

## Ethnic Conflict and Humanitarian Intervention

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Few interstate wars have been fought in the years following 1980, and trends increasingly illustrate a shift towards violent conflict in an intrastate context. Interethnic clashes have become the modal form of warfare in the international system. Data sets established to study this phenomenon have identified as many as 227 ethnic groups globally at risk, which compose more than 17% of the world's population and live in over 70% of the world's countries (Davis et al. 1997). These realizations have incited an outpouring of scholarly literature on the topic of ethnic conflict, and since 1990, more than 43 books and 249 journal articles have been published on the subject of ethnic conflict in the English language alone. Yet, all of these data sets, publications, and debates have yielded little that approaches the establishment of norms and theories towards a universal understanding of ethnic conflict. There seems to be one general point of consensus among theorists of ethnic conflict: that ethnic identities do matter and they must be better understood if the international community is to be capable of developing policy that promotes international stability in the future (Carment and James 1997; Stack 1997).

Two questions are central to this quest. One, what role do ethnic identities play in the outbreak of final conflicts; and two, how should the international community respond to intrastate ethnic conflicts? In this paper, the task of analyzing ethnic conflict is broken into these two distinct inquiries. The first investigation examines the nature of ethnic conflict and the degree to which ethnicity is a factor in current intrastate conflicts. Using the information gained from this analysis, the second query attempts to develop potential resolutions to such conflicts and to

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determine what role the international community should play when intervening in intrastate conflicts with ethnic dimensions.

### **The Nature of Ethnic Conflict**

The explosion of literature addressing ethnic conflict coincided with the end of Cold War politics (Carment and James 1997). An apparent resurgence in conflicts fought along ethnic boundaries, especially in the Soviet Union's former satellite states in Eastern Europe led to what many consider a rediscovery of ethnicity (Horowitz 1985; Gurr 1994; Schultz 1995). Arguments have been made that the collapse associated with the fall of the Soviet Union created a kind of intensified ethnic security dilemma that resulted in a shift to an offensive mentality among interspersed ethnic groups for power and survival (Posen 1993; Lake and Rothchild 1996; Fenton 2004). In the past fifteen years, the field has increasingly gained legitimacy as an essential way to better understand the current nature of the international system (Horowitz 1985; Carment 1993; Gurr 1994; Davis et al. 1997; Stack 1997; Avruch 2001). Some scholars have even gone as far as to suggest that ethnic conflict represents a formidable challenge to a state-centric view of the world system (Gurr 1994).

Prior to the emergence of conflict analysis along ethnic lines, discussion of ethnic conflict was considered a backwater of social sciences. Many disregarded it because ethnicity challenged the traditional foundations of traditional international relations thought in realism and liberalism (Stack 1997; Horowitz 1985). Realism deemed the understanding of ethnic groups as irrelevant to an international system dominated by state interests, the balance of power, and the maintenance of security, while the philosophy of liberalism discounted ethnicity as a holdover of pre-modern thought incapable of surviving in an atmosphere of international interdependence which stressed the emergence of human rights and democratic regimes. Furthermore, neo-Marxists denied that ethnicity was anything more than a cultural superstructure residing on the foundation of more fundamental class interests (Carment and James 1997). Only constructivists, themselves on the outskirts of mainstream political theory, were equipped to examine the significance of identity and "the historical, cultural, political, and social context" in which identity is shaped, all of which are central to

comprehending ethnic conflict (Hopf 176).

Many realists, liberals, and neo-Marxists remain skeptical of ethnicity as a useful tool for political scientists (Mueller 2000; Chiozza 2002; Gilley 2004). Russett, Oneal, and Cox (2000) argue that culture does not supersede the importance of democratic institutions or economic interdependence as an explanatory variable of conflict. Gilley (2004) fears that too much energy is being devoted to the study of ethnic mobilization and argues that there needs to be a renewed study of more fundamental political issues, such as class, rights, freedom, and security. In addition, the logistical difficulties of studying ethnicity, like defining the central concepts and creating objective data sets, often discredit the value of ethnic conflict to international relations in the eyes of political scientists (Gilley 2004). Others question the notions of widespread, Hobbesian ethnic warfare, arguing instead that the percentage of populations mobilized to fight in ethnic wars is much smaller than is often suggested, and that participants in ethnic conflict are primarily the lower strata of societies, such as prisoners, thugs, and exploitative politicians, who use violence in the guise of ethnic warfare for opportunistic gains (Mueller 2000).

