

Chapter 1

Introduction

Divisions within small states have in recent years been the most important cause of war.¹ This study focuses on violence or threat of violence induced by small-state ethnic conflict as a collective great-power agenda issue. Its interests are both empirical and prescriptive. Empirically, it uses contemporary and historical cases to understand the opportunities and limitations for major states coping with conflict between small-state ethnic communities. At present, the great powers lack agreement about attainable conflict reduction objectives when foreign domestic antagonists, such as those recently encountered in Somalia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, are unwilling or unable to practice restraint. Prescriptively, the study seeks to enlarge the ability of those states to plan for and to defuse such conflict. It is guided by the assumption that the major states cannot easily reject involvement when intrastate small-power conflict is increasingly perceived as an international-order problem. The great powers have traditionally exercised responsibility for maintaining world order because of their distinctive role in the hierarchy of states.²

While collective great-power intervention in small-state ethnic conflict dates from the nineteenth century, scholarly and public concern about it came about only after the Soviet-American Cold War ended in the early 1990s.³ As several new UN peacekeeping programs were then initiated, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali argued strongly for collective international intervention in small-state domestic conflict. Boutros-Ghali maintained that such intervention should be designed to facilitate “preventive diplomacy” (PD), which he defined as “action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when

they occur.”⁴ Arguing that the United Nations should widen its role in heading off violence within and between states before it happened, he implied that the major powers would work to support this vision, which depended upon major-state resources. However, he did not discuss how great-power support would be forthcoming.

Eight years later, a UN panel on peace operations headed by Lakhdar Brahimi noted the need for great-power action to counter states that instigate and support conflict within their neighbors, and referred by implication to the major states when it observed, “If a [UN] operation is given a mandate to protect civilians, . . . it also must be given the specific resources to carry out that mandate.”⁵ The major states have the necessary capabilities to provide for such a mandate, and thus have a veto over providing it, but they have often in the past tolerated a mismatch of UN capabilities with UN objectives. The Brahimi panel report did not show how the great powers can be persuaded to allocate to UN peace operations the priority they deserve.

Michael Lund, specifically addressing PD requirements, has called for “explicitly multilateral and multilevel” norms and procedures to provide for “more regularized [and] widely established arrangements” so as to “preempt crises rather than wait for them to erupt.”⁶ Comprehensive capabilities for early warning of potential crises would be put into place and applied as needed in particular disputes to keep response time between warnings and preventive action as short as possible.⁷ But Lund noted that great-power action to sustain a PD regime was in doubt: “[T]he task of galvanizing and maintaining resolve behind . . . coherent . . . [preventive] action is perhaps harder today than during the Cold War, especially if the action contemplated is likely to be multilateral. In an era of scattered, local conflicts, major powers appear to see few reasons to intervene in conflicts that do not *yet* greatly affect their national interests.”⁸ To deal with this problem, Lund recommended “downloading” prevention responsibilities from the major powers to the UN Security Council and to local actors within particular regions.⁹

This study attempts to fill in the gap in present-day understanding of the linkage between great-power action and commonly understood PD requirements. Sympathetic to the contemporary need for great-power-inspired PD, the study is particularly concerned with *collective* great-power PD action as an alternative to PD initiated independently by any single great power. It argues that collectively initiated PD is a potential enhancer of PD effectiveness in relation to small-state antagonists, and an underappreciated instrument of great-power leadership in this area.

This introductory chapter spells out this study’s distinctive preoccupations, its key issues, and its “focused comparison” methodology.

FOCUS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the present study is to better understand the roles and potential of the major states, working together and supported where possible by international organizations such as the UN, in the practice of PD. It provides a context to understand how the great powers affect PD practice, and to reconcile the stature and role of the great powers with PD requirements. It defines PD as the application of international values to a dispute that is local or regional but which has substantial international implications.

Specifically, the study breaks new ground in four ways. First, it explicitly takes account of great-power relationships, tracing how they affect major-state will and capability to defuse small-state conflict. Given the prominence of the great powers in the international system, this study in effect probes the international system as a causal variable upon internal small-state conflict.¹⁰ The focus is on the impact that international conditions, including the hierarchy of states, the international balance of power, and the concert of major states, have upon the parties to small-state domestic ethnic conflict.¹¹ Although the study also traces the effect of small-state behavior on the large powers, it was undertaken in the expectation that international values would be primarily promoted in the world by the major states; that their strength and influence would preponderate; and that international value promoters therefore require study.¹²

