Conclusion of James Fearon and David Laitin “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil Wars” (2003)

[We find that…] the conditions that favor insurgency-in particular, state weakness marked by poverty, a large population, and instability-are better predictors of which countries are at risk for civil war than are indicators of ethnic and religious diversity or measures of grievances such as economic inequality, lack of democracy or civil liberties, or state discrimination against minority religions or languages

If our analysis is correct, then policy makers should not assume that… ethnic diversity is the root cause of civil conflict when they observe insurgents in a poor country who mobilize fighters along ethnic lines. Instead, the civil wars of the [post WWII-era] have structural roots, in the combination of a simple, robust military technology [insurgency] and decolonization, which created an international system numerically dominated by fragile states with limited administrative control of their peripheries.

Regarding policy implications, the spread of democracy and tolerance for ethnic and religious minorities should be major foreign policy goals because they are desirable for their own sake, but not with the expectation that they are "magic bullets" for the prevention or resolution of civil war. Sometimes recommended as a general international policy for resolving ethnic civil wars (e.g., Kaufmann 1996), ethnic partitions should be viewed as having large international implications and high costs. International support for partition would increase the expected benefits for rebels, who, we have argued, may be able to get a nasty civil war going [even with] small numbers when the conditions for insurgency are right…

We find little evidence that civil war is predicted by large cultural divisions or broadly held grievances. But it seems quite clear that intense grievances are produced by civil war-indeed, this is often a central objective of rebel strategy. These could well pose obstacles to settlement.
1. How do Fearon and Laitin’s findings contrast with Kaufmann’s argument for partition as the only solution?

2. What do Fearon and Laitin mean by the “structural roots” that are the cause of civil wars?

3. What kinds of policy implications do Fearon and Laitin draw from their research? Do you think that those will be successful if implemented? Why or why not? What do they specifically recommend against?

From the Introduction to Chaim Kaufmann “Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars” (1996)

Ethnic wars involve organized large-scale violence, whether by regular forces (i.e. Turkish or Iraqi operations against the Kurds) or highly mobilized civilian populations (i.e. the *interahamwe* in Rwanda or the Palestinian intifada). A frequent aspect [of these wars] is "ethnic cleansing": efforts by members of one ethnic group to eliminate the population of another from a certain area by means such as discrimination, expropriation, terror, expulsion, and massacre.

Stable resolutions of ethnic civil wars are possible, but only when the opposing groups are demographically separated into defensible **enclaves**. Separation reduces both incentives and opportunity for further combat, and largely eliminates both reasons and chances for ethnic cleansing of civilians. While ethnic fighting can be stopped by other means, such as peace enforcement by international forces or by a conquering empire, such peaces last only as long as the enforcers remain.

This means that to save lives threatened by [ethnic] genocide, the international community must abandon attempts to [preserve] war-torn multi-ethnic states. Instead, it must facilitate and protect population movements to create true national homelands. National sovereignty is secondary [to this task]. The alternative is to let the *interahamwe* "cleanse" in their own way.

1. Why might groups engage in ethnic cleansing during wars?

2. What, according to Kaufmann, are the major advantages of separating opposing ethnic groups into defensible enclaves?

3. Why would peace only last “as long as the enforcers remain” under the alternative scenarios that Kaufmann rejects and why would Kaufmann’s solution allow peace to last longer?

4. Based on the context, what is a “true national homeland” likely to look like?