Despite these hesitations, the study of ethnicity and ethnic conflict continues to grow. The nature of ethnicity is often analyzed by scholars through two very different assumptions. One suggests that ethnic ties are primordial; the other argues that ethnicity is significant only through construction and other clarifying factors. Clifford Geertz captures the essence of primordial theory when he suggests that “for virtually every person, in every society, at almost all times, some attachments flow more from a sense of natural — some would say spiritual affinity — than from social interaction” (259). Geertz’s words signify the inevitable nature with which primordialists associate ethnic conflict. Primordialists believe there are no solutions to ethnic conflicts. Such conflicts are bred into a group’s worldview and certain groups will always be at war with others. Samuel P. Huntington’s (1996) clash of the civilizations thesis also supports this argument that ethnic ties are innate and ancient, based in irresolvable cultural and ideological differences. While primordialists see no reason to look beyond inevitable and apocalyptic clashes between naturally antagonistic groups to explain ethnic conflict, instrumentalists attempt to uncover other factors such as political

repression, remnants of colonial rule, or manipulation by opportunistic elites that illustrate that ethnic differences are socially constructed rather than natural phenomena. (Carment and James 1998; Sadowski 1998; Avruch 2001; Sambanis 2001).

The current conflict between the United States and other Western nations against certain Islamic radical groups can be used as an example of the way primordialists and instrumentalists would differ in explaining the current state of international relations. For primordialists, the conflict could be explained as a conflict that has been raging for more than a millennium and is unlikely to stop because of irreconcilable religious and ideological (i.e. democratic vs. theocratic regimes) differences (Huntington 1993). For instrumentalists, the emergence of radical Islamists is not the result of an inherent hatred of Western culture, but instead an expression of other political and economic frustrations that are not being paid due attention in the international community. Despite their differences, instrumentalists and primordialists both share a belief that ethnic identities are crucial in the explanation of such conflict.

One of the primary tasks faced by scholars of ethnic conflict is the need to define the phenomena they study. Before understanding what ethnicity is, it is useful to first understand that defining ethnicity is much less confusing when one stops trying to ascertain an absolute nature of ethnicity. Instead, it is more useful to conceptualize ethnic affiliations along a continuum of ways in which people organize themselves, such as nationality, class, race, or religion (Horowitz 1985; Fenton 2004). Ethnicity must be defined by both objective and subjective criteria, both ascribed and exclusionary traits. Ethnicity is exclusive in that it is often connected to birth and blood ties, but not definitively so. Intermarriage, the merging of subgroups, and conversion can all cause a person's ethnic identity to differ from his/her ancestors (Horowitz 1985). Just as kinship and ethnicity are not synonymous, neither are culture and ethnicity. Ethnic groups can define themselves from other communities through a wide array of factors, including language, religion, lifestyle, and place of origin, and it is important to understand that it is not how a group defines its membership, but rather if the group is conscious of being a distinct ethnic community that is significant to explaining ethnic conflict.

Most scholars, other than extreme primordialists, agree that certain

conditions facilitate resurgences in group identity that result in ethnic groups becoming involved in ethnic conflict. One of the most complete datasets on ethnic conflict, Ted Gurr's *Minority at Risk Project* (1994), suggests that when certain groups suffer or benefit from systematic discriminatory treatment in comparison to other groups, and the group focuses on political mobilization in promotion or defense of its interests, the risk for ethnic conflict increases. As such, boundaries of ethnic difference are not necessarily boundaries of ethnic conflict, and the focus of ethnic conflict studies must be to understand what factors contribute to mobilization of ethnicity into conflict (Schultz 1995; Fenton 2004). Schultz suggests three long-term factors that contribute to ethnic conflict. First, the nature of popular sovereignty and whether or not a state's nationalism is based on civic responsibility or ethnic exclusivity can predict the potential for conflict. Second, belief in the idea of self-determination can influence an ethnic group to pursue separatist objectives. Finally, relationships between governments and constituents in post-colonial societies can contribute to ethnic conflict, particularly in places where governments are characterized by corrupt and unrepresentative elite rule. In addition to these long-term factors, Schultz also notes five short-term indicators of potential ethnic conflict: disintegration of the bipolar system, dissolution of the Soviet Union, demands for democratic change, growing international concern over human rights, and improvements in global communications (Schultz 1995; Carment 1993; Kaufmann 1996; Besancon 2005). Despite stereotypes of ethnic war as spontaneous and irrational, theorists have examined a number of economic, political, and psychological factors that can contribute to an explanation of ethnic conflict (Horowitz 1985; Lake and Rothchild 1996; Carment and James 1997; Olzak and Tsutsui 1998; Sambanis 2001; Fenton 2004).

