

# **States, Ethnic Groups and Deterrence: Achieving Some Restraint in Violent Ethnic Conflicts**

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In many respects deterrence and extended deterrence in ethnic conflicts seem very unlikely to succeed. There is a fundamental difficulty in deterring low-level violence since effectively delivering the threat to the opponent is hard; most of the time, the actors on the opposing sides are not fully aware of what the consequences will be should deterrence fail. This problem stems in part from the multiple actors and interested parties that may be involved in such a conflict – a situation that complicates the ability to make a credible threat.

There are, however, cases in which an ethnic group did not cross what could be defined as one of the red lines of an opposing group and exhibited restraint. Thus for example, during the conflict between the Armenians and the Azeris over Nagorno Karabakh and Nakhichevan, in two instances - in 1991, after a massive operation was conducted against the Armenians by the Soviets and the Azeris, and in 1992 and 1993, when the Turks were highly involved in stopping the Armenians from conquering Nakhichevan – there were immediate deterrent threats that were quite affective.

By incorporating insights from the classical theories of deterrence, the emerging literature on deterrence in ethnic conflicts and insights from the Constructivist approach, we show the advantages of using a broader deterrence theory for understanding developments in ethnic conflicts. Our main claim in the paper is that it is highly important to address identity-linked issues when discussing the articulation and effectiveness of threats. Specifically, we argue that reference to situations of extreme violence in the near past have a powerful impact. Such events, not only take part in constituting the identities of the actors, but further influence the context in which future threats are posed and are interpreted. As we demonstrate, such threats can be effective in achieving immediate deterrence. While this is problematic both normatively and with regard to the possibility of maintaining long term general deterrence, interested parties must be aware of these dynamics.

## **Introduction**

In recent years much attention has been given to violent ethnic conflicts, which are seen as highly destabilizing occurrences in the global system. To mention just a few of the problems related to such conflicts – much human suffering, creation of a refugee and internally displaced people problem, and spill over effects to neighboring countries. In addition, many consider this relatively low level violence to be hardly stoppable. However, drawing on the classical deterrence literature and on recent improvements of the theory, the question arises as to whether this pessimistic prediction is the only relevant one.

It is intriguing and challenging to explore the relevance of deterrence theories to ethnic conflict as it relates to different kinds of actors who practice this strategy: the ethnic groups themselves, the government, interventionist actors and multi-national forces. As such, it may help to extend the theories of deterrence and may help to improve our understanding of the ways in which deterrence works (and fails). It is also extremely important to understand how violence in ethnic conflict can be prevented and whether deterrence is an efficient strategy to stabilize such conflicts. Furthermore, using threats is a very common characteristic of ethnic conflicts, and also fundamental prerequisite of deterrence strategy. As such, this kind of research may have important policy oriented implications. These implications also bear a normative dimension since deterrence is considered in the literature as a 'lesser kind

of evil' strategy aimed at preventing aggression. However, scholars cannot take this assumption for granted in all kinds of conflicts and should further explore the dynamics of deterrence in ethnic conflicts. Lastly, methodologically, as Saideman and Zahar suggest, "Just as the study of interstate war needs to focus on the outbreak of war and the existence of peace..." it is also important to systematically study restraint in ethnic conflicts and not just the cases of violence "...since civil and ethnic peace of various forms is far more prevalent than war" (Saideman and Zahar, 2008: 4).

In order to tackle these issues, we first discuss in general the deterrence literature, and the few previous attempts that were made to examine deterrence in ethnic conflicts. Next, we try to address the subject by looking at the existing literature on the outbreak of ethnic violence, and draw from it predictions with regard to the possibility of attaining successful deterrence practices. Later, by elaborating on some concepts taken mainly from the constructivist approach, we highlight the context through which threats, and specifically threats to identity, are interpreted, in order to better understand what might deter ethnic actors. Specifically, we argue that reference to situations of extreme violence in the near past have a powerful impact. Such events, not only take part in constituting the identities of the actors, but further influence the context in which future threats are posed and are interpreted. We argue that referring to events of extreme violence, though insufficient in creating an effective general deterrence (since in the long run they may cause actors to act rather than restrain themselves), may enhance the creditability of threats initiated during a crisis (i.e., immediate deterrence). While we are of course not suggesting this is a venue actors should aspire to, it does raise the importance of recognizing and addressing identity-linked issues while discussing deterrence, and specifically deterrence in ethnic conflicts.

We chose to focus on the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh and in Nakhichevan, since, in addition to the extremely large refugee and displaced people problem it created and the human loss, it provides a case where due to the highly charged relations between the Armenians and the Azeris, who were seen by the Armenians as Turks, important identity-related issues arose. Thus, this case can help in demonstrating the relevance of addressing not only matters concerning physical security, but also threats to the identity of the ethnic actors. Also, similarly to other ethnic conflicts, the struggle between the Armenians and Azeris was not isolated and hence it enables us also to discuss not only immediate direct deterrence but also extended deterrence, as practiced by the Soviets and the Turks.

## **Theoretical Discussion: Deterrence and Ethnic Conflicts**

Although scholars have started to use the concept of deterrence in the study of ethnic conflicts, as well as other related concepts such as arms race (Sislin and Pearson 2001: 60), compellence (Posen 2001: 202-4), security dilemma (Posen 1993), and balance of threat (Lindenstrauss 2006), the study of deterrence in ethnic conflicts is rather scarce. Current research regarding deterrence in ethnic conflict revolves mainly around immediate extended deterrence of interventionist actors. Most studies concentrate on cases in which intervening parties tried to deter a further escalation in violence, rather than preventing the eruption of violence in the first place. Also, the existing literature has usually concentrated on cases in which the U.S has been involved. Although there have been some important developments in recent years, the exploration of extended and direct deterrence of ethnic conflicts is under-studied and not only should it be further developed theoretically and empirically, but there is a

need to study the connections between these two kinds of deterrence with regard to ethnic conflicts. These two strategies of deterrence – extended and direct – may enhance each other and increase the chances that violence be prevented.

When addressing ethnic conflicts and the intra-state level it is important to differentiate between deterrence and repression. First, for theoretical and methodological reasons we are interested in focusing our research upon threats that are aimed at preventing violence rather than measures taken to coerce the opponent. This distinction is to some extent acknowledged by the differentiation made in the deterrence literature between deterrence by punishment and deterrence by denial (see Snyder, 1959, Mearsheimer, 1983: 14).<sup>1</sup> Although it was suggested that denial and other defensive measures may enhance deterrence by punishment especially in situations of low level of violence (Schelling, 1966: 78-9; Jervis, 1989: 9), repression is considered to be employed only by governments. While Saideman and Zahar claim that abuses from governments threaten ethnic groups more than threats from other groups (2008: 1), we are interested mainly in researching the latter phenomenon. Prima facie, deterrence theory that was developed mainly in IR would better suit a discussion of anarchy-like situations, in which ethnic groups are the primary rivals.<sup>2</sup>

Our theoretical arguments are based on combining classical notions of deterrence that were developed during the Cold War, the current emerging exploration of deterrence in ethnic conflicts, as well as some constructivist insights that allow us to extend and improve the scope of research. Specifically, we suggest that the exploration of extended deterrence and direct deterrence in ethnic conflict would benefit from referring to actors' identities.