Second, the chief conceptual contribution made in this study is to distinguish two distinct PD functions in relation to small-state conflict. Collective *intervention* is directed to defusing conflict between the primary antagonists in conciliatory or coercive fashion. Intervention supplies the potential for negotiation and communication between the primary antagonists when, as often happens, channels are otherwise lacking for these purposes. Collective *insulation*, unrelated in itself to the needs of the primary antagonists, defuses the conflict as an irritant to great-power relations. Insulation heads off unilateral great-power action that, by opportunistically supporting one antagonist or another in the local dispute, interferes with the ability of the great powers to bring collective influence to bear upon them. It also creates a great-power consensus about the terms to be offered to the primary antagonists. Intervention and insulation comprise the international values in the definition of PD adopted here. The definition is broad enough to allow for both elements, but it also invites disaggregating them.

Third, in examining the interplay between the great powers and small-state antagonists, the study anticipates changing great-power relationships

and motivations toward the local conflict as that conflict evolves. Because great-power orientations can change, the diffidence commonly shown by the major states in the early stages of local conflict should not be accepted as a constant; that is to say, aggravated local conflict can energize collective great-power PD in a manner that factions in local conflict may not have anticipated.¹³ This in turn opens up potential for later great-power intervention in aggravated, violent, and polarized local conflict. From this point of view, PD is not “do or die”: even if they initially fail, great-power efforts at intervention and insulation persist. Those efforts should become more effective over time as the major states learn from their mistakes. The PD definition adopted here thus raises the issue of contrasting the effectiveness of later as against earlier great-power intervention in local conflict.

Finally, this study aims at strengthening those who would apply international values in the contemporary period. It does so by seeking diagnoses of policy problems encountered in a variety of PD experiences, so that developments giving rise to those problems can be better appreciated and anticipated. The focus of these diagnoses is the gap between what Alexander George has termed “gross capabilities” and the “usable options” of states¹⁴ in defusing small-power intrastate ethnic conflict. What were the reasons why the great powers were not able to apply their gross capabilities in the most effective way? What enabled them eventually to mobilize usable resources? What problems in their own relations and in their relationship with the primary antagonists did they have to overcome before they succeeded in interventionist PD? The study also strives to offer policy prescriptions linked to different types of collective great-power PD. Extended comparison of cases, taking into account international and local conflict conditions, PD techniques employed by the great powers, and divergences in the case material, underpin the study’s diagnoses and prescriptions. While such analysis can hardly assure PD success under every condition, it can identify circumstances in which advance planning and a more refined menu of choice is likely to make a difference.

COLLECTIVE GREAT-POWER ACTION

PD can be exercised by great powers singly or together, by regional states, by international organizations, or by international civil servants such as the

UN secretary general. The focus here upon collective great-power activity is prompted by (1) the frequent link between great-power intervention in small-state disputes and the depth of great-power unity; (2) the presumption that collective action is likely to have a greater impact upon the local antagonists than major states acting individually; and (3) the recent decline in the willingness of specific major states to intervene independently in small-state disputes.

First, the link between great-power collective intervention in small-power disputes and the depth of great-power unity takes different forms. Major-state *unity* is an obstacle to intervention if the great powers give other issues greater weight and are determined to react to local ethnic conflict in slow, plodding fashion. Alternatively, great-power *disunity* can be the problem, the major states being unable to deal with the local problem in concerted fashion. Or the disunity impels the major states to find a consensus in order to prevent a breach in their own relationship that could lead to hostilities. Together, these possibilities highlight how great-power unity depends either on reaching a common position toward small-state problems, or else upon the belief that only such unity can create a solution for the small-state difficulties.

Second, collective great-power action increases major-state leverage upon the primary antagonists while reducing the incentives for opportunistic unilateral major-state action in support of one or another of them. As already suggested, successful PD requires bringing the superior power of the major states to bear upon the weaker ones. In recent years, the potential for exerting this power has on balance been increased by the weakness of political institutions and the low level of internal unity in many small-states. As Barry Buzan has pointed out, weak states are most distinguished by a “high level of concern with domestically generated threats to the security of the government,” and, as a result, “large-scale use of force [is] a major and continuing element in the domestic political life of the nation.”¹⁵ This condition creates an *objective* weak-state dependence upon outside patrons, and also a *subjective* dependence that varies according to the insecurity of the leaders. As intrastate conflict in such countries intensifies, the major states are likely to be prime candidates to provide assistance, and whether they respond separately or collectively can make a significant difference for weak-state conditions. Should the major states respond separately, they will invite the weak-state regime and its challengers to compete for allies, with the weak state becoming then a contending issue among the major states.¹⁶ If the great

powers respond collectively, they are better positioned to limit military assistance so that the domestic conflict is not intensified and, on the other hand, to expose the primary antagonists to alternatives to violence. In general, prospects for effective PD seem enhanced when collective great-power action permits encouraging and if necessary imposing restraint on weak-state primary antagonists.