By studying the causes of intrastate ethnic conflicts in comparison to the causes of other civil wars, Sambanis (2001) discovered that politics and the magnitude of ethnic heterogeneity are positively correlated with the onset of ethnic war. While economic factors explained other forms of civil war, economic factors paled in comparison to political factors as explanatory variables of ethnic conflict, a statistic that indicates the importance of status in combat that is drawn along lines of ethnicity. Thus, Sambanis argues that modernization theory, which emphasizes

economic development, is much less relevant than neoliberal theories of political development in understanding ethnic conflict (2001). Other studies have also shown that ethnopolitical conflict usually begins with limited protest and only gradually escalates to widespread violence as a group's demands continue to be unaddressed (Gurr 1994). Electoral politics in countries where parties are aligned ethnically can often create grievances that lead to warfare, as the ethnic group with the greater population will always maintain control of government institutions.

Other scholars continue to insist that there is value in examining ethnic conflict through an economic lens (Horowitz 1985; Coakley 1992; Besancon 2005). Marie L. Besancon argues for a separation of ethnic war from modernization theory and notions of economic inequality. In her research, she illustrates that ethnic uprisings actually require a degree of economic equality, as there is a "relative minimum resource threshold" where the costs of fighting must be justified by realistic expectations of potential gains (407). Thus, by nature, ethnic conflicts necessitate a certain degree of resource parity between groups. Drawing a distinction between horizontal groups, such as ethnic and religious associations, and vertical groups, like class and economic distinctions, it is evident that for ethnic conflicts to take place, inequalities must be conceived in terms that go beyond economic grievances. Thereby, Besancon's research suggests that political and educational inequalities are more likely deciding factors in the decision of ethnic groups to fight, and that relative economic equality is often a necessary prerequisite in determining which ethnic groups will resort violence.

Susan Olzak and Kiyotero Tsutui take the argument about the importance of neoliberal ideas a step further in their 1998 analysis of ethnic conflict. By illustrating that increases in "the number of governmental organization memberships...had a significantly deterrent effect on ethnic violence during the period from 1970 to 1979 in the periphery," they argue that membership in international organizations helped to initiate human rights cultures that were less conducive to ethnic conflict (Olzak and Tsutui 714). Olzak and Tsutui postulate that because institutional membership guaranteed certain liberties and civil rights to citizens of member nations, ethnic minorities were able to express their grievances through protest rather than violence. Thus, by opening alternative avenues of expression to discontented populations,

the need for and, thereby, the likelihood of ethnic warfare greatly decreased.

By using a compilation of data from the Minorities at Risk Dataset and the Uppsala dataset, it is possible to ascertain a greater understanding about the relationship between government, neoliberal institutions, and ethnic conflict. In Ted Gurr's Minorities at Risk dataset, he identifies the existence of 284 minority at risk groups (MARs), which are defined as "ethnopolitical groups, non-state communal groups that have 'political significance' in the contemporary world because of their status and political actions" ("About MAR"). The project subsequently defines "political significance" as meeting one of the following two criteria: (1) the group collectively suffers, or benefits from, systematic discriminatory treatment vis-à-vis other groups in a society; and, (2) the group is the basis for political mobilization and collective action in defense or promotion of its self-defined interests ("About MAR").

Similarly, the requirements of conflict analysis in the Uppsala dataset are also conducive to capturing the scale of intrastate ethnopolitical clashes currently underway in the world system. While Uppsala does not quantify ethnopolitical relationships, it lowers the high Correlates of War prerequisite of 1,000 battle deaths to a rubric of 25 annual battle-deaths per year, and thus enables the scale of ethnic conflicts to be more accurately represented in its data (Gleditsch et al.).