The theoretical section has three parts. In the first we distinguish between extended and direct deterrence and review how these concepts were used with regard to the study of ethnic conflicts and underline some of the drawbacks of the existing studies. In the second part we briefly review the main explanations to the eruption of ethnic violence, and evaluate the feasibility of deterrence strategies to prevent the outbreak of violence according to each of these explanations. In the third part we argue that some theoretical concepts and issues that have been studied in the literature of deterrence in relation to other kinds of conflict could be further developed in order to improve our understanding of the way extended and direct deterrence work in ethnic conflicts. We elaborate on what consists the capabilities of actors in ethnic conflicts, highlight the importance of the actors' identities and the context which these identities create, and examine the effects of enmity between the actors on the chances of successful deterrence.

### **The Distinction between Direct and Extended Deterrence and the Implementation of these Concepts in the Study of Ethnic Conflicts**

Extended deterrence occurs in a conflict situation, in which a defender threatens with use of force in order to protect his protégé from an attack of a challenging actor. As such, extended deterrence is opposed to direct deterrence, in which the defender aims to prevent an attack on his territory (Huth 1988: 424). In either case, the criteria that

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<sup>1</sup> For a related distinction between deterrence and compellence, see (Huth and Russett, 1990: 466; Morgan, 2003: 2-3; Schelling, 1966: 19-51).

<sup>2</sup> Saideman and Zahar are highly critical of the application thus far of security concepts from IR in the study of ethnic conflicts (2008: 4; 13-14). Still, we join those who still think this abstraction of looking at failed and collapsing states as anarchy-like situations is useful. Furthermore, we would expect IR scholars to have a sort of 'comparative advantage' in explaining these cases.

have been suggested by scholars with respect to what may be regarded as a deterrence success, apply. Scholars tend to agree that the success of a deterrence strategy is dependent on the defender's capabilities, the defender's resolve and the defender's ability to communicate these two factors to the opponent (Williams 1975: 70-76; Morgan 2003: 15-20). During the years, scholars have identified additional factors that influence actors' ability to sustain successful practices of deterrence. For example, they suggested the need to acknowledge the psychological barriers through which the deterrent threats are understood (Jervis, Lebow and Stein 1985; Lebow and Stein 1987; Lebow and Stein 1989) and the *balance of interest* that affects the credibility of these threats (Mearsheimer 1983; Shimshoni 1988). These issues were further developed with regard to the study of extended deterrence. Huth, for example, suggests that there is a special importance in cases of extended deterrence that the defenders clearly signal their intention and interests when protecting their protégé in order to prevent any uncertainty the challenger may have regarding it (Huth 1988: 438-9; see also Danilovic 2001:347-9,365).<sup>3</sup>

While both the study of direct deterrence and extended deterrence in ethnic conflicts are under-studied, the study of extended deterrence is nevertheless much more developed. Still, scholars face some difficulties in trying to implement the concept of extended deterrence in ethnic conflicts (Morgan 2003: 280-1; see also Tickner 1995: 179).<sup>4</sup> Posen suggests that a fundamental difficulty of states is often the lack of real time information regarding the need to deter. Furthermore, some ethnic conflicts are in strategically less important areas, that endanger only minor interests of potential interventionist states, and hence make it hard for them to present appropriate and credible threats (Posen 2001: 202-6; Saideman and Zahar 2008, 8).

Nevertheless, these problems do not necessarily mean that extended deterrence cannot work in ethnic conflicts (Morgan 2003: 281). Thus for example, Harvey arrives at the conclusion that extended deterrence in ethnic conflicts is a feasible aim, based on his empirical research regarding NATO's policy towards the conflict in Bosnia. Thus, he demonstrates that by fulfilling the classical requirements to attain successful deterrence – communicating costly and credible threats to the challenger – NATO members had succeeded in deterring the Serbs (Harvey 1997: 203-6). Carment and Harvey make an important contribution, in emphasizing that it is useful to think of a violent ethnic conflict as a series of separate encounters, that in each one, scholars must address the question of whether this was a success or failure of compellence or deterrence (2001, 44). The study of extended deterrence in ethnic conflict was also developed with the approach of pivotal deterrence, which is a practice used by a third party in a “pivotal position between two committed adversaries”. The aim of the deterrer in such cases is primarily to deter both sides (rather than one side as with extended deterrence), and sometimes simultaneously to

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<sup>3</sup> Huth suggests one way that defenders can signal their intention is through a bargaining process (Huth 1988: 439).

<sup>4</sup> For this reason, the distinction between deterrence and compellence in such conflicts is very important. It was suggested that following political and strategic difficulties that constrain the ability of interventionists to act in time and to pose credible threats, the interventionist states “more often find themselves in the active compellence mode than deterrent mode” (Posen 2001: 202-3). Thus for example, since fears of casualties and other costs are significant, “credibility will be most easily attached to an intervention that reflects a profound interest specific to the state or states concerned (Turkey and Cyprus, Russia in the ‘near abroad’)” (Morgan 2003: 280; see also Morgan 2003: 101). Furthermore, since it is hard to identify the values and priorities of the combatants, it is quite difficult to pose an effective threat. In addition, it is not always clear to whom the deterrent message should be directed (Morgan 2003: 281).

induce the opponents to reach a compromise (Crawford 2001-2: 502).<sup>5</sup> What is interesting regarding the research of extended deterrence in ethnic conflicts till now, is that scholars have tended to explore mainly the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo but have reached different conclusions regarding the question of whether these were cases of successful deterrence or not (e.g. see Zimmerman 1995: 13-14; Carment and Harvey 2001; Crawford 2001-2; and in Saideman 2002).

We argue that there are still some problems in the study of extended deterrence in ethnic conflicts. One problem is the emphasis on Western powers' extended deterrence (U.S, NATO) and the neglect of study of other powers, especially regional powers. A second problem is that not enough scholarly attention has been given to the special characteristics of (extended) deterrence in ethnic conflicts. For example, although Harvey (1997) provides important insights with regard to the study of extended deterrence in ethnic conflicts, he does not elaborate on the difference between extended deterrence in ethnic conflicts and extended deterrence in state vs. state conflicts. Thirdly, as some have already argued, most of the studied cases are those of compellence rather than of deterrence. This aspect is very interesting, since in contrast to the classical assertion according to which deterrence is more likely to succeed than compellence (e.g. Schelling 1966: 73-5, but also see Schaub 2004), in ethnic conflicts it seems that the opposite is true, i.e. that compellence is a more effective strategy than deterrence.

Finally, and most importantly, existing approaches tend to take the actors' interests as given. This is a problem that has been already acknowledged in the broader literature of deterrence (Luke 1989: 212; Nicholson 1992: 50; Tannenwald, 1999: 438; Wendt 1999: 36; Guzzini 2000: 149). The difficulties in identifying the interests stem not only from the fact that they are social constructions that need to be studied and are closely related to actors' identities (Price and Tannenwald 1996: 123, 137; Weldes 1999: 3-16, 118-9), but from the fact that even positivist scholars do not agree on the way interests are translated into a specific foreign policy (e.g. Allison and Zelikow 1999: 298). Therefore, as Lebow and Stein (1989: 215-7) concluded, the limitations in deterrence theory stem from the fact that actors' preferences change through interactions that cannot be predicted by the theory, and following this, important aspects are not studied (see also Carlsnaes 1992: 251-2).

