Ethnic Conflict in IR

Mgr. Zinaida Shevchuk

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- From 1989 to 1996 there were 69 armed conflicts, of which only five have been between states.
- Most of these internal wars were about power struggle in which ethnic groups seek to gain control over their ethnic homes.
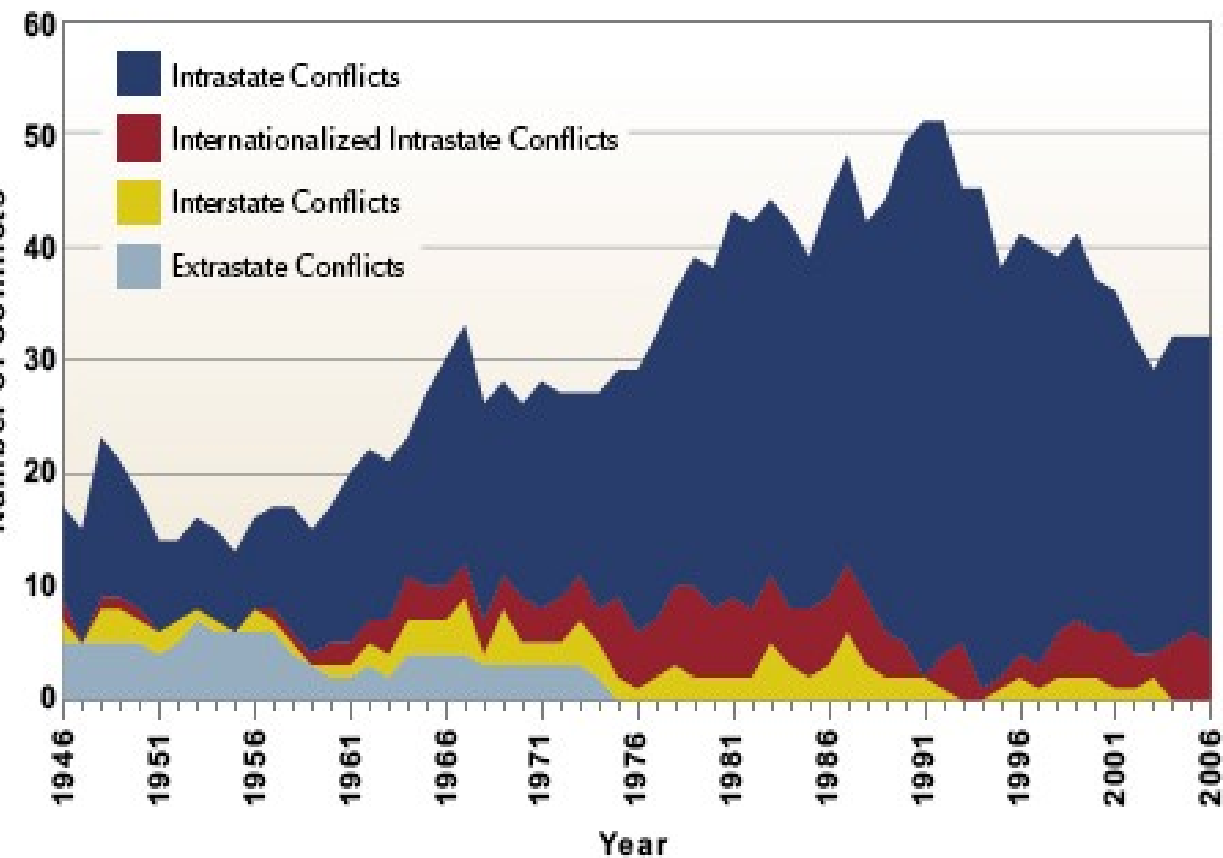
Figure 3.1 State-Based Armed Conflicts by Type, 1946-2006

After more than a decade of uneven decline, the number of state-based conflicts being fought around the world has levelled off.