Table 1 illustrates the nature of the 24 conflicts MAR identifies as currently ongoing major armed conflicts (as of early 2005). Of these 24 conflicts, only two are international wars, and of the remaining 22 intrastate conflicts, 19 are classified by MAR as having ethnic dimensions (Marshall and Gurr 2005). Table 2 goes a step further and breaks down these 19 ethnic conflicts by the nature of the grievances involved in the fighting. One trend that can be highlighted by the examination of these conflicts is that the modal form of fighting generally tends to be explained by inadequacies of central governments in incorporating regional ethnic groups into national administration. The second column, entitled "National" lists countries where combat is more territorially all-encompassing. These conflicts, like regional conflicts, are usually initiated by dissatisfaction of ethnic groups with power sharing arrangements and the deficiencies in the central

**Table 1: Armed Conflicts Ongoing in 2005**

(\* = indicates more than one conflict taking place)

<u>International</u>	<u>Political</u>	<u>Ethnic</u>
Afghanistan/United States	Algeria	Burundi
Iraq/United States	Colombia	Indonesia
	Nepal	Israel
		Ivory Coast
		Dem. Rep. of Congo
		India*
		Myanmar (Burma)
		Nigeria*
		Philippines
		Russia
		Somalia
		Sudan*
		Uganda

**Table 2: Nature of Ethnic Conflicts**

<u>Regional</u>	<u>National Power Sharing</u>	<u>Land/Resources</u>
D. R. of Congo-Ituri	Uganda	India-Kashmir
India-Kashmir	Philippines	Myanmar
India-Gujarat	Israel	Indonesia-Aceh
Indonesia-Aceh	Myanmar (Burma)	Israel
Indon.-Ambon	Cote d' Ivoire	
Indon.-W. Kalimantan	Burundi	
Nigeria-Central plains		
Nigeria-Delta state		
Russia-Chechnya		
Sudan-Darfur		

government (Marshall and Gurr 2005; "Uppsala" 2004). In the final column, conflicts centering on the issue of land and resource distribution are listed. This more economically oriented type of ethnic conflict is

a defining characteristic in only four of the nineteen ongoing ethnic conflicts.

Thus political grievances greatly overshadow the relevance of economic factors in explaining ethnic conflict. The political nature of motivations for conflict can also be illustrated by what kinds of solutions have had success in quelling some of these conflicts. In many situations, such as the Indonesian conflict with the Free Aceh Movement, international pressure has been instrumental in discouraging state-sponsored violence and initiating peace negotiations. As a result, conflicts, like that between Indonesia and the militia of the Aceh province, have witnessed a significant decline in fighting (Marshall and Gurr 2005).

Surveying data about the causes of the nineteen ethnic armed conflicts underway during early 2005 yields a number of conclusions and enables a better understanding about the nature of ethnic conflict. Research by Sambanis, Besancon, and Olzak and Tsutui that suggests the significance of neoliberal ideas about free government, involvement with the international community, and development of human rights cultures are important to the evaluation of ethnic warfare. Countries where ethnic violence does occur are often found in situations that lack effective governmental power sharing, strong central government, and a commitment to upholding values of human rights and equality. Status and politics are critical factors in explaining why ethnic groups opt for war. Russett, Oneal, and Cox (2000) go as far as to suggest that these conflicts do not need to be studied in terms of ethnicity because liberal and realist theories are already sufficient in explaining the causes of these wars. However, in failing to take into account the fact that opposing parties are aligning themselves through ethnic identity is missing a major piece of explaining these conflicts.

John Mueller argues in *The Remnants of War* that virtually all civil warfare, including ethnic war, “is a function of the extent to which inadequate governments exist,” arguing that “in an important sense many civil wars have effectively been caused by inept government” (173-4). Yet, this argument must be taken one step further, to asking what factors cause this inadequate government and why have these deficiencies in government so frequently been expressed through ethnic divisions? In looking at the list of conflicts above, it is important to note that each of the 19 ethnic conflicts taking place in 2005 are occurring in countries

that share a colonial experience and internationally imposed borders. While by no means have all of the world's former colonies been subject to ethnic warfare, it is a legacy that when combined with insufficient leadership and lack of inclusive government institutions can be detrimental to the populations of these diverse nation-states. A 2001 study on post-colonial ethnic conflict in Africa has empirically studied this relationship and found that indeed, "the structures created by colonial legacies are a significant determinant of rebellious activity in Africa and lend further credence to the broader argument that structural determinants of ethnic conflict provide a more compelling and robust explanation for ethnic conflict" (Blanton et al. 489).

