

UNDERSTANDING ETHNORELIGIOUS CONFLICT:
THE STATE, DISCRIMINATION AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

Literature on religion's role in understanding conflict in international relations is not well developed. This is quite surprising considering the series of events since 1979 Iranian revolution such as the Islamic rebellion in Afghanistan against communism; the civil war in Lebanon; the conflict in former Yugoslavia between Bosnians, Serbs and Croats; and the current tension in Iraq between Shi'is and Sunnis. This study takes an incremental step in moving toward the literature on religious conflict.

This project seeks to answer the following specific question: What are the factors that facilitate protest or rebellion of ethnoreligious groups? The answer to this question, as it turns out, will not be fully in accordance with intuition from the major schools of thought. Both annual multiple regressions and time series cross-sectional data analysis has revealed that unlike what is expected, there is a negative relationship between religious marginalization and conflict. Religious discrimination and religious legislation in majority religion discourage mobilization of ethnoreligious groups. This finding contradicts with the Minorities at Risk (MAR) model that simply predicts discrimination as a major determinant of grievances that at the end trigger mobilization.