As aforesaid, the exploration of direct deterrence in ethnic conflicts is understudied, and although some scholars have reflected upon important issues that concern the study of deterrence between the rivals themselves, there is still a lack of a comprehensive framework to explore how deterrence may work in such conflicts. An exception and a promising new venue is the recently published edited volume of Saideman and Zahar which emphasizes the importance of the deterrent power of the state itself vis-à-vis potential violence of ethnic groups. In this volume, a number of scholars focus on questions related to the dilemmas of governments that need to be able to deter without causing rebellion and to be assertive enough to protect all the groups while not being perceived as biased toward a specific group. They highlight the existence of a delicate balance between deterrence and assurance, according to which measures that are aimed at enhancing deterrence may result in undermining assurances and vice versa (Saideman and Zahar, 2008: 2-3, 9). The authors also make

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<sup>5</sup> In this respect, Jentleson for example suggests that although the international and regional organizations such as the UN or the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) may face difficulties, they also have authority and institutional capabilities that can help them to successfully implement strategies of deterrence and preventive diplomacy in order to influence the actors that are involved in ethnic conflicts (Jentleson 1998: 312-313).

a distinction among different kinds of undesirable behaviors the state might want to deter: violence between ethnic groups, violence against the state itself and separatism (Saideman and Zahar 2008: 10). Aside from this edited volume, most of the knowledge we have in this respect is from scattered insights suggested both by ethnic conflict experts and deterrence strategy experts. For example, Kaufmann suggests that one of the advantages of separation between rival ethnic parties is that it may strengthen the ability of actors to successfully perform deterrence. In such situations he claims “the conflict changes from one of mutual pre-emptive ethnic cleansing to something approaching conventional interstate war in which normal deterrence dynamics apply” (Kaufmann 2001: 458). Similarly, deterrence scholars have provided some anecdotal insights that may significantly contribute to the study of deterrence in ethnic conflict (see for example, Bar-Joseph 1998, regarding the Israeli Palestinian conflict).

In this brief review, we tried to demonstrate the need to further explore deterrence in ethnic conflicts. Not only is there not much research that elaborates on these issues, but a comprehensive research framework that connects between different insights is needed. Such a framework is important because of some of the idiosyncratic characteristics of deterrence in ethnic conflicts - mainly the different emphasis that should be given to specific issues that are less relevant or important in state vs. state deterrence, but are much more crucial in deterring ethnic conflicts. For example, and just to mention a few notable characteristics: the greater influence of identity-linked issues, the fact that some of the actors that are involved in ethnic conflict do not have a state and do not have access to state-linked institutions, the weakness of these actors in the international arena that increases their vulnerability, and the higher chances of an outside intervention.

### **Deterrence and Existing Explanations for the Eruption of Ethnic Violence**

In this section we briefly elaborate on some of the existing theories on the outbreak of violence in ethnic conflicts. We suggest that reflecting on these explanations in terms of deterrence, can help to better understand the ways deterrence may affect these conflicts. However, it seems that at least with regard to some of the predictions and mechanisms suggested by these existing theories, the likelihood of the success of deterrence in preventing the outbreak of violence in ethnic conflicts is questionable.<sup>6</sup>

The first kind of explanation regarding the outbreak of violence in ethnic conflicts underlines the existence of *ancient hatreds* (Kaplan 1993). According to this approach the authoritative regimes in empires managed to prevent the outbreak of violence between rival ethnic groups, but their collapse resulted with ethnic violence. Two main predictions can be drawn from this explanation regarding deterrence. First, that direct deterrence is most likely to fail, and only an external power can prevent violence. Second, the prevention of violence by the external power is achieved not by long term extended deterrence, but by denial. In other words, the latent assumption of this explanation is that deterrence will not succeed, since threats can not be effective in the long run, and only the presence of a powerful force, that can deny the sides the abilities to fight and to arm, may prevent the violence. However, it should be emphasized that most scholars criticize the *ancient hatreds* approach for being too

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<sup>6</sup> Such possible contradictions between deterrence theory and explanations of the outbreak of violence in ethnic conflicts may result with questions either regarding the validity of theories of deterrence or regarding the validity of one of the specific explanations of the outbreak of the ethnic violence. Dealing with such contradictions should of course be addressed, among other things, by looking into empirical cases.

simplistic (Fearon and Laitin 1996: 715, Mueller 2000: 43-45), and hence also the pessimistic predictions regarding the possibility of the success of deterrence drawn from this approach should be looked upon cautiously.

The second kind of explanation regarding the outbreak of ethnic violence revolves around the emergence of an ethnic security dilemma (Posen 1993: 103-104). As with the previous explanation, this approach also puts an emphasis on the collapse of empires and states. Such a collapse, that creates a situation similar to that of anarchy between states, forces the ethnic group to take steps to enhance its security, which are conceived as threats by the opponent ethnic group, causing escalation. The chances of successful direct deterrence in such cases seems to be low, since the steps that aim to create a deterrent posture against the rival group may cause a spiral of suspicion, similar to the tragic dynamics created by the classical security dilemma. While defensive realists have suggested with respect to state vs. state conflicts that actors can rely on *minimum deterrence* as a sufficient deterrent (see in Morgan 2003: 23-4), with regard to ethnic groups, it seems as if it is less likely that *minimum deterrence* can work, since from the outset the means ethnic groups have at their disposal are relatively limited. Extended deterrence, on the other hand, is more likely to succeed, since a threat posed by a powerful actor can alter this process either by providing the sides with assurances that increase their sense of security or by voicing clear threats that might reduce the incentive to act first.

A third type of explanation concerns instrumentalist considerations and highlights the importance of the struggle over resources (mainly economic) as the reason for the outbreak of violence. According to this approach the outbreak of violence in ethnic conflict results from objective or perceived unequal development, which may lead to resentment and insurgency (Lake and Rothchild 1998: 9-10; see also Horowitz 2000: 106).<sup>7</sup> Theoretically, if the motives are instrumental, threats can be voiced by the other ethnic group or by an external actor in order to present the violence as more costly than any gain that can be achieved from the struggle. On the other hand, while instrumental considerations might light the spark that brings about the struggle, the rise in ethnic awareness that accompanies this struggle usually cannot be wholly repressed (see Horowitz 2000: 134-135; see also: McGarry 1995: 135-136)

The fourth type of explanation of violence in ethnic conflict concerns the impact of elite manipulation of ethnic feelings. According to this explanation political leaders do not respond to but rather incite ethnic emotions that escalate into violence (Gagnon 1994-1995: 136-142).<sup>8</sup> Here the question regarding the feasibility of deterrence concerns two issues that apply both to direct and extended deterrence. The first issue is whether it is feasible to deter political leaders from igniting the ethnic issue.<sup>9</sup> A second issue is whether it is feasible to deter violence after such a process of

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<sup>7</sup> Kaufman (2001: 8) criticizes the economic explanations since it is unclear how groups that act out of instrumental-rational aims end up with irrational outcomes of violence. However, and as the logic of deterrence help to clarify, the main issue that should be addressed by researchers is whether expected gains surpass expected costs. In other words, violence will be considered as rational as long as its advantages seem to exceed its costs.