Data Sources: UCDP/PRIO; UCDP
Human Security Report Project Dataset

Human Security Brief 2

Ethnic conflict in IR

- Principle of national self-determination is as powerful and problematic today as it was in 1920s and 1930s.
- In the former Soviet Union – endless succession of irredentism and secessionist wars, state repression of minorites, ethnic cleaning, refugees and escalation to major power conflict.
- Western powers torn between desire for peace and stable borders on the one hand and the acceptance of principle of self-determination on the other.

Ethnic conflict in IR

- Ethnic conflict can have a potential to spread rapidly and catastrophically – "wildfire" metaphor.
- Chain reaction – ethnic war causes refugees, who de-stabilize a new place, causing more war, causing more refugees, and so.
- Cross-border transmission of ethnic violence.
- Factors leading to ethnic conflict:
- 1. Military strength and cultural preferences of the ethnic group, 2. the pattern of settlement of minority and majority group, 3. the presence of external guarantors or ethnic brethren in a neighboring country, who are willing and able to threaten to intervene, 4. the extent of minority's expected decline in ability to secede in the future, 5. the value of the "exit option for individuals in the ethnic group, and the social and political organization of the minority.

Spread of ethnic conflict

- James D. Fearon identifies identifies "nested minorities"
- Group A is a minority within an administrative unit dominated by group B and the latter is at the same time a minority within a larger administrative unit, state, in which group A constitutes a majority.
- For example, an Azeri minority within Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast, whereas Armenian majority within Nagorno-Karabakh was a distinct minority within the Soviet Social Republic of Azerbaijan.
- Change of power relations or state collapse is most likely to foster the rapid spread of ethnic conflict.

Theoretical framework for the study of intrastate conflicts

- Studying ethnic conflict through the lenses of IR theories make sense for several reasons.
- Firstly, IR theory is concerned primarily with issues of war and peace. While we should avoid a straightforward translation of findings from the realm of inter-state relation to those of inter-ethnic relations, it is equally important to bear in mind that some of the units of analysis are of course the same, that it is individuals –leaders as well as followers – who have choices to make about war and peace or conflict and coexistence.

International Relations theories

- Even though theories of IR are concerned with the **role and behaviour of states** in the international arena, they make fundamental assumptions about human nature. Realisms and liberalism both consider human beings as self-interested and rational actors concerned with their own survival. In an anarchical world this means to rely mainly on self-help and acquire as much power as you possibly can in order to defeat any threat to your survival. Realists are generally pessimistic about human nature, while liberalists are optimistic about human beings being capable of learning from experience.

International Relations theories

- Secondly, the reason for drawing on IR theory for a better understanding of ethnic conflict is empirically informed. One could notice that wars between states have dramatically decreased after the end of the Second World War and that wars within states are now one of the predominant challenges to international security. But it is a oversimplification of a much more complex matter. So-called internal wars, of which ethnic conflicts are but one form, may not be inter-state wars, but they are often not internal wars either in the sense that they are frequently not confined within the borders of just one state.

International Relations theories

- Georgia's two ethnic separatist conflicts – South Ossetia and Abkhazia – are marked by significant Russian involvement and support for the separatists, including their recognition as independent states by Moscow in 2008. The conflict in and over the Nagorno-Karabakh area has involved Azerbaijan and Armenia, and will not be resolved unless the two states find a mutually acceptable solution to their territorial dispute that also has the backing of three major regional powers – Russia, Turkey and Iran.

International Relations theories

- Thus, relations between states, continue to matter in the understanding of ethnic conflict. Yet there are important differences, too: rather than being fought exclusively between regular armies of recognized states, ethnic conflicts also involve non-state armed groups, defined on the basis of ethnic identities, which straddle state boundaries and give many of today's ethnic conflicts a distinct regional dimension.

International Relations theories

- This leads to a third reason why IR theories are relevant for the study of intra-state conflict: external intervention by states and their regional and international organizations remains the predominant approach to conflict prevention, management and settlement.

