Structure and Strategy in Ethnic Conflict

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Abstract

There is a long-standing difference of approach between those who see ethnic groups as firmly bounded, durable communities inclined toward ethnocentrism, hostility to outsiders, and passionate conflict, and those who see them as social constructs, with a solidarity based on material rewards and conflict behavior based on calculation. This difference of approach ought to yield to a new synthesis based on an understanding of ethnicity as a powerful *Gemeinschaft* affiliation that can induce both calculative and passionate action.

This paper begins with a depiction of these alternative perspectives and an enumeration of 10 often mutually incompatible theories of ethnic conflict. It then advances a view of ethnicity that is grounded in a deep sense of sociality, buttressed by the birth nature of the affiliation, the sense of similarity among group members, and their sense of difference from others. The paper argues that this view of the ethnic group is compatible with changing ethnic boundaries and other claims of social constructionists, although the latitude of elites to steer the process is limited. A powerful affiliation such as ethnicity would certainly attract the interest of those who wish to use it instrumentally, and so ethnic-group behavior is likely to be both passionate and calculative.

The recurrent tendency of groups to cleave from other groups and claim a disproportionate share of rewards fits remarkably well with the incentives to bifurcate that typically obtain in democratic politics. This tendency and these incentives make it both easy for political leaders to mobilize along ethnic lines and difficult to break the centrifugal tendencies that prevail in divided societies. In ethnic relations generally, and democratic politics in particular, maximal inclusiveness is a strongly disfavored outcome.

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Decades after the recognition that ethnicity is a powerful force in the politics of many countries, with profound effects on prospects for democracy (Horowitz 1993; Young 1993:18–19) and for economic development and the distribution of public goods (Easterly and Levine 1997; Meerman 1979), there is less agreement than ever on the causes of ethnic conflict. The disagreements relate less to the facts surrounding ethnic conflict than to varying ways of interpreting those facts. Anthropology, remarks Clifford Geertz (1973: 29), "is a science whose progress is marked less by a perfection of consensus than by a refinement of debate. What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other." In ethnic-conflict studies there has been decreasing consensus and increasing mutual vexation.

Not all of the existing disagreement is necessary. On many issues there has been a fruitless stalemate of opposed, polarized positions that ought to give rise to a synthesis. The aim of this paper, therefore, is not to break new ground but to rake over old ground (particularly for an audience that has not seen the terrain before) and to seek some common ground. The aim is, in short, to take a few short steps toward synthesis.

Conflict Theory: Hard and Soft Perspectives

Several schools of thought advance conflicting theories of ethnic conflict with various permutations and combinations. There are several issues on which they differ, but the differences

can be reduced to hard views versus soft views of ethnic conflict, with "hard" and "soft" referring to the nature of group affiliations and the ends of conflict behavior. For the hypothetical theorist who adheres to all of the hard positions (in reality, no one does), ethnic groups are ascriptive, firmly bounded entities that are based on a strong sense of commonality, engender considerable loyalty, persist over time, provide large affective rewards to group members, incline toward ethnocentrism, are hostile to and desire to dominate outsiders, are liable to pursue conflict behavior based on passion (even to the exclusion of calculation), and engender a great willingness on the part of group members to sacrifice for collective welfare. For the equally hypothetical theorist who adheres to all of the soft positions (again, no one does), ethnic groups are entities whose boundaries are problematic and malleable whose solidarity is based on the material rewards they provide their members rather than on diffuse affection; whose behavior, based on the interests of their members, is vulnerable to strategic manipulation; whose apparent affect can often be reduced to calculation; and whose severe conflicts with others often result less from irreconcilable objectives than from strategic dilemmas. These are hard and soft positions in the sense that the first sees ethnic affiliations as made of stone, while the second sees them as made of putty.

The range of issues about which disagreement is possible between these two poles is very great. At least three issue-clusters can be distinguished.

One cluster of issues has to do with the very concept of an ethnic group and the features it may or may not share with other affiliations. Is an ethnic group inevitably an exogenous variable, a given, or is it merely a vehicle created, say, for the extraction of resources from an environment? Where do ethnic groups come from, anyway? Once we discover that group boundaries change, that some ethnic groups die while others are born, what is left of the idea that

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groups are merely given? On the other hand, once we discover that ethnic affiliations seem to possess competitive advantages over other forms of affiliation in attracting the loyalty of their members, can they simply be regarded as receptacles of social purposes, more or less fungible with other affiliations? What is at issue, in short, is the very idea of ethnicity as a distinctive affiliation.

A second cluster of issues relates to the opposition of passion and interest as wellsprings of human behavior. Here, sides have been chosen in the debate, and they are powerfully antagonistic. Where some analysts see love and hatred, others see straightforward calculation. Where some see expressiveness, others see instrumental action. Where some see perceptual distortion driven by affect, others see appropriate response resulting from the situation. Each side tries to reduce one to the other.

A third cluster of issues concerns the extent to which the collectivity should be considered the central actor, the unit of analysis. A notion of deeply embedded groupness, characterized by diffuse sentiments, altruism, and the willingness of individuals to make sacrifices, is characteristic of the hard position. In contrast, the soft view is that ethnic groups can be decomposed into the motives of their members, that they are instruments for the pursuit of those motives, and that their actions need to be explained in terms of individual calculations of utility in specific contexts, rather than some transcendent collective purpose. On the whole, the importance accorded leaders is greater among adherents of the soft persuasion, and the role of mass sentiments and behavior is greater among the hards. To the antagonisms that make progress in this field difficult is thus added the methodological issue of the proper scope of investigation: macrosocietal or microstrategic.