<sup>8</sup> About the different means to incite ethnic emotions see (Snyder and Ballentine, 1996: 5; Snyder 2000: 88, Mueller 2000: 42). Other scholars have criticized this explanation, suggesting that manipulations of political leaders cannot explain why the manipulation succeeds so well (Brown 1996: 587; Saideman and Zahar 2008, 5). As will be later presented, there are some approaches that try to integrate between the primordial approach (ancient hatreds) and the constructivist approach (elite manipulation).

<sup>9</sup> A similar debate has revolved around the question of whether leaders of rogue states can be deterred. Compare for example, Smith (2006: 38) and Morgan (2003: 271-3). Although the possibility of



inciting ethnic emotions has started. This question relates to an extensive debate in the deterrence literature regarding the influences of enmity on success of deterrence, a debate that will be elaborated on in following sections. For now, we just argue that from this initial discussion it can be suggested that when looking at the possibility of deterrence in ethnic conflicts it is crucial to take into account the effects of the emotional aspects in the relations between actors, i.e. the existence of enmity.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this brief review of deterrence and the explanations of the outbreak of ethnic violence is that deterrence – either direct or extended – is (theoretically) feasible, at least in some of the explanations that were presented. As we suggest in the next section, further thinking should be devoted to the question of how a deterrent threat is framed and interpreted in ethnic conflict, which is in some respects different from the state vs. state situation.

### **Toward a more Systematic Study of Deterrence in Ethnic Conflicts**

In this section, we elaborate on the issues of capabilities, enmity, identities, and context in order to provide a more systematic way to study of deterrence in ethnic conflicts. These issues influence one another and discussing them may provide a basis for a better understanding of how extended and direct deterrence work in ethnic conflicts.

#### ***Capabilities (and Credibility)***

As many scholars emphasize, having the necessary capabilities is an important component of a deterrence strategy, since without something to threaten with (or at least that the other side perceives you as having), a deterrent posture cannot be achieved. It is not surprising therefore that the theories of deterrence received much attention following the introduction of nuclear weapons that supposedly provided decision makers with “a crystal ball” to see the horrendous results of a nuclear war (Carnesale et al 1983: 44). Although theories of deterrence were also developed with regard to conventional weapons (e.g. Mearsheimer 1983; Shimshoni 1988), and as presented, there is also some research concerning deterrence in ethnic conflicts, the question of what relevant capabilities an ethnic group should have, in order to deter, has not been dealt with enough. Elaborating on this question is important, since capabilities available to actors in ethnic conflicts are usually much more modest than those available to states practicing conventional and nuclear deterrence.<sup>10</sup> The difference can stem from the fact that in most cases only one of the groups in conflict has access to, and benefits from, the state apparatus (Lindenstrauss 2006: 9). While the ethnic group that doesn't have access to the state apparatus also has resources of its own, these are usually quite limited. Moreover, some of these conflicts are conducted by both sides with relatively primitive means such as household utensils (Kaufman 2001: 52). In addition, what is prevalent in ethnic conflicts is that the groups appeal for outside assistance from states and transnational entities, such as the diaspora. In this respect, if we see the capabilities of an ethnic group not only as the direct capabilities the group holds, but also the capabilities of its allies and affective groups (diaspora, kin state) this emphasizes the need to further explore the connections between direct and extended deterrence.

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detering the leaders of ethnic groups cannot be excluded, it seems as if it may be more difficult than deterring a leader of a rogue state, since these leaders are not always already in power, and hence there is less to threaten them with.

<sup>10</sup> It is especially interesting that the concepts of deterrence were to some extent defined by the capabilities such as with the concepts of “nuclear deterrence” and “conventional deterrence”.

An actor can create a stronger deterrent posture by relying on both direct and extended deterrence. As such, the deterrent posture of an ethnic group can be strengthened by the combination of the capabilities of the external actor (extended deterrent) and the capabilities of the ethnic actor (direct deterrent). In addition, the crisis itself can serve as a unifying event, strengthening the ethnic identity (and therefore the willingness to sacrifice for the group, which most likely increases the potential capabilities of the group). Moreover, the identity-linked elements can be even more important than just contributing to the capabilities, since they also project on the credibility of the threat (of either the external actor or the ethnic group) and therefore may enhance the deterrent posture.

In the more general deterrence literature, extended deterrence relationships between actors are considered to be very problematic, either because of lack of credibility or because of too much credibility (Zagare and Kiglour 2006: 624). Thus, in contrast to direct deterrence, which in most cases is considered to be inherently credible, extended deterrence is perceived as less credible since the defender needs to demonstrate his willingness to employ his forces in order to defend territories that are not his own. However, as Zagare and Kiglour contend, extended deterrence may also fail for being too credible (2006: 624). Situations of too much credibility may lead to a spiral process of escalation, since such kind of extended deterrence might allow the protégé to take adventurous actions.<sup>11</sup> In ethnic conflicts, especially ethnic conflicts in which the defender and the protégé have a common identity, such shared identity almost inherently creates credibility, similar to the way direct deterrence works.

### *Enmity and Deterrence*

**The General Argument.** A main issue that should be further integrated in the study of deterrence and ethnic conflicts is the question of how enmity between the sides affects the chances of maintaining successful practices of deterrence. This issue has received much attention during the Cold War and there was a debate around the question of whether hatred towards the opponent increases or decreases the chances of establishing successful deterrence relations. On the one hand, some scholars claim that hostility, mistrust and suspicion are necessary for stable deterrence (Falk 1989: 65; Kahn 1962: 30; and in Buzan 1993: 31-2; see also in Guzzini 2004: 44).<sup>12</sup> Thus, it was suggested that the deterrent threat will become more credible when there is enmity between the opponents. In such situations, the actors are less constrained in using their most powerful forces and their opponents are aware of this fact.

On the other hand, other scholars contend that enmity and mutual hostility have destabilizing effects on deterrence strategy (Waltz 1995: 22; see also in Morgan, 2003: 57 ft. 16). As Guzzini for example suggests, when a deterrence policy is based on preparations for the worst case scenario this scenario may become a self fulfilling prophecy (Guzzini 2004: 44). In this respect, some scholars refer to a paradox in the ability to attain successful deterrence, since although armament and resolve increase the credibility of the threats, it fuels the conflict and may contribute to a spiral escalation process (Stein 1985: 62; Tetlock 1987: 86; Quester 1998: 167-172).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The offense-defense balance may further complicate matters regarding extended (and direct) deterrence in ethnic conflicts. Thus, if actors take the threat too seriously, they may fear that the opponent will act first (Posen 1993: 32, 34-5; Melander 1999: 43; see also Downes 2001: 60).

<sup>12</sup> In this respect, see also in Wendt (1999: 260-3), regarding enmity in Hobbesian culture vs. rivalry in Lockean culture.

<sup>13</sup> A closely related issue is the question of the importance of reputation and resolve, an issue that received much attention from both scholars and practitioners over the years (see Schelling 1960,

In addition, some scholars suggest that enmity or hostility may bring irrational and incautious behavior and therefore may lead decision makers to disregard warnings and threats, which might also hamper the chances of the success of deterrence (Carroll 1984: 5). As Buzan suggests, “the problem in a situation of high hostility is that the assumption of rationality is weakened, because if hostility is extremely high, then irrational behavior, almost by definition, becomes more plausible.” (Buzan 1993: 31; See also in Morgan 2003: 60) In this respect, although it was asserted that deterrence was constructed as a non-emotional rational strategy (Cohn 1987), and although some scholars dispute the claim that deterrence is indeed non-emotional (Stein 2008 *qut.* in Adler, 2008: 15),<sup>14</sup> still many scholars as well as practitioners believe this is so.

