CHAPTER I

ETHNIC CONFLICT AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS
Given recent world events, the contemporary upsurge of interest in ethnic conflict among international relations scholars, policy makers and pundits, is not surprising. Over the last few years, emphasis has been placed increasingly on the importance of ethnic conflict as a security concern for the international system. Scholars have begun to debate the magnitude of the security threat and most appropriate techniques for managing the threat. Yet the magnitude of threat posed by ethnic conflicts to international peace and security is underestimated. This threat can be understood, in view of the fact that there are over 5,000 different ethnic groups in the world, whereas, the international system is made up of 185 nation-state. As Stephen Ryan argues "multi-ethnic states are likely to continue to be a feature of politics both within and between sovereign states". Undoubtedly, the current research on the international dimension of ethnic conflict and its linkage with peace and security is a case in which theory has lagged behind emerging realities.

From the security point of view, it is no longer possible to ignore the widespread tenacity of ethnic conflict, particularly the way in which it is influencing current inter-state behaviour. For some states, ethnic conflict presents a wide range of challenges for foreign policy and inter-state cooperation. Besides, there are problems created by ethnic conflicts such as the issue of human rights and refugee

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1 Stephen Ryan, Ethnic Conflict and International Relations, Brookfield, VT, Gower, 1990, p.74
situation, which also affect the international stability in a profound way. In this 'new world disorder', there is a growing concern that ethnic conflicts are so contagious that a conflict in one region can easily stimulate another elsewhere. For example, if the initial outbreaks of ethnic violence in the Balkans, former Soviet Central Asia and Africa, if not quarantined, could set-off an epidemic of catastrophic proportions. Analysts also fear that internal conflict can escalate by drawing in neighbours and outside opportunists. Reflecting upon these concerns, James B. Steinberg wrote in 1993, "The war in former Yugoslavia continues, and there remains a risk that it will spread not only to other parts of Yugoslavia, but to its neighbours, as well"2. Almost daily reports of ethnic violence from around the world lend credence to these fears.

Scholars of ethnic conflict and security do not reach uniform conclusions about the causes of ethnic conflict, the propensity for ethnic conflicts to spread, or about the management of conflict. This diversity of views should be regarded as strength, as it would help prevent us hurrying into premature closure on this important issue. Keeping this in mind, this chapter is an attempt to address the question of inter-state security crisis because of the international spread of ethnic conflict. In this sense, this chapter will also attempt to work out a theoretical and conceptual framework to analyse the cases of Tibet

and Afghanistan undertaken in this study. The aim is to suggest a framework within which vital questions related to ethnic identification and ethnic conflict can be asked in ways, which can avoid the flaws of the mainstream approaches.

The first section of this chapter addresses the inadequacy of mainstream international relations theories to deal with ethnic conflict. The second section examines the transnational ethnic alliance formation in the context of external intervention, the logic of identity formation and the threat to international security emerging out of it. Finally, we turn to the question of the international spread of ethnic conflict and its implication for international security. In this section, we distinguish between diffusion, which occurs when conflict in one area alters the likelihood of conflict elsewhere, and escalation, which occurs when additional, foreign participants enter an otherwise internal conflict. This is followed by an examination of relationship between territoriality, ethnic conflict and security.

**International Relations and Ethnic Conflict: The Conventional Wisdom**

The internationalization of ethnic conflicts raise an important question as to why the mainstream theories of international relations have largely ignored ethnicity as a component of statehood. Apart from some recent efforts by Jack Snyder, Barry R. Posen, and Van Evera, the failure of international relations theories to examine ethnicity as a meaningful force goes with the preference for the study
of material conditions such as power or class as a determinant of individual or group behaviour within a state, and with the primacy accorded to the role played by state and economic forces in an anarchical global system. Part of the problem is the understanding that, at least from the realist perspectives, the international system is anarchic rather than hierarchical. It is characterized by interaction among units with similar functions, the distribution of capabilities varying from system to system over time. There is a fundamental system-oriented rationalization inherent in realist assumption that seems to deny existence of ethnicity at any time. The realist emphasis on states behaving rationally in terms of external, structural features of the international system probably understates the importance of domestic affairs in shaping national policy and behaviour.