International Relations theories

- Neorealist argument is based on the assumption that internal wars stem from **domestic anarchy**. Anarchy is underlying cause of armed conflict within states, just as it is between states. The neorealist analyze the intra-state problems and relations though the lenses of international relations.
- The core concept is related to security dilemma, which asserts that efforts to improve one's security in the environment, where the strong central government is absent, makes others feel less secure and thus lessens security for all.

International Relations theories

- Thus, theories of international relations offer useful tools and insights in the study of ethnic conflict and conflict settlement. Yet, for a comprehensive analytical model to emerge, we need to integrate them within theories of ethnicity and inter-ethnic relations. After all, ethnic conflicts are distinct forms of conflict in which organized ethnic groups have recourse to the systematic use of violence for strategic purposes. Understanding the implication of this requires a more detailed engagement with the nature and characteristics of ethnic groups.

Theories of ethnicity

- As self-defined communities, ethnic groups are distinguishable by collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more differentiating elements of common culture, the association with a specific homeland, and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of population.

- This link between tangible and intangible aspects is key to understanding the political implications of ethnic identity and of the formation of conflict groups based on ethnicity. Connor has noted that tangible characteristic are important only inasmuch as they "contribute to this notion or sense of a group's self-identity and uniqueness." In turn, a threat to, or opportunity for, these tangibles, real or perceived, is considered as a threat to, or opportunity for, self-identity and uniqueness. Confronting this threat or taking this opportunity leads to the ethnic group becoming a political actor by virtue of its shared ethnic identity. As such, ethnic identity "can be located on a spectrum between primordial historic continuities and instrumental opportunistic adaptations".

Theories of ethnicity

- Such a definition that draws on both tangible and intangible aspect of ethnic identity and emphasizes both their objective and subjective elements is particularly useful for the study of ethnic conflict. This synthetic definitions seas ethnicity as a quasi-universal phenomenon, despite certain contextual differences, including both tangible (e.g., customs, traditions, language or religion) and intangible (e.g., sense of solidarity among group members, feeling of uniqueness) aspects of ethnicity, as well as their social and political implications, makes it possible to explain the intense emotions that "ethnic issues" generate and to account for the often excessive violence and wilful humiliation that can be observed in many of today's ethnic conflicts.

Theories of ethnicity

- I would like to pause at this stage and underline that I'm not trying to make you think or give a sense of conclusion about inevitability of conflict between different ethnic groups. It is neither theoretically logical nor empirically correct to assume that the mere existence of two or more different ethnic groups automatically leads to the onset of ethnic conflict between them. For that to happen, certain patterns of interaction are required, which occur only under specific circumstances. This is the reason why theories of inter-ethnic relations need to be considered on the way towards developing a comprehensive analytical model of the study of ethnic conflict and conflict regulation.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- No single theory exits that can comprehensively explain the multitude of internal conflicts across time and space.
- Causes of interstate violence "Why war?"
- It is really very hard to find one answer to this crucial question. One of the reasons for this is that war can have different forms: total or limited, world or regional, conventional or nuclear inter-state, civil or ethnic wars and its is impossible to explain these widely different activities in the same way. Besides, we have to distinguish between different types of internal wars. Chaim Kaufmann distinguishes between internal wars based on ethnic strife and strife which are fought over ideological issues.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Mass based – elite driven,
- Wars over territory – political control,
- Outside actor play a big role – the wars which are not influenced by outside players.
- Question "what are the causes of war" is a "cluster" question. It involves a number of different questions, such as "what the conditions necessary for occurrence of conflict behavior? Or "under what circumstance have conflicts occurred most frequently?" or how a particular conflict came about? These questions put together leads to complicated, ambiguous and unsatisfactory answers.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Even though, that all conflicts are unique events and requires specific research, it should be said, that there is also increased knowledge about them. There are different interpretations of what causes the armed conflict, but I think that, we can find some similarities and patterns between the causes of conflicts.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Jon Garnett divides these causes into four groups:
- **Human nature,**
- **Misperception,**
- **The nature of states and**
- **The structure of international system**.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- **Human nature**: there are different interpretations of this aspect. Some tend to believe that human beings are genetically programmed towards violence, but there is an ongoing debate about whether armed conflict is a result of "innate" or "learned" behavior.
- According to social psychologists aggression is a result of frustration. Violence occurs as a result of failure of human being to achieve its goals.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- **Misperception:** according to some scholars, conflict results from misperception, misunderstanding, miscalculation and errors of judgment. They consider armed conflict as a mistakes. This includes mistaken estimates of enemy intentions and capabilities, the failure to judge the risk and consequences of conflict in a proper manner. Thus, according to psychologists, armed conflicts occur as a result of unconscious drives and weaknesses in the human psyche.
- **The nature of states:** according to Michael Doyle, liberal states are more peaceful, because their governments are restricted by democratic institutions and have democratic values.