Following the questions raised with regard to the contribution of enmity to maintaining a deterrent posture, some scholars emphasize the importance of cooperation, trust and reassurance measures for a successful deterrence strategy (Schelling 1966: 259; Freedman 2004: 57; Stein 1991). The best example of cooperative practices that contribute to deterrence is the SALT agreements which were meant to enhance and stabilize the practices of mutual deterrence (Adler 1992; Evangelista 1999). Another example, more limited in nature, is the ‘red lines’ agreement of 1996 between Israel and Hezbollah, according to which both sides would refrain from attacking civilian targets.

**Between Identity and Enmity.** The question of enmity is especially interesting with regard to ethnic conflicts since some of the scholars contend that these conflicts revolve around mythical beliefs, and primordial hatreds. Moreover, it was suggested that most scholars agree that

...ethnic conflicts require at least three necessary and sufficient conditions; economic, political or military threats to the identity and/or existence of the ethnic group (primordial attachments), an elite with the political skills and resources to play on those fears (instrumentalism), and third party military, political, or economic support for the cause (Harvey 2001: 119).

Thus, although the primordial explanation cannot stand by itself to explain violence in ethnic conflicts and despite the heavy criticism this explanation receives (see Saha 2006: 5; Harvey 1997: 188), the existence of at least myths of past hatreds combined with the manipulation of these feelings by leaders, may bring actions that result in a violent conflict.

Enmity and hostility are also closely related to actors’ identities. It is widely accepted that identity is characterized by the differentiation between the “self” and the “other” (Katzenstein 1996: 22-4; Adler and Barnett 1998: 47; Wendt 1999: 224; Campbell 1998: 9; Tilly 1998: 402; see also Hopf 2002: 3-10). This difference not only creates the self but provides it with security. As Connolly suggests, “Identity requires differences in order to be, and it converts differences into otherness in order to secure its own- self certainty.” (Connolly 1991: 64)

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Schelling 1966; Williams 1975: 75, 83). Recently however, the ability to attain credibility by resolve was criticized by some scholars who suggest that in the past the importance of resolve was overemphasized, and was influenced by what Tang terms the ‘cult of reputation’, which leads actors to try to enhance their resolve while ignoring and disregarding the similar attempts of their opponents (Tang, 2005: 42, 49, see also Milliken 1996: 218, 228).

<sup>14</sup> There are some scholars now who argue that emotions do not necessarily exclude rationality (e.g. see Mercer, 2007: 23, 28-9), and that rationality and emotions mutually constitute each other (e.g. Löwenheim and Heiman 2006).

The importance of identity in explaining ethnic conflicts has been acknowledged by primordial as well as by constructivist scholars (e.g. Kaufman 2001).<sup>15</sup> Constructivists emphasize that identities may be subject to manipulation and be socially constructed. In this respect, this process may also be connected to ethnic symbolism (Kaufman 1998), and to the discourse of threat. As Hansen puts it, actors (states) are dependent on and constituted by external threats (Hansen 2006: 34) and this is even truer in the case of ethnic conflict.

Nevertheless, despite the attention the study of identities in ethnic conflict has gained, the literature on ethnic conflicts is quite silent regarding the connections between deterrence and identity. Surprisingly, interpretative scholars tend to neglect the study of deterrence in ethnic conflict although they have contributed both to the study of deterrence (e.g. Luke, 1989; Williams 1992) and to the study of ethnic conflicts (e.g. Arfi, 1998).<sup>16</sup> In this respect, one of our main assertions in this paper is that the understanding of the practices of deterrence can be further improved by connecting it to the study of identity (see also Lupovici 2008a; Lupovici 2008c).<sup>17</sup>

A good starting point to this discussion is the acknowledgement of some constructivist scholars that enmity and hostilities between actors affect their role identities.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, practices of enmity may become constitutive to actors, defining the basic identities of who they are (corporate identity in Wendt's terms) (1999: 224). For example, Mitzen argues that one of the challenges for the Israelis and Palestinians is to get beyond the routines of enmity that have constituted and reproduced competitive practices that perpetuate their conflict, routines that the parties prefer over the unknown new practices of peace (Mitzen 2006: 362-3). In other words, hostility, enmity and threats help to constitute not only the role identities of the actors as rivals and as enemies, but also their more basic identities.

There are some contradictory conclusions that can be drawn from this discussion and its connections to the debate on whether enmity or more cooperative relations among rivals increase the chances of successfully maintaining practices of deterrence. On the one hand it seems that since enmity may aggravate the threats and contribute to the spread of mistrust and antagonism between the ethnic groups, deterrence is more likely to fail or be irrelevant with regard to ethnic conflicts. On the other hand, enmity may enhance the credibility of the deterrent threat and may justify extreme violent acts, which in turn may strengthen the deterrent posture.

In addition, collective identity or enunciating a collective identity may help to enhance extended deterrence. In such cases the defender provides an 'ultimate' demonstration of his credibility by emphasizing his close relations with the protégé. That makes it clear for a potential challenger that the defender's motivation stems from a fundamental affection, that solidifies the interests of the defender in defending his protégé and that it is not going to change in the near future. Thus, this argument is closely related to the emphasis Danilovic (2001: 347-9, 365) puts on the existence of

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<sup>15</sup> For a distinction among different usages of the concept of identity by different theoretical approaches, see Bially Mattern, 2005: 42-50.

<sup>16</sup> For further elaboration on this issue, see Lupovici 2008a.

<sup>17</sup> Although some previous works have explored some connections between deterrence and identity, not only have these connections not been fully elaborated, but they were explored mainly with regard to nuclear deterrence and the identity of nuclear states (see for example: Klein 1994: 107, 109, 129; Sagan 1996-7: 73-6; Varadarajan 2004: 329-40).

<sup>18</sup> According to Wendt, role identities exist only in relation to others. One can have a specific role identity "only by occupying a position in a social structure and following behavioral norms towards others possessing relevant *counter-identities*" (Wendt 1999: 227, italics in original; see also Lipschutz 1995: 217).

strong interests of the interventionist side in order to demonstrate his resolve. When the protégé and patron share some similar identity characteristics, this is a strong indication for the existence of interests and therefore it may enhance the credibility of the deterrent posture. Moreover, threats to identity and enmity between the actors may further enhance the credibility of the threats voiced in ethnic conflicts. Of course, this does not mean that deterrence will automatically work, and also should not bring us to downplay the importance of actors' capabilities. However, it demonstrates the need to be more cautious regarding any general arguments about the effects of enmity on deterrence.

### *The Context of Threats*

Identities also influence the ability to maintain successful practices of deterrence by influencing the *context*. Identities help in shaping the context that provides actors with tools to understand and interpret reality. Certain identities that bring actors to feel secure or insecure establish the context which determines their framing of what are security, insecurity and threats (Hopf 2002: 1; see also Hansen 2006: 44; Lupovici 2008b: 11-6). As Hopf argues,

Identities operate in ways reminiscent of other cognitive devices, such as scripts, schemas, and heuristics. What an individual understands himself to be... helps determine what information he apprehends and how he uses it. In this view, an individual's identity acts like an axis of interpretation, implying that she will find in the external world what is relevant to that identity (Hopf 2002: 5).