Recent attempts by realists to come to grips with ethnic conflict expose the conceptual shortcomings of that theory. The exclusive focus on international anarchy as a cause for most wars and conflicts in the system is the most notable of the flaws. For example, Mearsheimer's realist account suggests that the appeal to chauvinistic ethnic sentiments result from the need to mobilize the population in the face of a threatening international environment.  

Similarly, Geopolitics is used to account for state breakdown and ethnic mobilization. In assessing the collapse of the Soviet Union,

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Waller argues that states seeking political legitimacy through conquest inevitably encounter resistance, which produces over extension or policy failure\(^4\). Alternatively, if a state loses its ability to regulate an ethnic conflict, the problem becomes a structural 'security dilemma' because it could invite external intervention\(^5\). Thus ethnic conflict poses a security dilemma along two dimensions: states which act out aggressive behaviour as a consequence of internal cleavages and transnational ethnic affinities; and states in which internal weakness leads to efforts to avoid external involvement. The result is a delegitimation of states' authority and "an opening in the political process for opposing factions"\(^6\). But within ethnic conflict settings, the security dilemma is not an inherent part of the system structure, as suggested by realism. It results instead from specific sources of insecurity for states, namely ethnic cleavages and affinities. Political opponents (or more directly by the masses) may pressure leaders of multi-ethnic states to act on these linkages which can, in some cases, be perceived as a threat by leaders of other states. In other instances, when cleavages and affinities are great enough to invite external involvement, the situation can become a real source of insecurity for all concerned states.


\(^6\) Ibid., p. 45
Within traditional perspectives such as that of Mearsheimer, the irrelevance of ethnicity is assured. Ethnic attachments are by definition transitional and their 'false consciousness' will become readily apparent as individual states and the global system move to upstage it, thereby limiting the importance of ethnicity. Both liberalism and Marxism share this perspective, drawing mainly upon such historical experiences of the western world as the establishment of civil societies and secular political systems. These theories have sought to generalize the historically and culturally specific western experience and attempted to apply it as a universal model to the study of the problems in the other parts of the world. There are obvious flaws in this way of approaching the ethnic problems. The problem is that in recent times there has been worldwide increase in ethnic conflicts. They are no longer limited to the peripheries. Nearly 28 years ago in the last century, Connor described the pervasiveness of multi-ethnic societies, and predicted the declining congruence between nation and the state\(^7\). This fact has led to many of the difficulties that third world countries encounter in the task of 'nation-building'; it has led to conflicts between states and among groups within a state. These conflicts in turn have wider international ramifications.

Two apparently contradictory but parallel trends seems to have substantially eroded the conventional discourse of state sovereignty

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and the realist paradigm that underlines it. One the one hand, the theory and practice of state sovereignty appears to be fast becoming subsumed under the relentless march of globalization and the concomitant ascendancy of ideas about interdependence and common security. Much recent social and political theorizing on the 'withering away' of the state has reinforced this. On the other hand, the world appears to be fragmenting into ever-smaller political units in order to accommodate the vociferous demands for autonomy from groups who reject the legitimacy of existing state boundaries. True, both the trends may seem to substantiate claims that the principle of state sovereignty, with its emphasis on territorial integrity is under threat from profound structural transformations.

One effect of this trend is that it has surely put paid to any lingering hopes that the mobilization of ethnic identity as a political resource was simply an irrational curse or a 'passing pathology' of modernization. In this respect, earlier expectations of both liberal

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and Marxist schools of thought, which assumed that ethnic identification and nationalism would cease to carry such a significant political load as societies inevitably 'progressed' along the road to modernity, have not been realized. Rather, the clamour for ethnically based sovereignty has reached a crescendo of such proportions as to drown out any rationale for alternative basis of political association in states experiencing ethnic separatism. More and more ethnic groups are fighting for ever small states of their own in order to escape what they see as the oppressive impositions of a centralized state in which they perceive themselves marginalized\textsuperscript{12}.