The incompatibility of these perspectives depends on whether they are seeking to explain the same aspects of the same phenomenon. If the aim is to understand ethnic conflict in general, none of the incompatibility disappears. If the aim is to explain some large aspect of conflict behavior, such as ethnic violence, the range of incompatibility will still be great. But if ethnic violence is disaggregated into several forms—for example, violent protest demonstrations, deadly riots, and secessionist warfare—is it not likely that these phenomena are explicable in terms of varying configurations of independent variables? Affect may be more important in deadly riots and calculation more important in secessionist warfare, especially when preexisting units, such as the Yugoslav republics, made decisions about warfare in structured institutional settings. Even then a variety of fears and perceptual distortions on the part of decisionmakers can scarcely be ruled out (Jervis 1976). On the other side this would still leave open the contested foundations of affect (*Rationality and Society* 1993; de Figueiredo and Weingast 1997).

Furthermore, the opportunities for disaggregated analysis are enormous. Everywhere the issue of the birth and death of ethnic groups presents itself for explanation. In some states ethnic conflict preempts conflict along other cleavage lines; in others it coexists with other types of conflict; in still others ethnic conflict is restrained. In some states interethnic attitudes seem unremittingly hostile; in others they have undergone changes, whether benign or malign. In some states seemingly manageable conflicts have become unmanageable; in others the reverse is true. In some states political parties are ethnically based; in others multiethnic coalitions have formed. There is abundant variation over time and space and there are bite-sized pieces into which ethnic conflict can be sliced. There is no a priori reason to swallow it whole.

Ten Explanations

So far I have characterized the competing hard and soft perspectives rather abstractly. When we get down to the level of explanations actually advanced, the disarray is greater than a simple polarity would suggest. Before going any further, I propose to provide capsule—and therefore somewhat caricatured—descriptions of 10 alternatives that have had some currency. For each I shall also point out some shortcomings or some evidence that does not fit the explanation.

 1. Ethnicity is a primordial affiliation, in the sense that it is connected to the things people cannot live without, among them, traditionality, the persistence of the past into the present, and a sense of collective self-consciousness (Shils 1957, 1995; Geertz 1963; Connor 1993, 1994; Isaacs 1975). A sense of community of this sort—*Gemeinschaft* rather than *Gesellschaft*—necessarily generates awareness of other communities, and this spills over (by mechanisms unspecified) into conflict and violence. Ethnic affiliations are highly charged and, on some accounts, nonrational.

 It seems futile to gainsay the emotive power of ethnic affiliations, and a good explanation will have to come to grips with the thick, compelling character of group membership. But primordialists have not provided a satisfying explanation as to why these affiliations are so emotive. They have identified the phenomenon, but most have not gone beyond it. If ethnic behavior is primordial in the fundamental sense in which that term is used, why is ethnic conflict so variable and why is even the definition of group boundaries so sensitive to shifting contexts?

 2. Ancient hatreds between groups produce conflict. Few scholars currently embrace this view, which remains popular with some foreign policymakers who are frustrated with the intractability of ethnic conflict in distant lands. Nevertheless, some students of ethnic warfare

have pointed out that groups concerned about possible threats to their security from other groups will ask themselves how those other groups behaved in comparable circumstances on previous occasions. If the previous behavior was hostile, the current response deemed appropriate may also be hostile (Posen 1993; Fearon 1994; de Figueiredo and Weingast 1997). Although these students are skeptical of ancient-hatred arguments, this way of seeing the matter opens the door to antecedent hostility as an explanatory variable.

Some antipathies are very old, but many are not. Romanian-Hungarian and Bulgarian-Turkish conflicts certainly have something to do with turning the tables on former imperial rulers. So does hostility between Cambodians and Vietnamese in Cambodia. But one needs to be very careful on this point, because the histories of some groups, such as the Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka, have been rewritten to emphasize implacable enmity even in the face of considerable cooperation and assimilation. Furthermore, many groups in conflict had never really encountered each other until recently. Although it may play a role in some conflicts, traditional antipathy is far from sufficient in explaining all current conflicts.

3. Ethnic conflict entails a clash of cultures. It pits against each other people whose values are in conflict, who want different things, and who do not really understand each other.

More often than not, however, people who seek different rewards do not impinge on each other: longstanding ethnic divisions of labor are usually shields, rather than swords, in conflict. Groups in conflict usually know each other rather well, and they do not like what they have experienced of each other, or they fear the traits and ambitions of other groups that threaten them. Certainly, the well-known contact hypothesis that proposes that cooperative intergroup contact will reduce antipathy has not been verified (Forbes 1997).

4. Ethnic conflict is brought on by modernization. Modernization makes people want the same, not different, things, and this sets up a great scramble for resources (Melson and Wolpe 1970; Tellis, Szayna, and Winnefeld 1998; Olzak and Nagel 1986).