Finally, the focus upon collective great-power action is supported by the growing reluctance of individual major states in the post-Cold War period to intervene unilaterally in deep-seated small-power intrastate disputes. This development increases individual major-state incentives to seek collective responsibility for intervening, and to apply more stringent intervention criteria. The May 1994 American Presidential Decision Directive on reforming multilateral peace operations reflects this trend, tightening as it did conditions under which the United States would participate, either with or without American combat troops, in multilateral military action. Although originally envisioned as a grant of authority to the UN to substitute for unilateral American military action, the directive was sharply revised following the death of eighteen American soldiers in a peacekeeping mission in Somalia, and the turning away by armed Haitian demonstrators of ships carrying American and Canadian peacekeepers prepared to land in Haiti. As Madeleine K. Albright, then American ambassador to the UN, put it in May 1994, "The U.N. has not yet demonstrated the ability to respond effectively when the risk of combat is high and the level of local cooperation is low."¹⁷

Since many weak states can threaten to fight outside forces while downplaying a willingness to cooperate with them, and since the use of force will often be indispensable for outside influence upon the primary antagonists, it is not surprising that the strong states are highly skeptical about PD. However, assuming that military operations launched from outside remain *objectively* important if intrastate problems are to be surmounted, and assuming, as seems reasonable, that anticipating intervention and insulation problems ahead of time can assist collective great-power planning, the focus on collective great-power action remains timely. Collective action appears to be a precondition for overriding strong American skepticism about multilateral peacekeeping operations. Because of the link, already referred to, between such operations and PD in difficult cases, great-power consensus is likely to be indispensable for PD, whether or not it is directed through the UN.

THE GREAT POWERS AND SMALL-POWER INTRASTATE CONFLICT

Intrastate conflicts that have been objects of great-power concerns include, according to one listing, “violent civilian power struggles, military coups, militarized ideological campaigns, insurgencies, civil wars, and revolutions.”¹⁸ These are all widespread; cause great suffering; affect and involve neighboring states through refugee flows, outside military assistance and bases, hot-pursuit operations, and outside instigation of internal conflict; engage the interests of major states and international organizations; and are major agenda items for the international community.¹⁹ Collective great-power interests and agendas can be immediately affected by small-state internal conflict, or by the prospect of it, or they could be affected by it in delayed fashion, after the conflict is played out for a time. The great powers often internationalize local conflict, exporting international values to, and widening concerns about, local disputes. They also localize and particularize international concerns, connecting major states and diplomatic frameworks to specific disputes.

When international interests and agendas are linked to small-state internal conflict, the scope of great-power activity depends upon four considerations: (1) the will and capability of the major states; (2) relations between major states and the primary antagonists; (3) international norms of outside intervention in domestic conflict; and (4) the timing of international engagement in local conflict. First, the major states tend to be much less concerned about the intrastate small-power conflict than about relationships among themselves, shaped by their respective international needs. For this reason, insulating the small-power problem as a great-power issue usually receives higher major-state priority than intervention in the dispute. Collective intervention is often delayed until after the emergence of local conflict, as the major states slowly establish common positions, and it depends heavily on the consent of the primary antagonists. However, though the great powers usually have low intrinsic concerns for the intrastate small-power issues, they can have strong extrinsic ones if some major states are perceived to be independently willing and able to intervene in them, to the detriment of those who do not. Great powers otherwise inclined to intervene unilaterally are offered inducements to join with other major states to ensure that the conflict remains insulated. Insulation is also promoted by rapid collective intervention in

those cases, dampening the chances of unilateral action. On the other hand, failure to insulate the conflict can be very problematic for the major states. Great-power persistence in intervening unilaterally or in remaining outside the great-power coalition usually leads to increased international tensions and to the threat of great-power war.