Ethnic conflicts have often emerged where attempts have been made to create 'nations' within the boundaries of centralized states in the name of modernization. In the interest of promoting national cohesion and unity, official policy has frequently repressed pre-existing ascriptive identities and interests based on them. This is especially so in many parts of the third world where new 'national' boundaries, imposed through the process of colonization and decolonization, resulted in the amalgamation of diverse ethnic groups into a single political unit. The problem of the sharp dysfunction between the processes of modern state formation and the ethnic groups absorbed into new states was initially approached via the optimistic programme of 'nation building'. That this has failed so spectacularly

in most cases has brought about the virtual demise of modernization theory with its assumptions about the inevitable dissolution of primordial ethnic or tribal bonds in the transitional process of communities moving from the small, close-knit, and homogeneous Gemeinschaften to the larger, more impersonal and heterogeneous association of Gesellschäften.\textsuperscript{13}

The prevalence of ethnic conflicts in the post-colonial states, however, has rarely succeeded in attaining sovereign statehood. (Bangladesh and Eritrea provide major exceptions). As Brunelli points out, at least part of the explanation is to be found in the nature of international politics and especially in the relations between new states themselves. For these states, frequently characterized as 'weak' or 'failed' because of apparently low levels of internal integration and administrative capacity, the fear that 'secessionism' might be contagious is certainly one consideration that would weigh heavily if it became necessary to take sides.\textsuperscript{14} In commenting on this 'demonstration effect', Horowitz identifies sequences of separatists movements in Africa. In Nigeria, for example, he notes that a Northern secession was mooted before that of Ibo; in what is now Zaire, the Katanga secession movement in the Southern region

\textsuperscript{13} For a discussion of change and development in theoretical approaches, including 'conflictual modernization', see Saul Newman, "Does Modernization Breed Ethnic Conflict?" \textit{World Politics}, vol.43 no.3, 1991, pp.451-75

\textsuperscript{14} John Brunelli, \textit{Nationalism and the State}, Manchester University Press, Manchester, p.223.
stimulated a similar movement amongst the Baluba of Northern Katanga.\textsuperscript{15} But with few exceptions, the state system bequeathed by European colonialism has remained intact, and the secessionist and irredentist movements have found little support for their aspirations in the African 'concert of states'.\textsuperscript{16} The same, however, cannot be said of the other parts of the globe.

To the extent that strong ethnic movements expose the vulnerability of central governments, and that one movement is often likely to be followed by another, fragmentation is obviously a concern for many states. Nowhere has this been more vividly illustrated than by the break-up of contemporary Eastern Europe and erstwhile Soviet Central Asia. The recent upheavals in the countries of former eastern bloc, former Soviet Central Asia and South Asia illustrate how the secession of one state can act as a detonator for others. As an effects nationalism, especially in its ethnically specific manifestations, is now thought to be "very much a ideology with a future".\textsuperscript{17} Recent experiences have also shown that the assumption that ethnic conflicts

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\textsuperscript{17} George Schopflin, "Nationalism and National Minorities in East and Central Europe", \textit{Journal of International Affairs}, vol.45, no.1 Summer 1991, p.51.
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are largely matters of internal or domestic concern is no longer sustainable.

These developments also disprove the assumption, implicit in earlier theories of the state, that national integration is a one-way street. No longer can it be assumed that, once integrated in a legal-territorial state, ethnic or other sub-national groups stay integrated while pre-existing bases of political association simply wither away. Similarly, there is no reason to assume that the process of modernization is irreversible. Chipman makes the point that if modernizing forces are capable of overwhelming traditional social and political arrangements, the opposite can also come about. Citing the revival of theocracy in the Iranian revolution of 1979 as a classic example, he argues:

Superficially modern societies in the developing world are sometimes challenged at the center by traditional groups who seek a declaration of history, a return to a past they better understand, and a reversal of the achievements of modernity ... giving pre-eminence instead to ancient ideologies or beliefs as more effective tools of organization.

However, there are signs in Iran that the trend towards 'theocratization' is now being reversed following recent electoral wins

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by anti-theocratic forces. Only to imply that salience of ethnicity is inevitable feature of political life.