If modernization produces conflict, why do some of the least modernized societies in the world (southern Sudan, Mauritania, Chad, highland Myanmar) have such intense ethnic conflict? And if modernization is the source of conflict, why does one so often hear that if economic development proceeds there will be less conflict? Perhaps the relationship is curvilinear, but, as things now stand, these are equal and opposite ideas.

5. Ethnic conflict is the result of economic competition between ethnically differentiated segments of the working class or between ethnically differentiated traders and customers (Bonacich 1972, 1973). In the one case, it is the underbidding of labor that causes resentment; in the other, it is the monopoly position minority entrepreneurs are able to exploit that is the cause.

Examples of such conflicts are more difficult to find than might be imagined. As I suggested, an ethnic division of labor inhibits conflict of the first sort, and customers' impression that middleman minorities are providing a valuable service, rather than exploiting them, inhibits conflict of the second sort. This is not to say that such groups are not objects of conflict on other grounds. In any case, if conflict is economically motivated, why does it take place along cross-class ethnic lines rather than cross-ethnic class lines?

6. An answer of sorts to this last question is provided by those who see the ethnic group as "a service producing club" (Congleton 1995: 74), or an affiliation designed to provide a reliable basis for exchange in the absence of enforcement mechanisms for preventing cheating (Wintrobe 1995). Ethnic networks provide trust to prevent cheating and sanctions should it occur. Ethnicity is a particularly apt affiliation for performing these functions because of the high

barriers to entering and leaving the group (Wintrobe 1995). From this supposition, there are two possible roads to conflict. In addition to providing reduced transaction costs for group members, groups use their influence to obtain state services, resulting in ethnically targeted policies, redoubled group efforts in politics, an increase in conflict, and a desire of groups that lose in the political process to opt out of the state (Congleton 1995: 87–90). Alternatively, some groups are so effective at providing a foundation for exchange that they receive very high returns, while others receive very low returns. Fear, envy, and hatred arise among members of the low-yield groups, who are in turn stigmatized by the high yielders (Wintrobe 1995: 53–54). (This is one of many arguments to the effect that conflict issues from ethnic inequality.) Conflict is thus the dysfunctional outcome of the functions that groups are called upon to perform.

In these utilitarian accounts, there is no independent role for affect and no explanation as to why group boundaries follow one set of lines rather than another. To show that already existing groups provide services to their members is not to show that services are the raison d'être of those groups. Services can be demanded of and performed by groups that come into being for quite different ends. That available institutions are used for some purpose is not evidence that they no longer fulfill any other. Moreover, the causal links are doubtful. Even without group-provided services, interethnic political competition might occur, and fear, hatred, and envy might arise.

7. The reduction of transaction costs also informs a quite different interpretation of group behavior (Hardin 1995). In this view, the ethnification of politics entails a coordination game in which group members emphasize their ethnic identity in the expectation that other members of the group will do the same. Various rewards follow from acting tacitly in concert. Group boundaries might run arbitrarily along another ethnic or nonethnic dimension and ethnic identity

might not take hold at all (Hardin 1995: 51). But once it does, coordination begins. And coordination slides easily into conflict and violence. All that is involved is tipping the balance— that is, passing beyond a certain point of escalation, often "from more or less random shocks" (Hardin 1995: 155; see 146, 151).

Interethnic conflict and violence thus derive from accidents of social relations (see Fearon and Laitin 1996) rather than feelings of antipathy (Hardin 1995:147-50), for ordinary people obtain their demonic ideas about others from manipulative elites.

For many severely divided societies, however, the evidence is the reverse. In some societies elites hold the same or more hostile attitudes than their followers (Horowitz 1997: 439, 457 n. 31). But in many other societies hostile ideas arise out of interethnic juxtapositions that make it difficult for political leaders to transcend those ideas. Some political elites, cross-pressured to be moderate on ethnic issues because of an externally derived universalism, have found to their enduring disadvantage that they are outbid on the extremist flanks by leaders more in tune with widely distributed hostile attitudes (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972: 80–86; Milne 1980).[1]

8. Other theorists argue explicitly that elite competition and the actions of "ethnic entrepreneurs" drive ethnic conflict (Brass 1985, 1996, 1997; Vail 1991: 11; Kasfir 1979). Elites manipulate ethnic identities in their quest for power. It is they who "construct" ethnic conflict (Brass 1997:26).

Why does interelite conflict proceed along ethnic lines, and why do the followers of elites follow them if the benefits flow solely to the elites whose interest motivates the struggle? Perhaps the followers do not know they are being manipulated, but this requires proof. It is especially unlikely that people will go to war or participate in a deadly riot on behalf of others.

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Not surprisingly, the elite competition view has been criticized for creating an inaccurate image "of evil politicians and innocent masses" (Kakar 1996: 150–51) and for leaving too little room for individual acts by ordinary people who engage in conflict behavior (Pandey 1992: 41).

9. Rational-choice theorists, motivated by the Yugoslav wars, have focused on ethnic warfare, but they have not always felt obliged to offer a theory of ethnic conflict in general. For them ethnic war is produced by the sense of insecurity that emerges when an actor is unsure of the intentions of another actor and the two are already mutually hostile (de Figueiredo and Weingast 1997; Fearon 1994; Hechter 1995; Lake and Rothchild 1996; Posen 1993).