Constructivists, who view identity as central to ethnic conflict, further elaborate on this relationship. Not only did colonialism fail to establish effective central governments, but it also reinforced and strengthened ethnic identities through administrative policies. For example, in the Central Lakes region in Africa, conflicts surrounding the ethnic identities of Hutus and Tutsis that have taken place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi, originate in part from Belgian colonial rule which issued "ethnic identity cards," using the "Tutsi" elite to maintain power in the state (Dunn 148). In addition, in the absence of strong post-colonial institutions, rulers have often fallen back on ethnic identities and nationalisms of exclusion to maintain power. Individuals left outside of government jurisdictions have utilized kinship networks to fill institutional voids. In such situations, violence has become an important means of discourse and expression for both state elites and dissident ethnic groups (Dunn 2003).

An example of this legacy can be seen in Somalia. Somalia was long considered one of the most culturally homogeneous nation-states on the African continent, but in 1991, the state dissolved, in part, due to the inability of the national government to serve the interests of its diverse population. Despite a purportedly homogenous ethnic composition, politics continued to be manifested in terms of clan alliances and regional fragmentations. Even under the representative democracy of the 1960s, the overwhelming majority of political parties bore the names of clan groups (Lewis 2003). Thus, an overarching and centralized political culture based on national social and economic issues never developed. This lack of participation in a national political culture

foreshadowed the impending state crisis.

Thus neoliberal institutional theories are important factors in explaining ethnic conflict and are certainly much more relevant than economic factors and modernization theory. However, they fall short of illustrating the entire background in which a conflict takes place. Ethnic conflict is a product of government deficiencies and discriminations, but it could not take place without a sustained and significant identification of individuals with ethnic group identities that supersede a unified national identity. This understanding of ethnic identity in conjunction with status politics is critical towards apprehending both the nature of and potential solutions for ethnic conflict.

### **Ethnic Warfare and Humanitarian Intervention**

One of the fundamental purposes of understanding the causes of ethnic conflict is to shed light on potential solutions to these conflicts in the interests of peace and international stability. Given that political factors and government institutions correlate strongly with outbreaks of ethnic violence, it follows that potential solutions to ethnic warfare must also be political in nature. In John Coakley's (1992) efforts to establish a typology of ethnic conflict resolution possibilities, he focuses on eight primarily political management strategies for the resolution of ethnic conflicts. These eight strategies are indigenization (akin to affirmative action), accommodation through group rights (rights in language, culture, education, etc.), non-territorial autonomy, assimilation, acculturation, population transfers, frontier adjustment, and genocide and ethnic suicide. Coakley notes that the selection of strategy must depend on how an ethnic group defines itself, its demographic characteristics, and state tradition.

Yet with most ethnic conflicts occurring within states plagued by inadequate or abusive governments, it is difficult to imagine Coakley's conflict management strategies being implemented domestically. Many arguments regarding the resolution of ethnic conflicts relate to the place of the international community in quelling such disputes. In an international system that operates on the foundations, legitimacy, and sovereignty of the nation-state, the place of international organizations like the United Nations in internal ethnic disputes is uncertain (Gurr

1994; Lake and Rothchild 1996; Carment and James 1998).

External involvement in the mitigation of ethnic conflicts in the past has a mixed record of success and has done little to establish a precedent of protocol for such intervention. Some studies suggest that Western democracies have been successful in devising policies of regional autonomy, integration, and pluralism that prevent all-out escalation of ethnic crises and that intervention has an excellent success rate of containing ethnopolitical conflict (Gurr 1994; Lake and Rothchild 1996). However, other studies are more skeptical and argue that UN and multilateral intervention come at high costs and can often complicate crises and compromise the safety of minorities (Carment and James 1998). One place where consensus exists is that institutional constraints, such as membership in and adherence to national organizations, and norms of peaceful transformation of conflicts among state elites, can yield positive results. Therefore there is a great need for the international community to clarify international laws and policies protecting the rights of minority communities and to establish norms of humanitarian intervention in response to ethnic conflicts, even though most scholars recognizing the hesitancy of nations to commit means to humanitarian intervention missions (Gurr 1994; Lake and Rothchild 1996; Carment and James 1998).