The phenomenon of ethnic conflict is often depicted as 'internal' in so far as it usually involves a dispute within the borders of an existing state. Such internalist account of state-related activities and problems has often been criticized for neglecting external or international factors in the analysis of so-called 'domestic' issues, and the notion that ethnic conflict is purely domestic matter has been dismissed as "simply one more statistic myth". The potential for ethno-nationalism in one state to act as a detonator for other conflicts is considerable. Surkhe and Noble also point out that as long as the nation-state is posited as the norm as well as the principal actor in the international system, an intra-state conflict that "even implicitly questions that norm and the nature of that actor ceases to be purely domestic and automatically requires international dimensions". The 'age of ethnicity' in international politics has also reinforced an already significant trend amongst governments to seek justification for many domestic policies by reference to external commitment.

It is admittedly difficult to dispute seriously the proposition that there are now few phenomena, which are exclusively either internal or

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external. However, the predominance of the realist approach, with its insistence on conceptual and empirical autonomy of the two spheres, has inhibited the development of a more comprehensive theoretical approach to analyze problems like ethnic conflict. Because realist approaches have tended to treat the study of the state system in isolation from the domestic forces which shape state relations, and to presuppose that states are unitary actors merely "reacting to geopolitical pressures exclusive of other forces", they have failed to produce an adequately articulated conception of the state in international relations theory. 22 And since the principal purpose of the realist theory in international relations has been to explain wars between states, it is hardly surprising that its exponents have paid little attention to the grounds and the nature of conflicts within states. Nor is this likely to change. Although ethnic conflicts constitute one of the most powerful attacks on the integrity of existing states, and therefore on their identity as international actors, the limited legal territorial conception of state sovereignty and authority which underlies the realist paradigm limits its explanatory scope. The more recent elaboration of a neo-realist perspective as exemplified in the work of Kenneth Waltz has not been able to enlarge the parameters of this paradigm. Rather, it has simply reasserted the unitary vision of states, while dismissing virtually all-alternative accounts as inherently

A general case outlining the inadequacy of realist paradigm in dealing with a range of issues, has been put clearly by de Senarcles:

One might be justified in thinking that the structures of contemporary international society foster relations of oppression and dependency, social marginalization, migratory movements, ethnic conflicts, civil and regional wars and terrorism. But these phenomena are not explicable by realist paradigm. A conceptual framework for the study of international relations that has nothing to say about the challenges of development, of the environment, of refugees, or about new religious or cultural antagonism, or that reduces these phenomena to traditional inter-state confrontations is necessarily incomplete and therefore inadequate.24

A study of causes and consequences of phenomena such as ethnic conflicts requires a much more comprehensive analytical framework, one which can transcend the state-centric focus of the realists on the one hand, and the society centered perspective of traditional political and social theory on the other. But while we wait for Rosenau's hoped for 'political Einstein' to reveal the underlying order obscured by present state structures, through a grand unified

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23 For general discussion on neo-realism see Fred Halliday, "The Pertinence of International Relations", Political Studies, vol.37, no.3 September, 1989 pp.512-13.

theory of national and international linkages, practical political developments are outstripping theoretical refinements as the recent escalation of ethnic conflict and security crisis the world over so clearly shows.

These developments also act as a significant barrier to the theoretical development in the apparent lack of consensus as to the assumed causal link between ethnic conflict and international security. How does ethnic conflicts become internationalized? Are they generated internally and then externalized as some theories would suggest? Do ethnic conflicts weaken state structures, inviting external intervention? Or does the process involve more subtle and complex set of interactions?

There are other theoretical restrictions, imposed by various approaches, which view ethnic conflicts as epiphenomena – a byproduct of the interaction between the processes of state building and an anarchical system structure. A theory should allow for these processes and the impact they have on relations among state, but it should also be able to account for the potentially important role of domestic factors. The fact that domestic variables are not meaningfully integrated into mainstream international relations research is not deliberate but arises from “paradigmatic blind spots”\(^\text{25}\), because of its system oriented focus. This problem becomes

particularly acute when existing knowledge about domestically generated ethnic conflicts is brought to bear on the study of interstate conflict.