When major states perceive that international stability depends directly on a local problem, they will attach high priority to it. International impacts upon the local conflict will then tend to be considerable relative to local or noninternational ones. That is, even if local conflict is aggravated and protracted and the local antagonists polarized, the great powers will tend to collectively intervene more forcefully, and be more strongly motivated to exert influence upon the primary antagonists. On the other hand, when international stability does not appear to depend on the local problem, collective intervention will tend to be weaker and less effective. Noninternational causes of local ethnic conflict will tend to be much more important relative to international ones, and the low priority attached by the major states to the small-state conflict weakens their leverage to affect the behavior of the primary antagonists.²⁰

Second, primary antagonists in local conflict are not internationally inactive: they can oppose, delay, stir controversy, and act as spoilers, blunting the effect of interventionist PD and causing it to fail when it depends on the antagonists' consent. The primary antagonists are also usually much more strongly motivated toward each other and toward outside states than the latter are toward them. A difference in perspective about the intrastate conflict also characterizes the primary antagonists, on one hand, and interested outside states and organizations, on the other. The former view their conflict "inside out," giving importance to external actors only insofar as the latter provide assistance with sustaining the positions and strengths of the primary antagonists. Obtaining outside assistance—in the form of material aid to combatants, humanitarian assistance to civilians, and political support in the form of recognition or influence upon the adversary—is essential when, as is often the case, no one primary antagonist is able to dominate its opponent. The major powers and international organizations, by contrast, view the intrastate conflict "outside in," treating it as significant only in light of its effect upon international stability and order.

Of the primary antagonists, the central regime as the recognized government often has larger resources to resist and impede outside intervention and to affect and benefit from it than does its challenger, giving it leverage upon the major states that the challenger usually does not possess. The con-

stituted government ordinarily has greater standing to request international intervention, and it can make the request anticipating that intervention will enhance its ability to suppress its opposition; when the government no longer feels this purpose is being served, it is better positioned to oppose, retard, or systematically interfere with external efforts, even when publicly favoring them.

Paradoxically, the leverage of the central regime upon the great powers increases when it is most vulnerable to its challenger, and when the regime is highly valued by the international community. In such a case, weakness and formal independence give it enormous bargaining advantages. (This condition is often linked to what may be termed “fictitious” borders, which the central regime cannot police and the challenging group can consequently capitalize upon to reap full benefits from neighboring state assistance.) Although the central regime then lacks actual independence, the international community’s determination to prevent it from being overrun enables the regime to inject its own demands into international negotiations.

Third, international norms of nonintervention in the domestic affairs of states have a mixed effect upon international responses to intrastate conflict. On one hand, the norms provide a defense for regimes defending their prerogatives—that is, to be supreme within their territorial jurisdiction. They are repeatedly cited to protect states against great-power interference, and even more to protect peoples within a state against domination from outside. “[T]he norm of nonintervention,” Lori Fisler Damrosch has written, “aims at securing the rights of people within a state to exercise political freedoms without external domination. [The] values of conflict containment and autonomy are at the heart of the international legal system’s commitment to a norm against external involvement in internal affairs.”²¹

Nonintervention norms and sovereign prerogatives reinforce the disinclination of the major states to intervene in intrastate small-power disputes, and when the great powers do intervene, norms and prerogatives incline them to move slowly and deliberately and to rely upon the consent of the primary antagonists. On the other hand, the scope of domestic jurisdiction is generally believed to have narrowed in recent years, partly because international organizations have intruded into the national life of states, and partly because governments at times have seriously damaged the security concerns of their peoples.²² Political challengers have also contributed to this shift by trampling upon the rights of individuals with the aid of neighboring states.

Finally, two questions of timing affect the scope of international engagement in local conflict: first, whether intervention occurs prior to violence

and polarization between the antagonists, and second, whether with the onset of polarization the antagonists perceive a hurting stalemate that they could not resolve in any other way.²³ Receptivity of the primary antagonists to outside mediation is often diminished once violence sets in because the ensuing civil strife hardens outlooks and divisions. Prompt outside intervention is justified by the difficulty of negotiating an end to civil wars, a problem reflected in the apparent rarity of negotiated settlements to such wars. As Michael E. Brown has argued, “[I]f distant powers or international organizations are going to take action to manage conflicts, they should act sooner rather than later; probabilities of success are higher and costs are lower.”²⁴ Intervention can be most efficacious prior to local confrontation, before positions have hardened. It has also been argued, however, that intrastate conflict is most ripe for settlement only following the onset of local stalemate, when civil strife aids international mediation in the later stages of the conflict. Since each of these ideas is logically compelling, no optimum point for international intervention can be identified.