Typology of causes:

- **Immediate** and **Underlying** causes
- **Immediate causes** are events that trigger conflicts; it could be trivial or even accidental.
- **Underlying** causes are more fundamental causes, conflict occurs as a result of aggressive, thoughtless and irresponsible acts by statesmen.
- Thus we have to distinguish between underlying causes of conflict and the events that trigger them.

Typology of causes:

- A **necessary condition** for conflict is one that must be present if armed conflict is to occur. For example arrangements or organizational structures – individuals must be organized in groups that have the capacity of organized violence - states, nations, ethnic groups.
- **Sufficient causes** of armed conflict are those that guarantee the occurrence of war. For example, the conflict occurs if two states hate each other so much that they can not tolerate the each other's independence. But it is not necessary condition, as many conflicts occur without such a big degree of hatred and they tolerate the each other's independent existence.

Typology of causes:

- A cause of armed conflict can be sufficient without being necessary and wise versa. A cause of conflict can be sufficient without being necessary.
- For example, the armaments are a necessary condition of armed conflict, but it is not a sufficient cause since the existence of weapons does not always lead to conflict.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- According to Using conflict theory: Conflict can occur for six main reasons:
- Incompatible goals, 2. High solidarity, 3. Conflict parties may have organized for conflict, 4. Mobilize their conflict resources, 5. Hostile toward each other and 6. They may have sufficient material resources.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Conflict parties can have in Incompatible goals due to **contested resources** (such as wealth, power or prestige, or because one party believe that it is treated unjustly, one group in deprived in comparison to others or some believes that those who have power hold it illegitimately), or **incompatible roles** (they play in an institution or organization. *Vertical differentiation*: different roles and status within the power hierarchy. *Horizontal differentiation*: people playing different roles within organization relate to each other as a colleagues, not as superiors and subordinates, as it is in vertical system) or **incompatible values** (different structures create different types of values: communal values and industrial systems).

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- According to "Using Conflict Theory" different conflict parties with incompatible goals are likely to engage in conflict if they are aware that their goals are incompatible with those of opposing group, if they have grievances and feel frustrated and if they have sufficient resources. The particular attention is paid to **conflict solidarity** and **sufficient conflict resources.**