A virtue of this conception is that its emphasis on the felt necessity of violence leads to an understanding of the way in which ordinary people become convinced that violence is unavoidable. Their fears move to the foreground of the analysis.

In one variant (Fearon 1994), ethnic war results from the fear of a minority that it cannot trust the guarantees offered by a majority that it will not abuse power to the acute disadvantage of the minority in a new regime. Separatist warfare is thus preventive war, with a minority deciding to secede at the outset rather than chance participation in a regime that could weaken its position and make secession difficult later.

This is a predicament produced by a failure of credible commitment. Buried in the formulation of the problem of commitment is an assumption about group intentions: namely, that groups would prefer to live together on mutually advantageous terms if they could only exchange commitments about those terms that were not subject to renunciation. But perhaps the problem is not that the majority is unable to commit itself credibly to respecting minority interests. Perhaps it does not wish to do so. Perhaps the majority prefers to live in a state in which it dominates the minority and supposes—usually correctly, to judge from the results of separatist warfare around

the world—that it can handle minority resistance and thus need not make concessions at the outset. Embedded in the commitment view of ethnic warfare in other words, is an understanding of ethnic conflict that is more benign than the understanding that may animate the participants.

In strategic-dilemma formulations, the role of interethnic antipathy in causing conflict is rejected. In the case of atrocities and what they signify about hostility, Fearon (1994: 3) speculates that atrocities are not produced by affect, but are intended to make later cohabitation impossible by deliberately deepening hatred or generating such fear of the target group's revenge among moderate members of the attacking group, that the latter will no longer be able to live near members of the target group. But if future hatred can be engendered by atrocities, is it not plausible that current atrocities are the result of a previously engendered hatred rather than a deliberate strategy? Do the emotions produced by a strategic use of violence dissipate, so that they do not become independent variables in later episodes of conflict? And, if they do, of what use is the strategy of engendering hatred? The antipathy to antipathy leads to an argument that proves too much.

10. It is precisely the strength of ethnic emotions, including the willingness to risk death for the sake of group interests, that has led some writers to develop theories of ethnic conflict based on evolutionary conceptions of kin selection and genetic imprint (van den Berghe 1981; Shaw and Wong 1989). Paul C. Stern has proposed a genetically encoded, "primordial sociality" that he asserts promotes inclusive fitness. Groups, he posits, gain an adaptive advantage when they can develop rules that proscribe selfish individual behavior. The deep primacy of group interests leaves them open to emotional appeals about threats to those interests. Although ethnic groups may not have an evolutionary advantage over other groups, political leaders make ethnic

groups objects of primordial attachment by tapping sentiments initially developed for such attachments.

Others have gone further, suggesting that groups inclined toward conflict and warfare have tended to be successful in competition with others (for a summary, see LeVine and Campbell 1972: 72–80). Brewer (1997) has also argued that group boundaries have evolutionary utility, because individuals historically were unable to survive alone. The benefits of cooperation, however, decline as groups expand, and so there is an optimal level of group distinctiveness beyond which groups lose the loyalty of their members (Brewer and Miller 1996: 46, 1996: 295–97). Outside the boundaries lie ethnocentrism and hostility.

These theories, if confirmed, could provide an understanding of the passionate attachment of individuals to ethnic groups, and some versions could, by stressing the functionality of intergroup aggression, provide clues to sources of conflict. But it is always dangerous to reason backward from a contemporary, recurrent phenomenon to an evolutionary rationale that ties current behavior to hard-wired functionalism. Deep sociality and tendencies to identify with ascriptive groups certainly exist, but it is not clear that their manifestations in ethnic conflict behavior can be explained by phylogenetic evolution. Even adaptive behavior can be manifested in maladaptive ways; maladaptive behavior can persist over very long historical periods; and even if ethnic conflict is shown to fulfill adaptive functions, it would still be wrong to assume that these functions could not be fulfilled in alternative ways, given the problem-solving capacity possessed by human beings.

The various approaches reviewed here do not build on each other so much as they compete with and purport to displace each other. They run the gamut from the passionless to the passionate, the structural to the strategic, the rational to the irrational, the culturally primordial to

the utterly contrived, and now back to the hard-wired primordial. It hardly needs saying that these explanations do not provide evidence of a field that has produced a great deal of cumulative knowledge.

Theoretical overclaiming is in evidence here.[2] Portions of the phenomenon have been discovered or rediscovered and then asserted to be characteristic of the whole phenomenon. If there are powerful emotions, or if ethnic group loyalty supersedes loyalty to other groups, the whole phenomenon must be primordial. If politicians benefit from calculative behavior, or if groups struggle over resources, the whole phenomenon must be instrumental. Clearly what is needed is a theory that can embrace the disparate manifestations of ethnic-conflict behavior.

It would be idle to claim to accomplish in one clean exercise what has not been accomplished in many previous iterations. To indulge in such a pretense would recapitulate the very overclaiming that has produced the current disarray. But it is not idle to try to deal with some of the bite-sized issues into which the larger issues can be subdivided.

Central to any such analysis are a consideration of the foundations of ethnic loyalty, the relation between passion and interest, and the significance of institutional context. A number of other issues, such as the role of individual and collective gratifications, can be addressed along the way, but these central issues get to the heart of the current disagreement.