INTERNAL ETHNIC CONFLICT

This study is limited to concerted great-power intervention in small-power intrastate ethnic conflict, a condition defined by Michael E. Brown as “a dispute about important political, economic, social, cultural, or territorial issues between two or more ethnic communities.”²⁵ Ethnic conflict is conceptualized here as occurring between communities of people whose culture-centered attitudes, associated with ideas of historical descent, are awakened and strengthened vis-à-vis other cultural communities and foster a particular sense of identity. It is a cultural manifestation of an unsatisfactory relationship between politically stronger forces controlling the central institutions and politically weaker ones which do not.²⁶ Culture-centered attitudes are particularly strengthened when ethnic groupings are subjected to political and economic inequality, and have long-standing historical grievances. The focus upon PD in the 1990s was stimulated by a sharp increase in intrastate ethnic conflict. A 1994 study cited an “explosion of ethnopolitical conflicts since the end of the Cold War [that] is, in fact, a continuation of a trend that began as early as the 1960s. It is a manifestation of the enduring tension between states that want to consolidate and expand their power and ethnic groups that want to defend and promote their collective identity and interests.”²⁷

The scope of ethnic conflict, however, varies considerably. Economic issues and cultural suppression are a source of antagonism in some ethnic conflicts, but not in others. Complaints against some central regimes stimulate ethnic challengers to secede from a state, while elsewhere they do not. Ethnic conflict can grow out of deprivation sensed by the weaker antagonist in relation to the stronger, or out of the determination of the stronger antagonist to crush or annihilate the weaker. Such conflict can feature political consciousness, or nationalism, on the part of the cultural groupings; alternatively, political consciousness might be low even as cultural consciousness, from interaction with other cultural groups, is high. As Walker Connor has noted, “[I]n the less modern states, . . . cultural consciousness precedes political consciousness, and . . . cultural consciousness presupposes an awareness of other cultures.”²⁸

Selecting ethnic conflict as a focus for intrastate disunity permits more detailed comparisons between cases than does a more mixed domestic conflict sample. However, conflict between ethnic communities is particularly volatile domestic conflict and hence especially problematic for great-power PD. In the present study, the volatility is reflected in each of the measures affecting the scope of great-power PD discussed in the last section. First, the boundaries of ethnic communities do not coincide with the boundaries of states, but commonly spill across them. Neighboring states can therefore instigate and strengthen the revolt, at times militarily intervening in support of it. Great powers can also become sympathetically involved in intrastate ethnic conflict, transforming it from a low-priority to a high-priority question for other major states anxious to block them from obtaining unilateral advantages. When the local conflict leads to acute tensions between great powers, the major states often quickly act together to prevent the conflict from widening, as has been noted.

Second, intrastate ethnic conflict complicates the relationship between great powers and primary antagonists in two ways. It stresses the weakest points of weak states by challenging the integrity of central institutions. When the central regime is, as often happens in premodern societies, already weak prior to the onset of ethnic confrontation, it is poorly able to protect itself when confrontation occurs and necessarily becomes dependent upon international assistance. That is to say, if the state’s institutions are to be strengthened, outside assistance is often required to advise on and even perform basic governmental needs. The problem is particularly acute when outside states support a revolt against a central regime that militarily cannot protect itself or subdue an opposition that

capitalizes upon poorly policed borders. Survival of the regime is then in doubt, and the international community is called upon to provide lifeline assistance.

Ethnic conflict also paradoxically strengthens weak central regimes by contributing to popular hatreds of other cultural groupings. Members of the dominant culture increasingly depend upon elites to resist internal challengers and outside intervention that does not envision clear-cut governmental superiority over its challenger.²⁹ As elites take advantage of unstable domestic conditions for narrow purposes, they have less incentive to make concessions to the opposing group or to international mediators. Their bargaining position in relation to mediators is enhanced as they manipulate their dependence upon international assistance to demand far-reaching safeguards and protection.

Third, controversies associated with international norms are accentuated by intrastate ethnic conflict. Rising ethnic hatreds and the inability of ethnic communities to bridge political differences stimulate the use of military force to suppress ethnic opposition. Central regimes then cite the international norm of noninterference to effectuate such hard-line effort, claiming the widest prerogative to act as they see fit. Yet excessive suppression has eroded the norm of nonintervention over the longer term and encouraged the international community to demarcate the moral and legal obligation to defend ethnic challengers deprived of rights.

Fourth, volatile relations between ethnic communities importantly affect the timing of effective international mediation. Such conflict is more conducive to violence than other types of intrastate conflict, and also to the polarization, mistrust, and security dilemma brought about by violence.³⁰ Ethnic conflict also tends to bring violence quickly, without plan or strategy but as a reaction to a sense of deprivation, before international mediation can be mobilized. It therefore narrows the window for receiving early warning of confrontation between ethnic groups and for useful early great-power intervention upon warning. Once violence occurs, stopping the fighting becomes a precondition for any other negotiating progress.³¹ Finally, the depth of antagonism and mistrust between the ethnic communities makes it difficult to persuade the antagonists to stop fighting for more than short respites, and to accept a hurtful stalemate. Diminishing the opportunity for early collective intervention in the dispute, ethnic violence thus also appears to diminish the opportunity for later intervention.

COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

This study concentrates on the interplay between the major states and ethnic antagonists in multiethnic states in eight selected cases, employing comparative analysis of these cases (table 1.1). The burden of the study is that comparative analysis of cases can uncover generalizations. Its method, structured, focused comparison, employs case study as part of a set of questions directed to understanding a problem broader in scope than any single case. While study of one case could, according to Alexander George, be “a means of stimulating the imagination in order to discern important *new* general problems, identify possible theoretical solutions, and formulate potentially generalizable relations that were not previously apparent,”³² many cases directed to the same problem can have cumulative effect and theoretical value. “[O]ne might consider,” George has written, “how a *series* of heuristic and plausibility probe case studies might be employed in order to achieve cumulation. By viewing heuristic cases and plausibility probes within the framework of the strategy of controlled comparison it may be possible to cumulate the findings and to employ them as an admittedly weak, but still useful, form of hypothesis assessment that falls short of rigorous hypothesis testing.”³³

Focused comparison serves three purposes in this study. First, it highlights within circumscribed conditions important great-power motives for collective PD, the range of feasible collective diplomatic action, and the consequences of such diplomacy, each reflected across case lines and suggestive of broader tendencies that are subject to further testing. Second, it suggests limits to the generalizations, while also establishing commonalities. Third, it assists policy interests by allowing an inquiry into what might have induced more effective great-power action.

TABLE 1.1
Cases Studied in This Project

(1)	Belgian Revolution (1830–1838)
(2)	Greek Revolution (1821–1832)
(3)	Bosnian Revolution (1875–1878) (Bosnia I)
(4)	Armenian Unrest in the Ottoman Empire (1878–1914)
(5)	German/Lithuanian Conflict in the Memel (1918–1939)
(6)	Belgian Congo Conflict (1960–1964)
(7)	Cyprus Conflict (1960–present)
(8)	Croat/Muslim/Serb Conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992–1995) (Bosnia II)

Deriving generalizations from the case material requires operationalizing independent and dependent variables at the outset.³⁴ The variable to be explained—the dependent variable here—is the primary antagonist decision to accept or not accept great-power PD proposals. For primary antagonists to accept PD, either their attitudes, positions, and relationships need to change, or incentives must be provided to reconcile them to PD proposals. The effectiveness of great-power PD directed to local conflict cannot be discussed without referring to primary antagonist attitudes, positions, and relationships.

The causal factor bearing upon the primary antagonist decision—the independent variable in this analysis—is the collective major-state motivation to intervene in the local conflict. This motivation generates cooperative action between great powers to consult, act, and plan together in relation to the local conflict.³⁵ The motivation can be stronger or weaker, depending on the interests of the major states. If their collective motivation to act is low, the major great powers are reluctant to cooperate, mutually suspicious, and intent on preserving their prerogatives to act independently; if their motivation is high, they will be more disposed to cooperate, overcome their mutual suspicions, and be sympathetic to multilateral action. The study does not explicitly compare collective and independently initiated PD, and thus cannot prove that collective PD is more effective than its counterpart. However, it is driven by the common-sense assumption that collective action has larger potential to influence the primary antagonists than does unilateral PD effort. That is, associations between highly motivated great powers are presumed to enhance the chances that a framework mutually acceptable to the primary antagonists can be produced to satisfactorily manage local ethnic conflict.

This study was not conceived on the basis of any well-developed theoretical framework, hypotheses linking collective great-power activity and the primary antagonists not being yet available when this project began. The present study, as far as is known, is the first to investigate it empirically.³⁶ It has been motivated by the increasing policy attention great-power PD has received, in light of the proliferation of small-state ethnic conflict, and the much-commented-upon difficulties experienced by the major states in dealing with such conflict. In short, the policy importance of PD has justified proceeding with this study despite the absence of theoretical insight into it.

To move from the particular to general, independent and dependent variables must vary and their variance be given full play. However, specify-

ing independent and dependent variables even in their most simplified, two-option form has analytical utility. The combination between them in this form yields a four-fold matrix (table 1.2).