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- It is quite difficult to understand what is happening in various conflicts. Every conflict involves multiple parties, large number of people and complex organizations. In order to explain the causes of conflicts it is necessary to examine the roots of the conflicts, focus on the dynamics of the conflict and to make general analysis, as well as micro level analysis, such as **"conflict mapping".** This method assumes the implementations of several basic steps: specification of contexts (history of conflict), the identification of conflict parties (primary and secondary), distinguishing the causes and consequences from the goals and understanding to dynamics and regulatory elements.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Michael E. Brown:
- **Structural factors:** weak states, national security concerns, ethnic geography.
  Political factors: discriminatory political institutions, exclusivist national ideologies.
  Economic and social factors: the economic problems, discriminatory economic systems, poor economic development.
  Cultural and perceptive factors: cultural discrimination, problematic history.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Besides Brown himself underlines the fact, that while these factors could be the underlying causes of intra-state violence, it is hard to find a factor which triggers internal conflicts.
- Among these factors, Brown argues, that underlying causes of internal war lies on two factors:
- 1. A strong sense of **antagonistic group history** and 2. **Economic problems**. Besides he stresses the impact of **bad leader** and argues that when these factors come together, there is a high probability of intra-state conflict.
- This is an important argument. It underlines such factors as the level of economic development, modernization in countries, the strength of government and the importance of the decisions which are maid by individual leaders and their central role in the outbreak of the violence inside the country.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Some theorists underline the importance of institutional organization and the state's system of government and claim that **autonomy** can the source of the internal conflict. This refers to territorial autonomy, which gives some ethnic groups political authority over a certain territory. Autonomy is defined as "the granting of internal self-government to a region or group of persons, thus recognizing a partial independence from the influence of the national or central government." According to this theory, autonomous regions are conducive to secessionism and may lead to the isolation of the minority and prevent its members from political and economic participation.

- "The institution of autonomous regions is conducive to secessionism be cause institutionalizing and promoting the separate identity of a titular group increases that group's cohesion and willingness to act, and establishing political institutions increases the capacity of that group to act".

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- According to structural-sociological theories the outbreak of intrastate conflict is more likely in a situation when 1. state is in crisis, 2. elites are alienated from the state or each other and 3. there is a capacity for social mobilization.
- The emergence of conflict is usually caused by multiple, interconnected aspects. We can hardly find a conflict which has a single cause, quite the opposite is true. Conflicts have multiple causes.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Thus you can see that there is a difference between internal wars and there is no single factor or theory to explain the causes and remedies of all internal conflicts. Different authors try to explain the causes of internal conflicts by stressing the different aspect.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Barbara. F. Walterand Jack Snyder identifies four conditions that increase the likelihood that conflict can occurs:
- The collapse of the government, weakening the central power of a state, disintegration of states institutions, which provokes the feeling of uncertainty in most of the population.
- The geographical isolation of minority groups – minorities, or some ethnic groups who are under real or imagined pressure can also initiate the spiral of violence.
- The requirement of power redistribution within state
- The requirement to change the unequal distribution of resources within the state – after the collapse of the state, every group seek to enhance its status and position.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- **Risk screening process**:
- Violent conflict in the past 10 years: If a country has experienced violent conflict in the past 10 years, there is a high possibility of recurrence of conflict.
- Low per capita GNI: Countries with low per capita GNIs face a higher risk of experiencing violent conflict.
- High dependence on primary commodities exports: Countries with a high dependence on primary commodities exports are more likely to experience violent conflict.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Political instability: It has two components
- * transformation of the state structure: Restructuring of the state at frequent intervals signals serious instability and the likelihood that violence is being employed to bring about systemic changes.
- * breakdown of law and order: When the government is not able to maintain control or effective rule (in certain parts or throughout the country), the breakdown of law and order, and hence violence, is likely. For violent conflict, these two factors can occur independently or in tandem.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Restricted civil and political rights: The deliberate and systematic denial of civil liberties and political rights increases the likelihood that groups will express dissenting views through violence, thus increasing the probability of violent conflict.
- Militarization: Countries may have a high defense spending as a ratio of their GNI and large armies as proportion of their population. However, a militarized society also highlights the availability of arms among non-state actors. These factors suggest the likelihood of emerging or escalating violent conflict.
- Ethnic dominance: When one ethnic group controls state institutions and/or the economy,there is an increasing risk of outbreak of violent conflict.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Active regional conflicts: Regional conflicts are likely to have a cascading effect, such that the internal stability of a country (flow of refugees, arms) is threatened, increasing the probability of violent conflict.