Sociality and Ethnicity

If we have come full circle from cultural primordialism to evolutionary primordialism, that is because the power of ethnic affiliations stubbornly presses in on us and demands explanation.

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Such an explanation resides, in the first instance, in the need of individuals to belong to groups. Individuals require the cooperation that groups provide. They possess a deep sociality.

That sociality, however, is not maximally inclusive. Whenever groups form, their members sense the existence of boundaries that divide them from other groups. Both the impulse to form groups and the impulse to differentiate them from others are so strong that they are easily activated. No sense of birth connection, no sense of common history, no sense of prior intracategory similarity is necessary at the outset. In a laboratory setting, random assignment to categories will activate a sense of groupness (Tajfel 1981). On small, homogeneous islands, similar cleavages develop among people living under identical conditions (Firth 1957). Whatever the exact sources, the tendency to cleavage is so well established as to be undeniable.

With cleavage comes comparison. Ingroups are said to have certain qualities; outgroups, others. Generally, insiders evaluate their own collective qualities more highly than those of outsiders (see, for example, Edelstein 1972; Dubb 1974). They also evaluate their own products as superior, even when detached third-party judgments are otherwise (Ferguson and Kelley 1964), and they apportion rewards so as to favor themselves and to disfavor outsiders, even when it costs them some portion of the reward to create the intergroup difference in apportionment (Tajfel 1974). They behave this way even in the absence of any hint by experimenters of intergroup competition and even in the face of possible positive-sum outcomes if they wish to choose them. They use their perceptual apparatus to categorize people into classes and exaggerate similarities among themselves and differences from others, a phenomenon known in social-judgment theory as assimilation and contrast effects.[3] Moreover, groups are given to in-group bias, and they appear to be motivated by a desire for favorable collective evaluation.

Although, as we have seen, some theories suggest that groups derive value from their ability to satisfy the goals of individuals within them, the opposite appears to be the case: individuals derive value from the groups to which they belong (Brewer 1997: 205; Brewer 1991: 476). Indeed, they derive satisfaction from the success of the group, even when their own contribution to that success is palpably absent (Brewer 1979: 322). By the same token, the willingness of individuals to sacrifice for group interests and participate in collective action is predicted more by a sense of collective deprivation than it is by individual deprivation (Brewer 1991: 478–79). The improvement of the group's condition, in other words, may be a more powerful motivation to participate in collective effort than improvement of the participating individual's condition. This finding casts doubt on the aptness of methodological individualism as a starting assumption—or at least as the sole starting assumption—in understanding group dynamics.

Given the compelling power of group affiliations, it is not surprising that individuals should find them useful vehicles for the pursuit of their own interests as well. It would be surprising if they did not. It is not possible, however, to reduce groups to the fulfillment of individual goals or to reduce affect to instrumental behavior. Both are present, as I shall argue in more detail later.

So far, all of this pertains to groups but not specifically to ethnic groups. Members of ethnic groups seem to partake of all of these tendencies to cleave, compare, specify inventories of putative collective qualities, seek a favorable evaluation, manifest ingroup bias, exaggerate contrasts with outgroups, and sacrifice for collective interests. Ethnic groups also seem to carry matters further. They appear frequently to engender more loyalty from their members than competing group-types and to engage in severe conflict with other ethnic groups.

To appreciate the special power of ethnic loyalty one must see ethnic groups not only as groups like all others but also as groups possessing qualities that not all other groups possess in the same measure. The most important of these qualities is a strong sense of similarity, with roots in perceived genetic affinity or early socialization, or both. Belonging to a group implies thinking of oneself as possessing characteristics that are somehow representative of the social category the group embraces (Brewer and Miller 1996: 22). This feature, it can be hypothesized, is what leads individuals to submerge their own identities in the collective identity, and to favor ingroup members and make sacrifices for them. One sees oneself, so to speak, in other group members. Similarity engenders empathy and in extreme cases even obliterates the boundary between one individual group member and another. There is ample evidence that people like others whom they believe to be similar to themselves in taste, attitude, and value (Byrne, Clore, and Smeaton 1986; Stephan 1973; Byrne 1969). They are also attracted to others who they believe like them in turn, but this seems to be because "interpersonal attraction is a very sound basis for assuming commonality; it results in exaggerated perceptions of similarity" (Hogg and Turner 1985: 61). People assume ingroup members are similar to each other—that, after all, is the result of assimilation—and that assumption strengthens their attraction to them, even when they have no actual knowledge of their qualities (Brewer and Miller 1996: 29–31). The irony here is that egocentrism leads people to favor those they see as like themselves, and this leads beyond egocentrism to ethnocentrism and sacrifice—in other words, to a broader concept of self and self-interest.

Ethnicity is a powerful affiliation, both because similarity is valued and because genetic (or putatively genetic) origins and early socialization are potent sources of similarity or, in any case, of cues that signal similarity: appearance, customs, gestures, language, clothing, tastes, and

habits. The assumption of similarity follows quickly once groups are formed, even in laboratories, and reinforces group identity. Even more powerful is the assumption of similarity that derives from birth or common experiences of childhood.