Most scholars have identified three major factors in accounting for the wave of contemporary ethnic conflicts. First, the trend towards 'democratization' in previously authoritarian countries has given more scope for ethnic minorities to freely assert their perceived rights. Second, increasing international concern (expressly articulated by the United Nations) for human rights, especially those of minorities – now tends to override more conventional concerns for sovereignty and non-interference in a country's internal affairs. And third, there is a greater scope for emerging regional powers, such as India, to exercise influence across their borders\(^{26}\). These factors clearly underscore the extent to which the politics of ethnic separation, although directed against prevailing domestic arrangements, cannot be treated in isolation from global developments. Further, where the goal of a separatist movement is fixed on the formation of a new sovereign state, its realization will of course introduce a new player into the global arena. This not only affects the 'remainder state', but also

inevitably brings about a rearticulation of interests amongst other members of the international system.\textsuperscript{27}

Ethnic conflicts have also been explained with the help of concepts such as uneven development, differential modernization, relative regional deprivation, internal colonialism, failures of assimilation, and cultural oppression. These concepts generally sustain the hypothesis that historic conditions – economic, social, and political – have created a context in which ethno-territorial identity achieves much greater political salience.\textsuperscript{28} More nuanced approaches point to the multi faceted character of these conflicts, most of which have economic, political and ideological dimensions that interact with ethnic aspects. Then there are those who propose that ethnic conflict as such may not really exist, rather, there are social, political, and economic conflicts between groups who identify themselves and there opponents in ethnic terms.\textsuperscript{29} There is a danger, however, in taking some aspects of these approaches too far and adding to the already pronounced tendency to treat ‘culture’ and its variables as those residual behavioural elements, which remain, unaccounted for by


\textsuperscript{28} Robert J. Thomson and Joseph R. Rudolph, op.cit., no. 18, p. 2. The authors here use the term ‘ethno territorial’ rather than ‘ethno-national’ because they contend that the latter tends to exclude groups with a regional base.

\textsuperscript{29} Rudolph Stavenhagen, op.cit., no. 20, p.119.
predominant structural economic variables. These approaches are no different from the traditional Marxist and modernization theories, which have been rendered anachronistic by contemporary events. However, warning against this tendency, Fred Hirsch, a contemporary economist emphasizing the linkage between culture, religion and economy, writes: “Modern economic analysis has kept religion firmly outside the economic sphere and thereby obscured the role it has played in the economic system”\(^3\)

**Transnational Ethnic Alliances and International Security**

Situations of emerging anarchy and violence in ethnic relations arise out of strategic interactions between and within group. In international relations, the distinction between interstate or systemic causes and intrastate or unit-level causes in understanding crisis and reasons of ethnic conflict is increasingly challenged as the first section of this chapter demonstrates. In addition, the implications drawn by many analysts, that the levels of analysis define separate and autonomous causal factors are to be questioned. There are instead reasons to believe that the inter-group and intra-group interactions (and for the matter, inter and intrastate interactions as well) as being inherently linked to the larger strategic calculus. Together, the choices made in these two areas combine to create a cycle that threatens to

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pull multiethnic societies into violence with grave danger to international security.

Ethnicity, by itself, is not a cause of violent conflict. Most ethnic groups, most of the time, pursue their interests peacefully through established political channels. But when ethnicity gets linked in a problematic way with the overall structural totality of national and global processes, it emerges as one of the major fault lines along which societies fracture. Vesua Pesic, a professor at the University of Belgrade, a peace activist in former Yugoslavia and now a leader in the political opposition to Serbian President Slobodon Milosevic, says it well: ethnic conflict is caused by the "fear of future, lived through the past." This 'fear of future' process and the logic of ethnic identity formation and its linkage with conflict need to be understood both at micro and macro level. James P. Piscatori, emphasizing the transnational nature of ethnic conflict, writes:

Ethnic groups are often shaped or influenced by the larger milieu (micro affected by macro) and ...ethnic considerations often transcend the traditional state boundaries and operate as at least quasi-

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independent variables in the international system (macro affected by micro). 32

It is the vastly expanded scope and intensity of these multileveled interactions (micro & macro processes) which ethnicity a suitable subject of transnational relation. 33

In this context, it can be argued those ethnic ties among peoples across state borders in the international system act as unstated alliance among those people. The term alliance, in this case, refers to "a similarity or relationship in character, structure, etc, affinity" 34 rather than the more traditional meaning of the term in international behaviour. Transnational ethnic ties may also represent an opportunity for elites in many societies to mobilize political support by using ethnic appeals to vilify a rival state for its treatment of ethnic brethren. 35 In this manner, similar ethnic groups distributed across different states in a geopolitical context will be likely to form, what are, in effect ‘alliances’. Hence, there is a connection between the


33 Joseph S. Nye, Jr. and Robert O. Keohane define transnationalism as “the movement of tangible or intangible items across state boundaries when at least one actor is not an agent of government or an intergovernmental organization”, Joseph S. Nye, Jr. And Robert O. Keohane (eds.) in Transnational Relations and World Politics: An Introduction , Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1971, p. xii.