Attempts to protect ethnic minorities have often come into conflict with Article 2(7) of the United Nations Charter, which enshrines sovereignty and gives states the legal right to manage their own internal affairs free from outside interference (United Nations 1945). During the period from 1945 to 1989, the right to intervene in another state's domestic affairs was justifiable only in efforts to save its nationals from extreme dangers (Aguilar 2005). However, the weakening of geopolitical discipline and the outbreak of ethnic nationalism and subsequent breakdown in state-society relationships following the Cold War era has forced scholars to consider the nature of a new world order (Falk 1999). These eruptions of intrastate violence have made it impossible for the international community to continue to ignore what its role should be in domestic violence, particularly among competing ethnic groups. Furthermore, the Cold War's realignment of the balance of power among United Nations Security Council members has made its support for military intervention in intrastate conflicts more likely.

Interventions in Northern Iraq during the first Gulf War, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and inaction in places like Rwanda and East Timor have made pressing the question of how and when the international community should intervene in domestic, ethnic conflicts.

This question breaks down into two fundamental parts. First, does the international community have a right to intervene at all in intrastate conflicts? Secondly, if the international community should intervene, what course of action is best for the resolution of ethnic conflicts? Answers to the first question are divided into three major camps of opinion: realists, rationalists, and revolutionists (Bellany 2003).

Realists tend to shy away from notions of humanitarian intervention (Van Evera, 1991). For realists, sovereignty, or “the legitimacy of a single hierarchy of domestic authority,” is central to notions of their state-centered world system, because it justifies the right of states to maintain control of their own territories and domestic political order (Krasner 20; Wesley 2005). Realism is also often acceptable to the opinions of governments and the general public, who believe that ethics of intervention are superseded by “an overriding moral obligation to advance the interests of their own moral communities against the interests of other moral communities,” and that expending unnecessary resources abroad can only translate into civil unrest at home (Wesley 2005). For example, realists would view intervention in Somalia’s ethnic conflict as a major U.S. policy mistake, because it resulted in the loss of several soldiers’ lives and created an uproar domestically without advancing U.S. interests internationally. Essentially primordialists in their perceptions of ethnic conflict, realists argue there is no reason to expend valuable resources abroad for the purpose of solving disputes which they believe are illogical and grounded in age-old cultural hatreds.

While realists advocate non-intervention through adherence to notions of sovereignty and self-interest, rationalists, or pluralists of a liberal tradition, support non-intervention by emphasizing the importance of abiding to international norms and a belief in culturally relativism. For the rationalist, intervention in conflicts with ethnic dimensions is inadvisable because defining a “supreme humanitarian emergency” is an impossible task (Bellany 13). Arguments from the rationalist point of view claim that humanitarian campaigns camouflage neo-imperialist efforts to impose Western democratic views and emphasize that above

all else, ideas about human rights are inseparable from the cultural contexts in which they are conceived (Vincent 1986; Tharoor and Daws 2001). While some rationalists recognize the necessity of intervention under UN auspices in dire cases of humanitarian emergency, such as genocide, rationalists remain generally skeptical of intervention and question whether humanitarian war can yield peace in conflicts between ethnic groups.

Finally, revolutionists, or solidarists, believe in a universal moralism that transcends cultural differences. For solidarists, the rights of individuals surpass the rights of states to sovereignty. There is great concern for global distributive justice, and agreement that there is a basic foundation of human decency among revolutionists. For example, revolutionists use ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and Rwanda as prime examples that the international community recognizes a universal conscience for humanity (Bellany 2003). They also point to continuing change in public opinion in favor of humanitarian intervention as a result of news media continually bringing home images of destruction and crisis that are not reconcilable with Western audiences and neo-liberal thought (MacFarlane et al. 2004).

Despite disagreements between realists, rationalists, and revolutionists, there is a growing trend within international organizations, especially within the United Nations system, and individual governments towards establishing norms of intervention in the post-Cold War era, and most actors recognize what revolutionists would term a ground level of basic human decency. The quantity of ethnic conflicts underway in the international system and the relationship between these conflicts and inadequate political regimes is forcing international governmental organizations to reexamine their roles in intrastate wars. Today discussions have shifted away from a concept of sovereignty as simply a right, toward a notion of sovereignty that recognizes a degree of duty owed to a nation's citizens from their government (Aguilar 2005). In September 2000, an International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) was established to compose a response to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's challenge: "how we should respond to gross and systematic violations of human rights?" One year later the ICISS reported their findings in *The Responsibility to Protect*, which established a framework similar to just war principles and authorized

military intervention if the “primary motive...is to halt or avert human suffering” (MacFarlane et al. 2004). What remains most troubling for those who acknowledge the right of third parties to intervene in ethnic disputes with humanitarian motives is how to establish consistencies and norms of when and how the international community should act in such situations.