Underlying genetic similarity and early socialization is, of course, the family. The family is the unit that constantly replenishes ethnic group members. It is the first group to which individuals belong and, because of the long period of human maturation, its influence is extraordinarily durable. At an early age children express fear toward strangers and learn the difference between family members and others. There is little doubt that they internalize the significance of the birth principle in cooperative organization and of distinctions based on birth. In most conditions they certainly appreciate that, however attenuated, genetic connections are a surer source of similarity than any other. Ethnic groups, whatever their actual composition, purport to be founded on descent, and they, too, offer a greater sense of similarity than groups founded on other premises. Given people's general preference for others with similar attributes, this fact alone accounts for ethnic affinity. Experimental studies show that the greater the felt similarity within a group, the greater the degree of ingroup bias (Brewer 1979: 318). Within ethnic groups felt similarity is likely to be great, which should lead to expectations that in-group bias and differentiation from outgroups will also be great. The ascriptive character of ethnic affiliations accounts for their potency.

Among family choices bearing on ethnicity, marriage is perhaps the most important. Endogamy gives concreteness to conceptions of ethnic affinity and makes the group a descent affiliation. If two subgroups that previously did not intermarry begin to do so, the reason is that they are beginning to see the line between them as insignificant in comparison to the line between them and other groups. Although marriage patterns can and do change, there are spiral

effects that issue from them. Groups in accelerating conflict tend to practice less exogamy. This leads to less porous boundaries between the groups, and the resulting attenuation in ties facilitates (or is at least no barrier to) further conflict. Severely conflicted groups rarely have exogamy rates very much higher than 10 percent. Groups with low levels of conflict (such as many in Latin America) have porous boundaries, both created by and facilitating exogamy, thus bolstering ties that can be a barrier to conflict.

In addition to being the source of descent affiliations, the family is also the source of behavioral lessons likely to be transferred to ethnic relations. Diffuse, unflinching mutual support and affection are the widespread model for family relations (however different reality may be). It is likely that this model is invoked for ethnic affiliations that are grounded in the same birth principle and grow out of family affiliations as well.

The degree of similarity of traits within ethnic groups and of difference of traits between groups is undoubtedly highly variable. Differences need not be substantial. There may be fairly similar inventories of cultural attributes across group lines. Nevertheless, it is common for a few traits that mark one group off from another to be exaggerated as interaction proceeds (see, for example, Weiner 1978: 240–41). Cleavage drives culture more than culture drives cleavage.

Notice that this account, although referable to birth, gives ample room for the social construction of ethnicity. Intergroup boundaries are constructed in social life just as they are constructed in the laboratory. The scope of group boundaries is not foreordained, and boundary change is common (see Edel 1965; Young 1965; Bruner 1974; Vail 1989). In the process of boundary enlargement or contraction, cultural and political elites play the part described by social constructivists, emphasizing features in the situation of their audience, including affinities and

disparities, that conduce to one or another definition of the group and its boundaries (Horowitz 1977).

Some social constructivists, however, go further, claiming that elites do not merely steer the process according to existing ethnic juxtapositions, but more or less shape them in view of their own material interest, with wide latitude to foment conflict and violence. These broader claims are highly contestable (see Kasfir 1979: 375–76). The constraints of the field in which group interactions occur limit what elites can do and what interests they can pursue (Horowitz 1985: 64–75). The strong perceptual basis of ethnic affinities and disparities is underappreciated by many constructivists. By the same token, the freedom of elites to foment conflict and violence is limited by their followers' definition of the situation and what they are willing to fight over. Hindu nationalists in India often attempt to incite attacks on Muslims, but they rarely succeed in the southern states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, where caste affiliations have more resonance than the Hindu-Muslim polarity (Wilkinson 1997). Constructivism can survive without seeing ethnicity as an altogether opportunistic and infinitely malleable affiliation.

The account I have given also takes seriously the claims of primordialists that ethnicity is a thick *Gemeinschaft* affiliation, without acceding to the extreme claims of some primordialists as to its mysterious, ineffable, invariably conflict-producing quality. To the contrary, a hard emphasis on the responsiveness of ethnic groups to the deep needs of group members is not at odds with a keen sense of the variability of ethnic phenomena (see Eller and Coughlin 1993). It follows that group members may entertain sentiments so intense that theorists identify them as primordial, even though group identities are socially constructed, recently constructed, founded on relatively little in the way of palpable differences, and mutable as environmental conditions change. Intergroup sentiments can and do change. Whereas Georgians formerly had a high

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opinion of Abkhaz as a people with a rich traditional culture, these stereotypes have given way to a view of them as wild and uncivilized (Anchabadze 1997: 6). Some antipathies and affinities are durable and some are not. The determinants of such variations remain open to explanation.

Stereotypes of group characteristics, aptitudes, and disabilities amplify whatever intergroup differences have been identified. Many of the traits imputed to outgroup members are threatening. The putative differences that accompany intergroup differentiation also provide reason for group mobilization. Not only do ethnic groups seek favorable evaluations, but the favorable outcomes they seek in competition are endangered by the presence of traits, such as diligence, clannishness, or intelligence, that they sense in their adversaries, even as they prefer their own mix of attributes. When stereotypes are invidious, that is, threatening to positive group evaluation, conflict is likely to be severe (Horowitz 1985: 166–81).