34 Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary

35 Donald L. Horowitz, op.cit., no. 15, p.291.
dyadic conflict level between two neighbouring states and the presence of a disadvantaged ethnic minority in one state when members of the same minority group are in power in the other. In order to explain this linkage, it is useful to conceptualize ethnic linkages among people across state boundaries as functionally equivalent to alliances between two states. E. Siverson and Starr identify such alliances as a major factor in the diffusion of war. They contend that “alliances can be seen as important components of the incentive structures available for states”36. From there they argue that “borders and alliances create the salience and/or the case of interaction that significantly increases the probability that states will join ongoing wars.”37 That is, war diffuses through the international system as a consequence of alliances. Conflicts in Kashmir and Afghanistan are classic examples of the dyadic conflict behaviour two or more neighbouring states.

But, for the purpose of this chapter, the focus is on the escalation of ethnic conflict to an international conflict. So, if alliances affect decision making, interactions, and the size of international wars, what does conceptualizing ethnicity as an alliance mean? In order to understand this, we need to come to terms with the notion of ethnicity itself.

37 Ibid, p.93.
Ethnicity guides interpretation and action in the social world. It is, thus, a part of the frame of reference of the social groups in which both physical and socio-cultural world is interpreted. The socio-cultural world is a “preconstituted and preorganized world whose particular structure is the result of a historical process and therefore different for each culture and society”38. In other words, ethnicity is a way to typify the world, others and oneself, and as such it implies roles and ways to act. As Max Weber argues, the existence of institution of marriage or state means nothing but the mere chance that people will act in a specific way. Similarly, the existence of an ethnic group indicates the likelihood that people will act in accordance with the general framework of typifications in which ethnicity, as a reference to certain criteria of communality (e.g. language, history, race), is considered to have high relevance. Whether ‘ethnic affinity’ is understood to be driven by primordial bonding (common history, culture, religion etc.) among kith and kin, or it is understood a through a more utilitarian approach where, ethnicity is understood as a tool used by individuals, groups, or elites to obtain some larger, typically material, ends, in a geopolitical context, it produces similar policy preference emerging out of a shared way of life. This has an important implication for conflict and security, and seriously undermines the plausibility and legitimacy of the approaches, which accord primacy to the territorial states.

Members of an ethnic group divided by an international border tend to have the potential motivation for the formation of an ethnic alliance providing a society a wider 'mechanical solidarity' to control the socially constructed aspects of territory, thereby bringing the interstate border disputes leading to wars.

This hypothesis lead us to suggest the following set of interactions between two states, for example let us assume A and B are two bordering states.

- An ethnic group experiences increasing persecution from state B where it does not have access to power, mobilizes or challenges state B’s authority/sovereignty which leads state B to counter mobilize against the ethnic group.

- If members of the same ethnic group share power or are dominant in state A and state B fall within “Politically relevant international Environment”39 (PRIE) then state A will take interest in the relations between state B and the ethnic group, and will respond to the situation by increasing its hostility towards State B.

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39 PRIE developed by Maoz and “represents the set of political units whose structure, behaviour, and policies have a direct impact on the focal states’ political and strategic calculus. A states PRIE contains all other states with which it is geographically contiguous and all major and regional powers that are capable of interacting militarily with the focal state.

In other words, the predicament of an ethnic group in different countries can have a significant impact on the intensity of conflictual relations between them, especially if its members are treated differently by the two states. Differential status of co-ethnics is hypothesized to motivate co-ethnics to act on behalf of their ethnic brethren. The nature of ethnic conflicts around the world suggests that if members of the ethnic group are predominant polity members\(^\text{40}\) in one state and are disadvantaged in the other, the interactions of the states that share co-ethnics is likely to be conflictual.