The absence of a general theory of PD must be kept in mind when examining this matrix. The preconditions and reasons for reaching one combination rather than another are issues for the present study, but no claim is made that the study will yield a general theory. Rather than establish universally preponderating tendencies, case analysis is designed to highlight divergent patterns forming the building blocks for contingent, situationally grounded generalizations. As George has observed, the user of the controlled comparison method “seeks to identify the *conditions under which each distinctive type of causal pattern occurs* rather than attempting to address the question of *how often* each outcome and/or causal pattern does occur or can be expected to occur.”³⁷

The matrix addresses options associated with PD as a process whereby the major states seek to prevail upon the primary antagonists to change their behavior. These options anticipate much of the drama of the case analysis to follow. The matrix displays the contrast between a coercive-minded and a conciliatory-minded great-power coalition, a contrast reflecting strong and weak motivations to intervene, respectively. It displays how great-power influence efforts by no means invariably dominate

TABLE 1.2
A Simplified Model of Independent and Dependent Variables

		Dependent Variable: Receptivity of Primary Antagonists	
		<i>Acceptance</i>	<i>Nonacceptance</i>
Independent Variable: Great-Power Motivation	Strong	Successful coercive intervention	Misperception between primary antagonist and great-power coalition in aggravated local conflict
	Weak	Successful conciliatory intervention	PD provides force-dampening but no reconciliation

primary antagonist thinking. And it invites explanations for the failure of PD intervention initiatives. PD may fail because the great powers rival each other more than they cooperate. It may fail because one or more major states persist in independently taking sides in the local conflict, bolstering primary-antagonist will or ability to reject collective great-power PD. And it may fail because of the depth of suspicion of the primary antagonists toward each other or the great powers. Collective PD may fail even if great-power motivation to intervene is strong, as a primary antagonist in aggravated local conflict misjudges the depth of major-state commitment. And collective PD may at times succeed even if great-power motivation is weak, depending on the relationship and interests of the primary antagonists. These possibilities, which might otherwise be neglected, point to the need for careful whole-case analysis that can distinguish ultimate PD success from prior failure.

THE CASES

Finding generalizations about the PD process is difficult not only because PD is delicate and complex, but also because of the considerable variation between and within PD cases. First, the present study is designed to escape the limitation of large multicase comparisons, which is that they “[do] not capture the details and nuances of each particular communal group’s traits, grievances, and conflicts.”³⁸ In-depth study of eight cases reported upon here is ideal for combining “details and nuances” with generalizations.³⁹

Second, the study strives for more diversity in the case sample than is commonly allowed for, because it employs historical and contemporary cases. The logic for doing so is threefold. First, older cases—even if largely forgotten today—are usually better documented than widely-known recent ones. Second, the cultural awareness of peoples that shaped ethnic conflict was already facilitated by social communication within and across ethnic lines in nineteenth-century Europe. And third, the major states were as busy coping with these conflicts in the nineteenth as in the twentieth century; while many fewer cases of small-state ethnic conflict arose prior to 1945 than afterward, a larger proportion of the former occasioned international attention because they challenged major-state territorial empire, the building and maintaining of which were more widespread prior to 1945 than afterward. Ethnic conflict in the earlier period at times directly affected the actual and potential balance of power between the major states.

To be sure, the research task would have remained the same whatever the PD cases selected, namely, abstracting from apparently idiosyncratic elements of the cases and uncovering patterns applicable to the contemporary period. Further, it is difficult to establish the representativeness of any sample of eight cases. For his part, George has argued that controlled comparison remains an important analytical method even if the cases are not representative of the general universe of instances of interest. “The desideratum that guides selection of cases in the controlled comparison approach,” he has written, “is not numbers but *variety*. . . . [T]he investigator in designing the study will either seek cases in which the outcome of the dependent variable differed or cases having the same outcome but a different explanation for it.”⁴⁰

A third source of diversity is the enormous variability of the PD process, even within cases. For example, great powers can change their level of engagement in the local dispute. When PD requirements are greater than the level of mobilization of their resources, the major states must either deepen their commitment to reach a settlement in the local conflict, or else withdraw. Their choice between persuasion and coercion as PD techniques, which reflects their level of PD commitment, is also changeable. They can employ only one of these techniques to achieve both a military and political settlement, or vary their use of the techniques when dealing with military and political questions. The choice of techniques depends on whether the primary antagonists agree on separating or continuing to be part of the same state, on whether their relationship is violent, and on whether certain transition effects of the local conflict—including neighboring states’ involvement, byproduct effects upon civilians, and primary-antagonist challenges to major-state pacification efforts—intrude to stimulate sharpened major-state involvement in the local conflict. Much of the PD drama is in deepening great-power involvement in the local conflict.

The primary antagonists also illustrate variability within cases, seeking on a competitive basis to influence the great powers to intervene on their behalf. Indeed, the onset of great-power intervention typically occurs because the central regime or its ethnic challenger demonstrates sufficient influence with the major states to cause them to intervene. This involvement is always linked to an important discontinuity in the relationship between the primary ethnic antagonists—that is, to the onset of more severe conflict or confrontation between them.