If we return to the emergence of cleavage and ask why the tendency is so persistent, we might speculate that differentiation results from a decline in the benefits of cooperation as group size increases. But another explanation can be inferred from the behavior that immediately accompanies cleavage: group bias that seeks favorable evaluation through discriminatory action. Perhaps this behavior also manifests a desire to reap a disproportionate share of the rewards in a given environment. This desire would not be at odds with the quest for a favorable evaluation, since the relative superiority of evaluation would provide a justification for unequal distribution. This desire would also comport with observed political behavior in ethnically divided societies, where a part of the society claims to be the whole, places the status of ethnic strangers at sufferance, demands a variety of privileges, dominates the environment, and, if possible, establishes a status hierarchy.

Nothing I have said here, it should be emphasized, obviates the possibility that individuals may sense more affinity with groups other than the ethnic group into which they were born. Some people may find that occupational cleavages displace ethnic cleavages. Again on the similarity principle, professors may prefer the company of professors, or physicians of physicians, to the company of members of their own ethnic group or family. Some individuals may find that they have more than one strong birth affiliation. A Belgian may be born Flemish and Catholic, in distinction to other Belgians who may be born Walloon and Catholic or Flemish and secularist in the Freemason tradition that, passed down from generation to generation, produces a birthlike affiliation in Belgium. Likewise, beneath these overarching levels of affiliation, there are likely to be subethnic ties as well. A Fleming from the southeast of Flanders may also see himself or herself as a Limburger and may view Antwerpers as possessing a certain unwonted arrogance.

These variations depend on particular social developments. In the case of occupational affiliations, the growth of a complex set of educational structures may strongly differentiate academics and doctors from other occupational groups. In the case of multiple birth affiliations, a history of religious warfare and then Enlightenment ideas produced *familles spirituelles* based on religious orientation, which were overlaid on, but did not correspond to, orientations based on language. In the case of subethnic ties, since many ethnic groups are amalgams (that is, built from the ground up), the residue of sentiment attaching to earlier, lower-level materials may be more or less salient, depending in large measure on how significant overarching conflicts are.

In many countries, the first and second variations—occupational identities (or class identities) and cross-cutting birth-based identities—are not present. The first is a function of an industrial or post-industrial, highly complex division of labor. The second is a function of

specific histories. Multiple, sweeping, continental movements of the sort that, because of their inconclusive results, produced multiple affiliations in Belgium or Switzerland, are not universal. Still, they are present when, for example, Islam and Christianity or Islam and Hinduism crosscut ethnic affiliations, as for the Yoruba in Nigeria or for many groups in India. But in many countries where such developments did not break ethnic lines, ethnicity, while always encountering competing affiliations, does not encounter affiliations quite so powerful in their pull. In such cases, a single cleavage can rend a polity. Usually, however, especially after relatively recent amalgamation, subethnic affiliations are available for invocation when the context shifts to a lower level. This fact, as I shall mention briefly below, provides a policy handle for the mitigation of ethnic conflict.

In short, a view of ethnicity as a strong affiliation is not incompatible with variation in its political saliency. History is not reducible, after all, to how members of one group see members of another, and it is a mistake of maximal primordialists to think otherwise. But the Gemeinschaft position, a minimalist primordialism—though the term "primordial" has misleading overtones that ought to be avoided altogether—is not indefensible.

Affective and Instrumental Behavior

It should be clear by now that, at least in this field, efforts to subsume passion in calculation or calculation in passion are futile (see *Rationality and Society* 1993). Neither the view that ethnicity is impervious to reason nor the view that ethnic conflict results solely from the suboptimal consequences of the rational behavior of actors can be sustained. Bell's (1975: 169) observation that ethnicity is salient "because it can combine an interest with an affective tie" puts

the matter well, and it is easy to see that, once the affective side of ethnic affiliations is recognized, those affiliations will also become "a strategic site" (Bell 1975: 169). When it is clear that people give preference to members of their own group, members of that group will appeal to other members for such preference. Just as the family is simultaneously an emotional and an economic unit, so the ethnic group takes on instrumental tasks, but it cannot be described solely in terms of, or be reduced to, the performance of those tasks, even though this performance should make the affiliation more rewarding and therefore more valuable than before (Patchen 1995).

The point is important for many reasons. One reason is that reduction of passions to interests can lead to a cribbed view of the emotions. In one account (Wintrobe 1995: 53–54), as we have seen, fear, envy, and hatred arise essentially as a result of distributive shortfalls, whereas a good case can be made that the repertoire of ethnic emotions, conditions evoking them, and action based on them are considerably wider. Petersen (forthcoming), for example, differentiates fear, hatred, and resentment, suggesting that they derive from varying conditions and are activated under varying circumstances of ethnic relations. Furthermore, to deny an independent role to affect might be to expect a proportionate (that is, reasonable) response to stimuli such as grievances, whereas ethnic conflict is frequently characterized by disproportionate responses: excessive fears of harm and excessive reactions to harm.

The reduction of instrumental to affective behavior has adverse consequences as well. In anger there can be reason, even if the response goes beyond reason. Experimental studies of aggression reveal that attacks believed to be unjustified arouse greater aggression in response than justified or explicable attacks (Geen 1990: 44). People gauge the appropriateness of their level of anger by reference to justification, and they reason about justification.