The most frequently supported area of scholarship suggests that the best way to think about intervention in ethnic conflicts is through increasing support for neo-liberal reforms and institution building to create stability and balance in situations of ethnic unrest. Advocates of this type of intervention support the United Nations’ efforts to codify intervention “in the form of soft law, or emerging custom” to advance the norm that “halting egregious abuses of human life matters more than treating sovereignty as sacrosanct” (MacFarlane et.al. 2004). The most popular line of this theory gives the United Nations primacy in coordinating intervention efforts, and suggests the development of a UN committee on human rights to monitor internal conflicts and issue reports to Security Council members on potential violations of human decency. In addition, these scholars have proposed the development of an all-volunteer army with greater independence and financial backing to support peacekeeping operations (Augilar 2005; Falk 1999). They believe that after military intervention stabilizes regions of ethnic conflict, development-oriented peace-building and the promotion of human rights cultures, along with the establishment of power-sharing institutions, are the best solutions to violent ethnic conflicts (Coakley 1992; Carment and James 1998).

In contrast to these moral-based efforts to construct a culture of human rights and peace through the codification of neoliberal norms, Michael Wesley argues that for ethical concepts of humanitarian intervention to have a practical impact, they must be approached from a realist framework which acknowledges that states always act in their own best interests. While Wesley agrees that the international community needs to intervene in cases of human catastrophe, like the ethnic genocides that took place in Bosnia, he believes that these humanitarian interests can increasingly be reconciled with a new form of governance interventionism that became more significant in the wake of September 11<sup>th</sup>. As international security has “shifted its attention from the

aggregation of power to zones of extreme powerlessness,” states are being forced to pay attention to and intervene within states where internal violence and ethnic conflict are rampant out of their own self-interest (Wesley 67). U.S. interventions into Afghanistan and Iraq can be viewed in this light, since military intervention is directly related to a concern about ties between these two states and their connections to the Taliban and al-Qaeda, which threaten the U.S. (Wesley 67). Sovereignty is no longer “a blank check. Rather, sovereign status is contingent on the fulfillment of certain fundamental obligations, both to its own citizens and to the international community” (Wesley 68). For Wesley, the only way that states will commit to humanitarian intervention to alleviate internal ethnic disputes is if they first recognize a vested self-interest. In return for their efforts, intervening states expect to see new regimes uphold law and order and adhere to basic principles of representative government, economic liberalism, and human rights, all of which are factors that scholars have shown tend to decrease the likelihood of ethnic violence.

Finally, a third strain of possibility for humanitarian intervention in the resolution of ethnic conflict suggests that partition, or physically separating a state into two or more separate, autonomous entities, is the only way to resolve ethnic conflict in a place that has already succumbed to violence. Ethnic wars involve inflexible loyalties and intensified security dilemmas that cannot be resolved except by the physical separation of warring parties (Kaufman 1996). Advocates of partition argue that while military intervention may temporarily mitigate violence by adjusting the balance of power, once peacekeepers leave the region, violence will inevitably resume. Therefore, the international community must be prepared to partition violent parties if it is to succeed in establishing lasting peace. This school of thought has the least regard for state sovereignty, arguing that sovereignty must take a back seat to concerns of safety and self-determination which it sees as inseparable from ethnic violence (Kaufman 1996).

Given the wide array of solutions proposed towards the establishment of norms of humanitarian intervention, it is difficult to begin to reconcile these varying opinions towards the establishment of procedures for intervention. A good starting point is the rejection of partition as a practical solution to ethnic conflict. As studies by Nicholas

Sambanis and Jaroslav Tir have shown the record of partition in promoting peace are not only inconclusive, but partition also causes population movements that are coerced, painful, and costly (Sambanis 2000; Tir 2005). The costs, which in cases of partition involve long-term military commitments and expensive peacekeeping efforts, are simply not worth the benefits, as most violent partitions, like Bosnia-Yugoslavia, more frequently result in failure than the resolutions that involve state-building and power-sharing (Tir 2005).