In other words, since deterrence is dependent on the social constructions of actors, such as the construction of "threat" and of "security,"<sup>19</sup> it is argued that deterrence is dependent not only on actors' capabilities but on common knowledge that the deterrer and the deterred actor share (Lupovici 2007, see also Adler 2008).<sup>20</sup> In this respect, there is a need of an ideational context in which the threat can be interpreted as being part of a deterrence strategy.

Thus, such a context does not only revolve around actors' knowledge regarding capabilities, but it is also about the actors' more general knowledge (a construction) regarding each other. In such situations, extreme past violent events may become part of what constitutes the victim's identity (and most likely also the victimizer's identity)<sup>21</sup> and shapes the context of the relations between them. As such, not only does it further fuel and maintain the hostility and the hatred, but the victim's enunciators may remind their audience of the unacceptable cost and consequences of past events. In other words, although such events (and the way they shape the identity) may lead the victim to want revenge (and therefore general deterrence will not work), should a crisis erupt, the victimizers may take advantage of that event and may use it as a precedent that presents their past and potential capabilities and their

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<sup>19</sup> Regarding the social construction of threat and security, see (Lipschutz 1995 224; Chilton 1996; Buzan et al.: 204; Hopf 1998: 186-187; Mutimer 2000: 26; Smith 2000: 87; Weldes 1999: 2, 7, 18-9).

<sup>20</sup> The argument cannot be just that there is a context in which one side sees itself as the victim, while the other sees itself as the victimizer, since both sides tend to see themselves as the victim. A similar argument was presented by some scholars who suggest that both sides in a deterrence game tend to see themselves as defenders rather than as the challengers (e.g. see Lebow and Stein 1989: 221,223)

<sup>21</sup> In order to strengthen their self-esteem, victimizers may continue to scorn their victim. In this manner, the victimizers help themselves to justify to some extent the extreme violent act by implying that the victims brought it on themselves (see Lamb 1996: 58; 60 with regard similar claims on domestic and interpersonal violence).

credibility in order to achieve immediate deterrence. Thus, the context and the way identity is formed have an important part in initiating as well as interpreting the threats and the way they affect the credibility. In this respect, acknowledging the importance of the context may help to explain the paradox according to which fear is a necessary condition for ethnic war because people are usually “mobilizable only when confronted by some threat” (Kaufman 1998: 4-5), however fear also stands at the heart of deterrence practices, which means that fear may provide a mechanism for avoidance of violence. Thus, fear and threats should be understood as part of the actors’ identities and the social context which gives meaning to “fear”. As Kaufman himself suggests, “The fear comes not from what the other group does, but from one group’s feelings and expectations regarding the other group” (Kaufman 1998: 5). In this respect, what Kaufman is suggesting is that the group’s identity helps to interpret the threat and therefore, as suggested earlier, an extreme violent act in the past may encourage revenge, but for the same reason may restrain immediate willingness to use force.

## **The Conflict over Nagorno Karabakh and Nakhichevan**

In this section we try and analyze whether deterrence practices can be identified in the struggle between the Armenians and Azeris over Nagorno Karabakh and Nakhichevan. We specifically address the predictions we derived from explanations of the outbreak of ethnic violence regarding the success or failure of deterrence practices. Later, we elaborate on issues that were raised in the previous section, i.e. the importance of looking more closely at the capabilities of the sides, credibility, identity, enmity and the context. We try to show that while general deterrence clearly was non-existent in the conflict – in two instances, in 1991, after operation "Ring" was conducted by the Soviets and the Azeris, and in 1992 and 1993, with respect to Nakhichevan – there were immediate deterrent threats that were quite effective.

### ***Historical Background***

The modern political sources of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan date back to 1920-1, when the question of delineating the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan arose after the Bolshevik conquest of the area. In 1921, Stalin, then the Commissar for the Affairs of Nationalities, decided that Nagorno-Karabakh will be an autonomous region in Azerbaijan and not in Armenia.<sup>22</sup> Also, at that time it was decided that Nakhichevan, a landlocked exclave, with an Azeri majority, bordering with Armenian territory, will be an autonomous republic linked to Azerbaijan (Mooradian and Druckman 1999: 709; Cornell 1998: 53). The Armenians attribute special importance to Nagorno-Karabakh since in the late Middle Ages, when Armenian territory was divided between the Russians and the Persians, the Armenians nevertheless succeeded in maintaining a certain level of autonomy there. In the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the territory came solely under the Russian domination, but even then the area served as a safe haven for the Armenians who fled from the Ottomans and the Persians (Smith et al. 1998: 53).

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<sup>22</sup> de Waal maintains that there were two main reasons why Nagorno-Karabakh was included in Azerbaijan and not in Armenia. The first, were short-term strategic considerations that revolved around the importance of the oil fields in Azerbaijan and the wish to secure the Bolshevik holding of Azerbaijan. The second, were more longer-term economic considerations, to create economically viable regions (de Waal 2003: 130-131)

In 1988, influenced by Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of *Glasnost*, the Armenians in Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh declared their wish to unite and for Nagorno-Karabakh to secede from Azerbaijan (King 2001: 529). One of the reasons for these demands was the demographic changes in the area. While in 1921 the Armenian population was 94% of the total population in Nagorno-Karabakh, by 1988 it was only 75% of the population. The Armenians claimed that this was the result of a deliberate action by the Azeris, and that what was occurring in Nagorno-Karabakh was similar to what had occurred in Nakhichevan during the Soviet rule. The Armenian minority in Nakhichevan had been 15% of the population in the 1920's but by the 1980's there were almost no Armenians left there (Cornell 2001: 78; de Waal 2003: 133; Kaufman 2001: 55).

The Armenian nationalist upsurge resulted in a rise in Azeri nationalist feelings and in violent acts and mutual ethnic cleansing. Soviet and international efforts were made to mediate between the sides, but the conflict escalated from 1988 until a ceasefire was agreed upon in 1994. The Soviets first supported the Azeris' demand that the borders of the republic not be changed. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Russians began to support the Armenian side. From 1989 onwards, the Azerbaijanis began a blockade on Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia, a blockade which was joined by Turkey. This blockade caused severe damage to the Armenians, and Armenia suffered from a serious energy crisis in 1992-1993. Throughout the conflict, Armenia gave economic support, and at times, some of its military forces actively participated in the violent struggle of the Karabakh Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh (Cornell 2001: 96; Herzig 1999: 67).