- High youth unemployment: Youth unemployment can have a critical bearing on the probability of violent conflict. Lack of jobs and opportunities tend to create frustration, making unemployed youth (especially young men) prime candidates for recruitment by militant organizations with funds and arms at their disposal.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- Furthermore, the risk screening process contains 6 general categories of potential conflict:
- 1. Social and ethnic relations: Social and economic cleavages, Ethnic cleavages, Regional imbalances, Differential social opportunities (e.g. education), Bridging/bonding social capital (e.g. inter-group associations), Group identity building, Myth-making, Culture/tradition of Violence.
- 2. Governance and political institutions: Stability of governance & political institutions, Equity of governance, Inclusiveness of political institutions, Equity of law/judicial system, Links between government and citizens.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- 3. Human rights and security: Role of media and freedom of expression, Human rights' status, Militarization of society, Security of civilians.
- 4. Economic structure and performance: Economic growth, Income disparities, Per capita income changes, Inflationary trends, External debt management, Reliance on primary commodities exports, Employment and access to productive resources, Conflict-induced poverty.

The Causes of Intra-state Wars

- 5. Environment and natural resources: Availability of natural resources, Access to natural resources (including land), In-country and cross-border competition over natural resources.
- 6. External forces: Regional conflicts (including territorial, trade, natural resources, disputes), Role of kindred groups outside country, Role of Diaspora.

The Security Dilema and Ethnic Conflic – Barry R. Posen

- End of the Cold War – nationalist, ethnic and religious conflicts in Eurasia.
- Collapse of imperial regime – problem of „emerging anarchy.“
- Security dilemma:
- 1. when offensive and defensive military forces are indistinguishable, any force on hand are suitable for offensive campaingns.
- 2. effectiveness of the offense versus the defense. Preemtive action in the event of political crisis.

Offense and Deffense Strategies

- Groups have to determine whether neighboring groups are a threat.
- Nature of military technology and organization
- Strong national identity – key ingredient of the combat power of armies – groupness.
- Military capabilities – often unsophisticaed, infantry-based armies.
- What methods are available to a newly independent group to assess the offensive implication of another's sense of identity?

Offense and defense startegies

- What methods are available to a newly independent group to assess the offensive implication of another's sense of identity?
- History
- 1. multiethnic empire supressed or manipulated the facts of previous rivarlies to reinforce their own rule. (Soviet Union and Yugoslavia lacked any systemic commitment to truth in historical scholarship.

Offense and defense strategies

- 2. the members of ethnic groups did not forget the record of their old rivalries.
- 3. Because, their history is mostly oral, there is no other view of the past.
- 4. The central authority begins to collapse and local politicians begin to struggle for power, they will begin to write down their version of history in political speeches.
- Result: **one group is likely to assume that another group's sense of identity, and the cohesion that it produces, is a danger.**

Offensive over defensive action

- Two factors: technology and geography.
- Technology – military capabilities with exception of nuclear weapons.
- "islands" of settlement across the nominal territory of another group – irredenta.
- Economically autonomous, military defensible, nearby brethren.
    - preemtive war more attractive.

International relations of ethnic conflict

- Vulnerability vs. ethnic ties argument

Vulnerability argument:

- States vulnerable to secession do not support separatists in other states – ethnic conflict: sufficient condition for not support.
- On systemic-level – high level of international cooperation
- Common vulnerability of states and the insecurity of statesmen creates a common interests to build international institution.
- International system protects stability of boundaries and territorial integrity – any violation of the boundary regime may undermine the entire system.

Spread of Ethnic conflict

Stephen M. Saideman

Ethnic-ties counter-argument:

-Domestic level more important: such variable as 1. motivation of political leaders, 2. the supporter's preferences and 3. ethnic identities influence on foreign policy.

-States support those actors internationally that share ethnic ties with decision-makers' supporters.

-States oppose those actors that share a history of enmity with the political leaders' supporters.

-States will be neutral or ambivalent toward those conflict where decision-makers' supporters have ties to both sides.