Thus two main divisions of thought remain as potential avenues of humanitarian intervention, realism and institutionalism/neo-liberalism, which each have advantages and disadvantages. As MacFarlane, Thielking, and Weiss have pointed out in their studies, the U.S. intervention in Iraq, and the subsequent “ex post facto humanitarian justification” of it, have greatly complicated the establishment of universal consensus on humanitarian intervention (MacFarlane et al. 2004). Wesley is correct in assessing that the states with the resources and power to intervene in weaker states plagued by ethnic violence are the Western, developed countries, and these states are most likely to intervene only when they fuse humanitarian ethics with self-interest in safety (Wesley 2005). In addition, international, liberal doctrines like the ICISS’s *The Responsibility to Protect* also fall subject to accusations of Western bias, as this report failed to include findings that opinions of intervention varied markedly by region, and omitted China’s complete rejection of humanitarian intervention (MacFarlane et al. 2004). So how can inherent Western biases about humanitarian intervention and the need to protect the lives of minority ethnic groups be reconciled with more regional and universal notions of what justifies international intervention?

The best potential synthesis of these divergent viewpoints seems to begin with an acknowledgement that Western and developed states are going to act and use their militaries in situations where they feel they have a vested security interest. By keying on notions that absences and abuses of power are threatening to Western states, their support for humanitarian intervention in ethnic conflicts in failed states will become more likely (Wesley 2005). Once their agreement on the need to intervene in humanitarian crises is achieved, then management and resolution of ethnic crises in various regions of the world needs to take on a more

regional character that acknowledges the situation on the ground, the history of the conflict, and the customs of actors in such situations. Intervention should involve the participation of regional actors both in the planning and implication of peacekeeping operations. This is not a compromise of Western values but instead a commitment to serving both the interests of the local community and the Western interest in establishing peace and stability.

The literature on humanitarian intervention offers several specific suggestions that will aid the pursuit of this approach to conflict resolution. First and foremost, the United Nations needs to pass soft laws to help recast sovereignty as a right contingent on the basic responsibilities of governments to respect human rights and maintain law and order. In addition, a UN committee composed of members with expertise on humanitarian intervention from a diverse array of geographic and cultural backgrounds should be established to monitor and advise the Security Council in decisions on humanitarian intervention. This Committee will have the voice to exert pressure and provide objective justification for decisions to intervene, thereby helping to create norms and precedents about which situations constitute humanitarian crises (Aguilar, 2005). Furthermore, once a decision to intervene has been made, it should be accepted by the people at risk, and regional organizations and states in the region where intervention is to take place should be consulted and included in planning for military intervention and peace-keeping, so as not to create an appearance of neo-imperialism by major powers against Third World states (Tharoor and Daws 2001). Not only must regional actors be included in the process; they must also be given an equal voice in proceedings, including an equal right to veto operations they feel are unjustified. The resort to military action should follow a just war framework, and military action should not be pursued unless it is a last resort which will result in more good than harm, with means that are attuned to the ends. Finally, just as a UN committee on humanitarian intervention needs to be established to help determine when such intervention is justified, the committee should also be crucial in the establishment of peace-building plans along with regional actors. Cultural customs and norms should be taken into account when constructing reconciled states, rather than merely assuming that a liberal framework of democratization will find success in all

cases.

These suggestions coincide with the writings of many scholars who suggest that the establishment of norms in humanitarian military campaigns needs to fall somewhere in between “rigid guidelines and a case-by case ad hocery” (Tharoor and Daws 2001). The process proposed above stresses the need for openness, objectivity, and commitment in developing norms for humanitarian intervention. A broad platform and framework is the best way to address the many cases of human rights abuses occurring in the international community. Only by making the effort to include all state actors in a process to establish these norms can the international community hope to begin to resolve the many ambiguities facing the place of humanitarian intervention in geopolitical relations today. The international community can no longer sit idly by without addressing the growing persistence of intrastate and, in particular, ethnic conflicts. By fostering a discussion about both the causes and characteristics of these conflicts in international bodies, we can take the first steps towards a process to mitigate these wars. Only by acknowledging ethnic disputes that are ongoing both within and across state borders, and by working together to yield the best solutions, can the community of nation states work to create stability and peace in an international system of predominately intrastate warfare.

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