### ***Deterrence and the Conflict in Nagorno Karabakh***

While it may seem that the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh is a case in which deterrent threats were rather feeble and that ultimately they failed, we will try to show that a more complex and nuanced view should be taken with regard to this conflict. Thus for example, contrary to other scholars, Melander shows in his work that the full fledged violent conflict between the Armenians and Azeris over Nagorno Karabakh was not inevitable, and that until the breakup of the Soviet Union, the possibility of the sides agreeing to a negotiated settlement was rather high (2001). With regard to the question of whether at all there was an attempt at deterrence, it can be stated that the Azeris were quite persistent in their objection to the secession of Nagorno Karabakh or its annexation to Armenia, and that the Armenians, in acts that resulted in ethnic cleansing of the Azeris from Armenia and Karabakh, had in fact also signaled their ability to inflict harm on those who will try to block the secession of Karabakh (Cornell 2001: 94). It should be noted however, that the conflict between the Armenians and the Azeris, as is the case with many ethnic conflicts, was not an isolated struggle. When it restarted in the late 1980's it was while both republics were still in the Soviet Union, and the sides carefully looked upon the responses and on possible future responses of the central government to demands and actions of each side. Thus, the Azeris expected the Soviets to back them in their refusal to relinquish Nagorno Karabakh, as long as they remained loyal to the central government, and the Armenians hoped the Soviets would help them achieve an agreed upon settlement to the problem so that Nagorno Karabakh would be annexed to Armenia (Melander 2001: 52, 58). Nonetheless, other domestic problems in the Soviet Union, that at times diverted the attention from what was happening in Karabakh, lead to several occasions in which the confrontation between the sides could be seen as a direct one. To further complicate matters, in addition to the Soviet involvement, the Armenian

separatist movement often acted upon its own decisions and also the Azeri central government didn't have full control on the Azeri paramilitary forces (Melander 2001: 53).

As aforementioned, addressing the predictions of success or failure of deterrence by the different approaches that aim to explain the outbreak of violent ethnic conflicts, may help to better understand issues concerning deterrence in such conflicts. With regard to the Primordial and Security Dilemma explanations, in accordance with the pessimistic predictions we derived from these explanations, general deterrence had failed in Nagorno Karabakh. However, contrary to these explanations, the violence in the conflict was not continuous – thus, after the initial eruption of violence in 1988, the subsequent year was relatively quiet, and also after operation "Ring", that will be discussed shortly, it seemed as if the Armenians were about to stop their struggle (Kaufman 2001: 68).<sup>23</sup> With regard to the Instrumentalist explanation – while the Armenians in Karabakh claimed they were discriminated against also in the economic realm, the Soviet attempts to try and convince the Armenians to abandon their demands by trying to allocate more funds to the area proved infertile (Kaufman 2001: 74). Thus, both the 'carrot' of providing more funds and the 'stick' in the form of the very damaging Azeri blockade on Nagorno Karabakh and the threat to continue it as long as the Armenians did not cease their struggle, did not stop the Armenians from fighting the Azeris. The Manipulation of Elites explanation is less relevant to the conflict in Karabakh, since as Kaufman claims, it was mass-led rather than elite-led (2001: 49). Still, some extreme leaders, even though they did not become national leaders of the two republics, had great influence on what was occurring on ground. Although it was clear to these leaders that if caught, they would be arrested, this rather than serving as a deterrent, actually served as a motivation to keep on fighting in order to gain independence.

Looking at the capabilities of the sides, while it is clear that the Azeris had an advantage in that they could relatively easily block transfers to both Karabakh and Armenia and that they were numerically superior, the separatist Armenian movement had access to the Armenian republic's apparatus and to the highly motivated and organized diaspora that proved its ability to assist Armenia already after the earthquake of 1988 (Tchilingirian 1999). It also should be noted, that while the Azeri government tried to create an army from August 1991, in fact during the conflict it failed to create a disciplined one, and most of the fighting was done by paramilitary forces, over which the government didn't have effective control, and this hindered the ability of the government to credibly threaten the Armenians (Kaufman 2001: 72-73).

When addressing identity-linked issues, enmity and the context, it should be emphasized that since the Armenians saw the Azeris as being 'Turks' (Rieff 1997: 128; Herzig 1999: 60) they projected upon them all their fears and the enmity that had been built up as a result of the events of 1915 and the Turkish refusal to acknowledge these events as genocide. In this respect, our claim is somewhat similar to that of Cornell, who also gives importance to the intensity of past events, and to that of

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<sup>23</sup> Of course it can be argued that the security dilemma explanation should only have started to work after the breakup of the Soviet Union. This however makes it hard to explain what caused the initial violence already in 1988. Still, Saideman claims that the security dilemma has explanatory power in still-functioning countries, but in which discriminatory policies towards an ethnic group causes concerns for the group's security. Saideman also discusses economic and political insecurity in relation to the ethnic security dilemma (Saideman 1996: 22-23). Saideman's extension of the concept can also help in explaining why when the Soviets took direct control of Nagorno-Karabakh from the Azeris in 1989, there was a sharp decrease in the hostilities.



Kaufman, that gives importance to the existence of ethnic prejudice and fear (Cornell 2001: 36, 84; Kaufman 2001: 49; 55; 71; see also Melander 2001: 55).

With regard to credibility, clearly had the Azeris used the Armenian perception of them as Turks to state their threat more strongly, they might have succeeded in deterring the Armenians.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, since at the time the conflict broke out, the Azeri collective and national identity was still weak (Dudwick 1995), it also affected the credibility since it was not completely clear over what the Azeris were willing to fight. Also, the Azeris believed that they could rely on the central government against the Armenians. This belief was not ungrounded; In April 1991, began Operation "Ring", the most serious attempt of the Soviets to force the Armenians to cease from struggling over Nagorno Karabakh. In this operation, joint forces of the Soviet interior ministry troops and Azerbaijani special police conducted a massive offensive against predominantly Armenian-inhabited villages in regions north of Nagorno-Karabakh. While the operation's formal purpose was to act against Armenian guerilla operators and to collect unlawfully acquired weapons, the joint forces also forcefully deported the Armenian occupants of the villages to Stepanakert<sup>25</sup> and their homes were given to Azeri refugees (Melander 2005: 173). In early May, the operation expanded into the territory of Armenia proper, when Soviet and Azeri forces backed by tanks and helicopters entered three Armenian towns on the pretext that illegal guerilla operations were conducted from there. Following this, forces also entered villages in Nagorno-Karabakh, burning and looting houses and trying to bring the population to leave their homes and flee to Armenia (Croissant 1998: 40-42). The Armenian Leader, Ter-Petrosian described these actions as "...an act of state terrorism carried out by the Soviet Army, the Interior Ministry and the Azerbaijani police." (NYT May 8, 1991: A11).

The political purpose of the operation was to pressure Armenia not to declare independence and to demonstrate that the price of continued struggle over Karabakh would be high. The operation's scope and the brutality of the joint Soviet-Azerbaijani forces had a deep impact on the Armenian side and contributed to the rise of radical Armenian leadership in Karabakh (Melander 2005: 173). While in previous events, the Soviets stood by and did nothing to assist the Armenians (Cornell 2001:82-83), in this case they actively assisted the Azeris in the ethnic-cleansing of the area. The impact of this change should be understood also in the context in which for many years the Armenians had considered the Soviet rule as their guarantee against Turkish aggression (Panossian 2001, 157). Thus, this current betrayal of the Soviets was seen as particularly threatening. In the short run, this operation succeeded in intimidating the Armenians from continuing their struggle and they were now willing to enter negotiations with Baku on unfavorable terms. However, in the longer run, and following the failed coup attempt against Gorbachev in August 1991 which paralyzed Moscow from presenting the necessary backing to the discussions regarding Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenians returned to their stringent positions and to their recognition, that they could protect themselves only through military means (Melander 2005: 174-175). In this respect, since the Azeris clearly could not anticipate the break up of the Soviet Union, the vast uncertainty and incomplete information affected their credibility and actions, mainly before, but also after, 1991 (Melander 2001:54).