Spread of ethnic conflict

- Military interventions against another state are acts of aggression and multiethnic states that have problems with minority issues must typically think twice before supporting rebellions in neighboring states. "Even where ethnic affinities relate, not to peripheral minorities in the external state, but to centrally influential groups, support is byno means automatic."
- Cross-border assistance may likewise lead to unwanted turmoil spreading across state borders into the territory of the intervening state. While these are strong arguments for supporting nonintervention, there is empirical evidence pointing in the opposite direction.

Spread of ethnic conflict

- Most of the internal armed conflict has notable implications for regional stability and have "spill-over" effect. Some neighboring states can trigger the conflict by supporting different groups. This strategy is based on interests of particular state. Conditions under which the spillover effect can transmit the violence to different places occur then internal tension and instability in one country gives the opportunity to external power to intervene in order to maximize its interests and gain power.

Spread of ethnic conflict

- The greater the level of instability in one country the more significant the risk of a spill over effect into the neighboring state.
- The probability of conflict increases with the external group support.
- The risk of conflict increases if the kin group is governmental rather than another peripheral group.

Spread of ethnic conflict

- Steven E. Lobell and Philip Mauceri

Diffusion – spillover effect

Escalation – other ethnic groups, other states or non-state actors participating in the ethnic conflict.

- Weakening state – escalation- when outside ethnic groups have opportunities in order to capture the spoils.
- Diffusion – Barry Posen security dilemma logic.

Spread of Ethnic conflict

- Non-state actors role – escalation – when ethnic group is struggling for its status – support of neighboring kin.
- Diffusion- Ethnic kin appeal through IGOs and NGOs to destabilize the majority ethnic group.
- Escalation and diffusion when there is some change in the ethnic balance of power and in the competition for the distribution of social, economic and political resources.
- Degree of economic, social and cultural integration within regional and global system

- 2 schools:
- Affective school: existnce of etnic kin in neighboring state – outside intervention.
- Instrumentaliar school – political leaders to obtain scared resources.
- Ethnic domination vs. diversity – the extent to which political institution are in hand of a single ethnic group
- High vs. law institutional constraints – the extent to which leaders posses power over states policies.

Domestic determinants of ethnic intervention

Low (I)	Dominant-low (I_a): belligerence	Diverse-low (I_b): passive lobbying
Institutional constraints		
High (II)	Dominant-high (II_a): sporadic interventionism	Diverse-high (II_b): realpolitik policies

The Caucasian idea

- The Association of Peopled of the Caucasus – effort to build a sense of common ethnicity among the diverse people of the Caucasus.
- Pan-Caucasian identity – all peoples of the Caucasus originated from one ethnarch.
- Caucasian languages classified under the Iberian-Caucasian family – Kartvelian, Abkhaz-Adyghe, Nakh and Dagestani.
- Share ethnic and cultural similarities, have a common historical destiny, uphold independence and sovereignty as important values for regional ethnic-political and intellectual development.

The Caucasian alliance

- Generally Chechens, Ingush, Dagestan, Kabardians, Ossetians, Adyghey and Abkhazians tend to see themselves as related to each othes, in term of culture and language.
- "After the Russian conquest the Abkhazians and North Caucasian people had no means of continuing anti-colonial resistance, and so they resorted to passive resistance. Their historical connections may have weaken, but the Abkhazian, Adygheys, Circassians, and Kabardians never forgot that they were members of one ethnic group who were artificially separated by tsarist Russia and then by Soviet nationality policy. Whenever an opportunity presented itself to take their destiny into their own hands, such as at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, they revolted. In between, passive resistance persisted."

Limits of the alliance

Leader of the Pan- Caucasian movement are not experienced in politics, let alone the politics of integration. No one leader could be accepted by all ethnic groups.

Integration efforts were exhausted by war, first in Abkhazia, later in Chechnya.

Enormous firepower that Russia was willing to use against Chechnya discouraged anyone besides Chechens from counteracting Moscow's military might.

Process of states-building and privatization – individual ethnic identity over a common Caucasian ethnicity.

Pan-Caucasian ethnic identity is barely embryonic.