

conflicts have emerged⁶. These conflicts between a state and a segment of its population also tend to be highly lethal. Since the end of the Second World War, between 1.6 and 3.9 million unarmed civilians on average have died at the hands of their own state in each decade⁷. In fact, this kind of "state-sponsored" massacre of members of ethnic and political groups has in recent decades claimed more victims than all other forms of deadly conflict, including inter-state conflict. This is consistent with a trend that has emerged in recent years, where the number of classic inter-state wars has been decreasing and the number of intra-state conflicts, particularly in the Third World, is increasing.⁸

Although these disputes have different historical roots and are not easily amenable to universal solutions, they present similarities from which some prescriptive principles of conflict prevention and conflict management could be drawn. To put these conflicts involving ethnic minorities into perspective, it is useful to have some sort of schematic classification of each situation in which ethnic groups interact. The most common situations are⁹:

- (a) Ethnic groups within a state identified as being multi-ethnic or multi-national. Such groups may base their identity on language (Belgium, Canada, Switzerland), religion (Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims in India), nationality (former Soviet Union) or race (South Africa). In such cases, ethnic groups which are different from the dominant or majority nationality may or may not enjoy special legal status, and they are usually in a minority and non-dominant position.
- (b) Ethnic groups within a state that does not formally recognize its own multi-ethnic composition, such as France, Japan, Indonesia, Turkey or numerous African States. Minorities may be regionally based, such as Bretons and Corsicans in France, or Scots and Welsh in Britain, or they may be racial (Blacks in the United States), religious (Copts in Egypt, Catholics in Northern Ireland or the Baha'i in Iran), linguistic (Berbers in Algeria), or tribal (as in Afghanistan), or a combination of several of these elements.
- (c) Minorities that identify with their ethnic kin in a neighbouring state where they have a majority status (such as the Hungarians in Romania, the various Russian minorities in the former Republics of the ex-USSR, the Turks in Bulgaria, the Albanians in Kosovo, the Mexicans in United States).
- (d) Multiple ethnic groups within a state in which none enjoys a particularly dominant position, specifically in recently independent, formerly colonial countries, in which the state itself is a relatively artificial construct; this situation tends to prevail in Africa south of the Sahel.