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<sup>24</sup> In this respect it is interesting that Kaufman notes that the political leaders of Azerbaijan were "covertly discriminatory rather than openly chauvinistic" (2001: 66).

<sup>25</sup> At that time it was a city in Karabakh with an Armenian majority. Since then, the Armenians declared it as the capital of the 'Independent Republic of Nagorno Karabakh'.

### *The Turkish Extended Deterrence and Nakhichevan*

During the conflict between the Armenians and Azeris on Nagorno-Karabakh, there were two times in which it seemed as if the Armenian forces were going to enter, and possibly take over, Nakhichevan – the first, in May of 1992, after episodes of cross-border shelling between Armenia and Nakhichevan,<sup>26</sup> and the second, beginning in April 1993, after the Karabakh Armenians had seized the Kelbajar region, and as such it was the first time they had taken over substantial territory also outside of Nagorno-Karabakh. While the Armenians succeeded in advancing on and conquering important Azeri positions until they occupied about 14% of Azerbaijani territory (de Waal 2003: 286), Nakhichevan was not touched and remains till today an autonomous republic that is self-governed and is still considered part of Azerbaijan. In this respect, the case of Nakhichevan is clear case of immediate deterrence success.

Turkey looked upon the possibility that Armenian forces will enter and conquer Nakhichevan, which borders with Turkey, with great worry (Winrow 2000: 8).<sup>27</sup> This threat became more acute with the Armenian military advances in Karabakh. On March 6, 1992 President Turgut Özal stated that "on the matter of Karabakh, it is necessary to scare the Armenians a little bit" (NYT March 7, 1992: 3; Astourian 2000-2001: 31), a statement that sent shock waves through Armenians in Armenia and in the Armenian diaspora (Cornell 1998: 60). While Turkish Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel tried to voice much more cautious statements, he also was quite attentive to Turkish public opinion on this matter. Thus for example, speaking before the Azerbaijani parliament Demirel stated: "We, a population of 60 million in Turkey, are well aware of how sensitive this issue is for Azerbaijan. As these incidents were happening, our parliament, press and public pressured us to act. We told them to be patient. When I was received by U.S President Bush in Washington on 11 February, I told him that if the United States and Western countries back Armenia in this conflict, then we will have to stand by Azerbaijan, and this will turn into a conflict between Muslims and Christians that will last for years. (FBIS-SOV-92-086, 4 May 1992, 62; our emphasis). Later, in April 1993, shortly before his sudden death, Özal "clearly alluding to the 1915 genocide, stated that 'Armenia has not learned its lesson from the experience in Anatolia and the punishment inflicted.'" (Astourian 2000-2001: 31; see also Cornell 2001: 294). This statement received prominence in the Armenian press. The Turkish government reacted to the possibility of Armenian forces entering Nakhichevan with concentrating its forces on the border with Nakhichevan and with reconnaissance flights over the border with Armenia (FBIS-SOV-93-171, 7 September 1993: 95). After the death of Özal and the appointment of Demirel as President, the incoming Prime Minister Tansu Çiller said that she will request parliament's permission to declare war on Armenia if "one spot of Nakhichevan is touched" (Kessings, September 1993- Azerbaijan; Bishku 2001, 17).

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<sup>26</sup> It is still unclear who was behind the incidents on the border between Armenia and Nakhichevan. Heydar Aliev, the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Nakhichevan at the time, claimed it was members of the extreme Armenian party, Dashnak, and that he believed that Ter-Petrosian did not have full control over them (Goltz 1998, 178).

<sup>27</sup> Aliev claimed that Turkey was more worried about the fate of Nakhichevan than Azerbaijan was. Aliev said that prime minister Demirel would call him on a daily basis for updates on the situation in the exclave, while he sometimes had trouble for weeks with communicating with Baku (FBIS-SOV-92-106, 2 June 1992, 39).

The Turkish threat, especially as articulated by Özal was a costly signal, since one of the main issues that is an obstacle to the normalization of the relations between Turkey and Armenia is the question of the Turkish recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Voicing such a threat, that implies a repetition of what Turkey officially and also overwhelmingly non-officially denies, seems to be extremely harsh. Moreover, one of the restraining factors on the Turkish policy towards the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan at the time was the fear from the Armenian diaspora in the West, which could constrain Turkey's diplomatic maneuverability (De Pauw 1996: 182; Cornell 1998: 66), and it was the Armenian diaspora which placed a special emphasis on the Turkish recognition of the Armenian Genocide.<sup>28</sup> Looking more generally on Turkish policies and grand strategy it can be debated whether this was a smart move but clearly the Turkish threat was effective. While this threat was backed by a build up of forces on the border, its effectiveness resulted mainly from the fact that it could be understood in the context of the historical Turkish-Armenian hostility as a threat directed at the Armenian collective identity, and in this respect it also overreached the blur between the Armenian state and the Armenian separatist movement. In addition, in this case, the Turkish extended deterrence had inherent credibility similar to direct deterrence, since Turkish policy makers, following public demands, repeatedly emphasized the ethnic affinity between the Turks and Azeris.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper we tried to show that while the study of deterrence in ethnic conflict in IR is rather scarce, it raises important questions that are relevant both to the study of deterrence in general and to the study of ethnic conflicts. Specifically, we emphasized the need to take into account the context and the identity of actors in order to better understand the success or failure of deterrent threats in ethnic conflicts. We also underlined the need to put more emphasis on the connections between direct and extended deterrence, connections which may explain the level of credibility of the threat. Lastly, the paper highlighted some idiosyncratic characteristics of deterrence in ethnic conflicts that were not developed enough in the literature.

We suggest that the conclusions drawn from examining the events in Nagorno Karabakh and Nakhichevan can contribute in extending the scope of the study of deterrence in ethnic conflicts. First, this case is of interest since it shows the possibility of the existence of red lines even in conflicts that seem unrestricted. Second, it contributes to the emerging research on deterrence in ethnic conflict in cases other than that of U.S/NATO involvement. Also, this case shows the complicated links between direct and extended deterrence practices, and the dangers but also the opportunities when an actor, such as the Azeris, relies mainly on extended deterrence. Lastly, we suggest that one of the important aspects of the credibility of the Turkish and Azeri threat has been the way it was interpreted in Armenia as connected to the traumatic events of 1915, and hence was received with much worry among the Armenians and was extremely effective with regard to Nakhichevan. This last conclusion cannot be seen as a policy recommendation, since it is not only normatively flawed but might be a risky policy, since threatening too much the other side might result in desperate actions and not restraint, and hence contribute to the

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<sup>28</sup> In this respect it is important to note that most of the Armenian diaspora are descendants of Armenians who resided in the western parts of the Armenian homeland, i.e. parts that were in the Ottoman Empire. Soviet Armenia was built on a remote eastern part of the Armenian homeland and its population is mostly not descendants of survivors of the Armenian Genocide (Panossian 2001: 157).

long term failure of general deterrence. Still, attention should be given to identity-linked issues, since over all, deterrence is a practice aimed at preventing violence, and as such might be the lesser evil in some cases.

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