Also, the above discussion and cases indicates that the linkage between the evolution of regime type and its interaction with domestic ethnic group, wherein the basis of regime legitimacy and institutions are weak, creates a critical role for third parties (viz. state/states, governmental agencies, international military alliances) upsetting the regional security relationships with far-reaching repercussions for international security.

Ethnic affinities relate directly to the problem of sovereignty, i.e. the ability of the states to implement authoritative claims over their territories. Efforts to control the flow of people, culture and resources are inherently difficult. Ethnic conflict can expand horizontally when groups in one country prompt those in another to make more extreme demands. In addition, dyads (i.e. pair of states, particularly significant

\(^{40}\) Tilly defines polity members as groups that have 'routine, low-cost access to resources controlled by the government'. Charles Tilly, From Mobilization to Revolution, Random House, New York, 1978, p.52.
in contemporary world affairs is the situation in numerous new states which have achieved independence since the second world war, the post-colonial polytechnic state) with transnational ethnic ties in which a dominant ethnic group concentrates power and resources, and uses them to further its own interests, at the same time attempting and frequently succeeding in keeping the other non-dominant ethnic group or groups in a subordinate or marginalized position will produce higher levels of conflict behaviour than other dyads. This situation may lead, as it has so often done, to general violence, civil war, interstate war and external intervention. India-Pakistan wars over Kashmir; Indian intervention into ethnic conflict in Srilanka, Sino-Indian boarder dispute involving Tibet; External intervention in Afghanistan’s ethnic conflict, creation of Bangladesh indicate a general pattern of high-intensity of ethnic conflict in Southern and South West Asia involving, at least, a pair of states with ethnic groups dispersed across the international border.

Besides elucidating cases of ethnic conflict with negative consequences for international security following findings arise from the exploration of these cases.

i) Geo political location of an ethnic group with transnational ethnic ties in overall ethnic composition of states has negative consequence for interstate-conflict behaviour. Groups in one state that witness ethnic mobilization by ethnic groups in another may increase their political activities. The latter recognizes that internationalization
of demands can both simultaneously encourage internal mobilization and weaken the salience and effectiveness of the state by creating international fora for substate grievances. This legitimation process is facilitated by the existence of supranational organization, and human rights organizations, which provide a forum for subnational ethnic claims. Horizontal linkages also occur through information flows, transnational media networks and the arms trade. In this context, the ethnic diaspora provide both material and symbolic support for politically mobilized ethnic groups. These links are crucial for an ethnic separatist movement to prosper and grow.

ii. Within ethnic conflict setting, transnational affinities are important to an understanding of relationships between states. It is widely debated whether affinities create the conditions for diffusion. Some argue that ethnic conflicts are self-limiting by virtue of their particularist trait, while others suggest that affinities can pose security threat to region concerned. In either instance, ethnic affinity is viewed not only as an opportunity to be exploited by external states. Groups on which elites rely for support also perceive these international ethnic linkages as potentially useful. Either way, transnational ethnic affinities rise among most groups in the international system, especially those that have undergone diasporic migrations as well as divided by borders drawn by the colonialists. The Russians in Ukraine and Baltic, the Tamils in South India, the Chinese of South East Asia,
and the Tibetan groups in the West are some of the prominent examples.

Centrality of Territoriality: Implications for Ethnic Conflict and Security

The role of territoriality has been acknowledged as the central stake in ethnic conflicts. Colin Gray writes, "[armed] conflict cannot occur beyond geography." After a relatively silent period during the cold war, geopolitical themes such as territoriality and boon diaries have found their way back to the study of international relations as with many other social sciences as a part of discussions on globalization, ethnicity and collapse of empires. This revival is also distinct from the earlier geopolitical schools and behaviourlist approach as it is based on the realization that geographical space and social processes are eventually dependent. Territorial organization of power is by no means distinctive of modern times, or of advanced modern state. In Grosby's view, it is rather a fundamental feature of all human societies. Against the view that eroding state sovereignty means eroding territoriality, he argues that the significance of territoriality remains a fundamental constitutive element of contemporary societies. Highlighting the ethnic aspect of territory, Anthony Smith argues that territory is relevant to ethnicity not because it is actually possessed nor even for its 'objective' characteristics of


climate, terrain and location but because of an alleged and felt symbiosis between a certain piece of earth and its community. If the people constitute the soul, territory is the body of collective self. It is the mythical and poetic character of territory described in family narrative, songs, paintings and pieces of literature that are important for ethnic groups. As a result, no direct personal experience is required for a strongly felt tie of identity. Furthermore, although homelands typically entail ‘ideas’ of sacred places and centres, sites of historical memory or natural beauty, even ordinary landscapes can become significant in the consciousness of ethnic groups.\footnote{Anthony D. Smith, \textit{The Ethnic Origin of Nations}, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986, p.28}