Moving from the particular to the general, the present study focuses upon three issues of interest in all the cases: (1) how the great powers come

TABLE 1.3
Core Empirical Questions

1.	What significant early warning signs of domestic unrest appeared in the cases?
2.	Were these signs perceived by great-power leaders?
3.	How did information at the disposal of policymakers about these and other indicators affect international intervention?
4.	What problems for the great powers in gaining important information were presented in the cases?
5.	How strong was the political will of great-power leaders to deal with the problem of civil strife?
6.	How important were differences among the great powers in forging a collective response to the unrest?
7.	How important were these differences and informational shortcomings for the success or failure of intervention?

to be collectively engaged in the small-state ethnic conflict and how their engagement deepens; (2) how and why the primary antagonists accept or reject PD proposals from the major states; and (3) whether the great powers are warned, or could have been warned, about impending confrontation between the local ethnic antagonists in time to defuse it before it becomes critical.

An interest in controlled comparison guides the preparation of profiles for each of the cases selected for study here. Core empirical questions are asked of each of these cases (table 1.3). Analysis of the cases is also controlled. First, to derive generalizations in spite of the case variety, analysis repeatedly highlights apparently important distinctions between the cases, often by using typologies. Commonalities within these distinctions are then made explicit, and hypotheses are derived in the course of probing the distinctions and the commonalities.

OUTLINE OF THIS STUDY

The remainder of this chapter summarizes the content of this study. Chapter 2 spells out the distinction between insulation and intervention as forms of PD. It outlines a PD typology based upon the motivation of the major powers to intervene in local ethnic conflict; this motivation may be high or low or shift from low to high. Chapter 3 argues that great-power relationships in different eras can be fruitfully compared on the basis of long-standing, empirically verified efforts of the major states to collectively address

small-state conflict. The chapter shows how PD diplomacy is shaped by Tight Concert, Loose Concert, and Prevailing Opposition patterns of great-power relationships. In each of these patterns, great-power PD directed to local ethnic conflict is a consequence of “outside in” calculations by the major states.

Profiles of each of the eight PD cases analyzed in this study are provided in chapter 4. They focus upon the core empirical questions listed in this chapter. Chapters 5 through 9 focus on the interplay between the great powers and the primary antagonists over the entire local conflict cycle. On the great-power side, the focus is especially on the changeable, collectively perceived interests shaping PD. When addressing the primary antagonists, the study gives heavy attention to their relationship and to their dependence upon outside states.

Chapter 5 concentrates on the emergence of local ethnic conflict and the local consequences of great-power PD. It shows how primary antagonist calculations contribute to such diplomacy. It argues that political grievances of the ethnic challenger are a much more important stimulator of ethnic conflict in our cases than nationalism, making the challenger group more dependent upon the major powers. Chapter 6, on the shaping of collective PD agendas, discusses insulation and intervention as PD objectives, and also the timing of great-power initiatives. It argues that insulation has been easier for the great powers to realize than intervention, and that insulationist PD shapes interventionist PD.

Chapters 7 and 8 focus on alternate PD techniques. Chapter 7 considers conciliation as a tool of great-power influence for reconciling the antagonists and for tension-reducing, force-dampening efforts. It concludes that collective conciliation in the cases is generally of limited utility, but that force dampening is more significant than are reconciliation efforts. Intensification of local ethnic conflict stimulates conciliatory crisis management measures. Chapter 8 deals with coercive PD. It points out that, in contrast to conciliatory great-power responses, coercive measures are usually delayed and therefore more subject to transitional developments that deepen great-power involvement, including humanitarian emergency, military intervention by secondary states, and, where international forces intervene in the local conflict arena, provocations by one of the primary antagonists against those forces. The chapter emphasizes how great-power relationships endure in spite of shifts and complications in relations between the major states and the primary antagonists.

Chapter 9 deals with the PD endgame, and especially how great-power initiatives come to be successfully implemented. It distinguishes between

political and military aspects of settlements, and between conciliatory and coercive techniques, and it argues that applications of coercive PD depend importantly on whether great-power vital interests are present.

Chapter 10 recapitulates the most important arguments of the study and applies them to the needs of contemporary policy officials and planners. The chapter distinguishes between first-cut general conclusions and more important second-cut contingent conclusions. The first of these assist policy officials in diagnosing PD policy problems, while the second—following the PD typology outlined in chapter 2—help in diagnosis and in policy prescription.