the potential support, based on the ability for either the host or the secessionists to support ethnic groups within the potential supporter and on the perceived intentions of each.

Finally, I code the dependent variable as support for a particular side if

a state gives either material assistance in the forms of arms, equipment, and/or money, or diplomatic assistance in the forms of recognition; votes in favor of that side in international organizations; or interceding with other states on the behalf of that side.

D. The Quantitative Analyses

Chapter 6 will use a variety of statistical techniques to test hypotheses derived from the three competing arguments. Specifically, I will use the Minorities at Risk [MAR] dataset and raw data from the MAR project to determine which theories best capture the international relations of ethnic conflict in the 1990s. The dataset includes information about nearly all ethnic conflicts in the world.[87] Therefore, it should help us determine whether the findings from the case studies apply beyond secessionist crises and are relevant today.

The analyses will be of four kinds. First, I use simple cross-tabulations to consider how the competing arguments performed in the case studies. Second, basic trends in numbers and level of support throughout the 1990s will test whether arguments about precedents,[88] demonstration effects, and the like are accurate. Third, I test whether various characteristics of ethnic groups influence the level and breadth of support groups receive. In particular, I will consider the influence of the identities of groups; the existence, behavior, and power of their kin; groups' degree of separatism; and the relative power of their host states. Fourth, I test whether various features of potential supporters cause them to give more or less support to ethnic groups in conflict. Again, to test the competing arguments, these analyses will consider: the major identities of states' populations and the leadership, the vulnerability of states to separatism and ethnic conflict, and the relative power of potential supporters. To be clear, the nature of the data makes it hard to test the ethnic ties approach, so these analyses will tend to focus more attention on how well the other arguments hold up.

The concluding chapter will compare the three case studies and consider how the qualitative and quantitative findings relate to each other. I then briefly examine the Kosovo conflict as it raises questions both about the Yugoslav case study and about the timeliness of this book. I conclude by reflecting on the implications of this research for ongoing policy and theoretical debates.