In other words, territoriality implies not only the physical but also the social and psychological aspects of space. Yet the basic issue of whether such apparently mythical value put on territory can be given a legitimate status by other groups, who also have interests in the territory, remains basically the same. The problem is, ethnic boundaries only seldom coincide with state boundaries and, at the same time, territory is a vital constituent of the identity of a state. States value territory beyond its rational strategic and economic value. Dawa Norbu captures the conflictual nature of ethnic and state boundaries in terms of ‘Mono ethnic state and Polyethnic social systems’. He suggests that the monopoly of the “dominant ethnic groups” over the exercise of state power is fairly universal\footnote{Dawal Norbu, \textit{Culture and Politics of Third World Nationalism}, Routledge, London, 1992, p.192}. Thus,
Territoriality for modern state is a strategy to maintain the hegemony of dominant ethnic group over the non-dominant groups based on sovereign geographical units delimited by single lines.

In terms of international security, cold war norms and their underlying values focussed on protecting state sovereignty challenged ever increasingly by 'global' threats such as ecological degradation, refugee flows, demographic changes ethnic conflicts etc. These threats have in common that their consequences are not limited to specific countries. These global threats of non-military nature to international security kicked off a debate as part of the process of widening the security agenda during periods of cold war, détente and was reinforced after its end. 45 The debate continues primarily because few of the effects and hardly any of the causes of the 'new threats' can be countered by military means.

Among the three main bases of territorial claims—national borders, history and self-determination, it is the last that has been given most attention in the conflicts involving ethnic groups. Although, there have been efforts to resolve the issue by both legal and political means, they have not been able to decree or define away the use of violence as final arbiter.

International law and conventions have devised referendum as the final sanction of the right to self-determination but the attempts to

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hold a referendum has thus far required a serious use of force. An apparent exception to the need for violence is Quebec, which was able to take advantage of its preexistence as a province to impose votes on self-determination without much violence.

If the ethnic conflict has an identifiable territorial claim, a number of territorial solutions are available, principle variations are of two types: regional autonomy or federation, and secession. Although, both autonomous region and federation can contain varying of degree of self-rule, they differ from each other mainly in their relations with sub-state units. Whereas autonomous regions usually enjoy a status different from the rest of the country, the federalized regions make up the entire country and have similar internal governance structures.

Opinions and practices, at least since second world war, have favoured the maintenance of existing sovereign states, but what has become abundantly clear through the 1980’s & 90s is that one cannot understand the implications of ethnic conflict for international security without transcending the traditional framework of international relations theory. Here, the assumptions of mainstream realist thinking that the state is the only subject of security and that anarchy is an unavoidable condition of international relations ignores the increased saliency of non-military issues and emergence of new actors viz. ethnic group in international relations.

Therefore, a theoretical approach capable of seizing the effects of ethnic conflict on international security must focus on the aspects of change occurring at different levels: in the nature of international
system; regarding the relative importance of actors; and regarding the context of security.

A constructivist approach is therefore, far better suited to international security than mainstream realist security studies. Underlying this approach is the security concept of Arnold Wolfers, which qualifies “Security, in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats against acquired values and, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked.”46 Instead of ill conceptualized threats to an outdated security concept, a constructivist approach links international system, where, new security units, such as ethnic groups define threats with regard to what they perceive as their core values to be protected. As a result the importance of state security defined in terms of sovereignty will be diminished compared to societal security defined in terms of identity: the definition of security broadens the ties it is linked to specific states and applied to the regional or even global level. Due to collective threat perceptions and a developed sense of community, states will have to reinterpret their notion of sovereignty which is being challenged everyday by the new realities of world politics.