In spite of links between passion and interest, each can occupy a somewhat separate domain or at least be present in variable proportions. Violence provides an excellent example of this, for there is abundant evidence that some interpersonal violence is impulsive and some is instrumental (Berkowitz 1974). Some psychologists emphasize instrumental rewards in generating aggression (Lange and van de Nes 1973), and others the anger that follows from frustration (Fitz 1976). Whatever the balance, the two motives can be distinguished. In a study of Scottish prison inmates convicted of serious assaults, 76 percent were found to have engaged in impulsive aggression; only 18 percent had engaged in "controlled and planned aggression" (Berkowitz 1986: 97). Personal dispositions play a role. Emotionally reactive people are likely to attribute hostile intentions to others and, on that account, to respond with aggression; they are sensitive to insults and easily provoked. On the other hand, instrumentally aggressive people have personality profiles resembling those of nonaggressive people (Russell and Arms 1995). In a study titled *The Seductions of Crime*, Katz (1988) notes the low rate of injuries in robbery, suggesting that robbery is an example of instrumental violence. But he also examines the violence that takes place in a minority of robberies and concludes that it is not typically the result of panic or a transaction gone awry but is gratuitous, even "recreational." It is, he says, a manifestation of "commitment to be a hard man—a person whose will, once manifested, must prevail, regardless of calculations of practical self-interest" (Katz 1988: 179, 180, 187). The person who behaves in this way has chosen to cultivate a "distinctive morally insensitive will," to be mean, to generate "dread" (Katz 1988: 194, 100, 135–38). Undoubtedly, people who cultivate reputations for excessive, unpredictable violence gain rewards that might not be available to others (see Schelling 1966: 37–39, 118), and for that reason willfulness can become a strategy. But it is not always a strategy; it can and does proceed from impulsiveness or deliberate

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immorality and "delight in violence" (Katz 1988: 138). The rewards that accrue may reinforce this behavior, but the personality inclined to needless violence is not likely to be impelled toward it in the first instance by the rewards.

There are some analogies here to ethnic violence. Deadly ethnic riots are large, passionate events, characterized by brutality and atrocities. There has been much speculation about the extent to which they are spontaneous or organized episodes (see, for example, Tambiah 1996; Brass 1996, 1997; Wilkinson 1997). In the end, however, how could they be anything but both? A riot on such a scale could scarcely be organized in the absence of a great deal of anger against the targets. A riot that was the spontaneous expression of deep hostility toward the targets would soon attract the attention of those who stood to gain from planning violence, and they would then surely attempt to foment later riots, drawing on (and undoubtedly trying to exacerbate) the hostile sentiments of those whose participation they wished to engage in violence. Passion might come first; organization could not succeed without it; but passion would attract organization. Interest can mobilize people along the lines of their passion, but only if there is passion to mobilize around. Quite a lot of instrumental behavior is grafted onto attachments that have such a great value for people that they become magnets for mobilization.

Ethnic Behavior in Democratic Politics

Strategic behavior really comes into its own in the structured settings of democratic politics. Even here, however, there is a circular relationship between the situations actors confront and those they create. Ethnic group boundary change responds strongly to the political environment, particularly the territorial frame in which groups find themselves. Very often in Asia and Africa

the approach of independence produced a tendency to create larger ethnic agglomerations more suited to political competition in the whole territory. This tendency was called "supertribalism" or "artificial ethnicity," as if to say that lower-level affiliations were more genuine.

In many cases, new identities at high levels of generality—such as North and South, Christian and Muslim, or Malay and non-Malay—were embraced, even though, as I mentioned, the component groups did not abandon lower-level identities for all purposes. Mobilization of one group to these new levels often created a need for others to increase subethnic cohesion in response, but the responses were not perfectly symmetrical. The category "northerner," or at least northern Muslim, came to have great resonance in Nigeria, but southerners remained divided as Ibo, Yoruba, and others; even the Yoruba category was subject to fission along the lines of the traditional kingdom. The strategic imperatives that produced the reconstruction of group boundaries did not work their will evenly among groups, free of a variety of social constraints.

In some states, the configuration of antecedent cleavages and the structure of the polity inhibited the growth of wider identities. In those states, such as Tanzania, group identities remained at much more local levels, and ethnic conflict, although not absent, did not divide the state down the middle (Young 1976: 216–73). Much the same was for a long time true of India, but the newly nationalized Hindu-Muslim cleavage threatens to rend the society (Hardgrave 1993).

It is useful to contrast the range of variations outside of Asia and Africa. At one end are largely fluid societies, often with immigrant origins, that contain groups that historically had initial difficulty securing acceptance but came to be accepted as the immigration of still-newer groups facilitated their incorporation. This is true in large measure of groups of European origin in the United States, France, Australia, and New Zealand. In the middle of the continuum are

societies in which ethnic groups compete as groups, but in a complex setting that mitigates the singleminded character of such conflicts. In these countries—Switzerland, Belgium, and Canada, all of them close to powerful neighbors and all of them federations—external forces historically fostered internal integration, but in the context of multiple lower-level loyalties. To return to a point made earlier, religious warfare, the Enlightenment, and the industrial revolution gave rise to powerful cleavages that compete with the ethnic cleavage: Protestant-Catholic, religious-anticlerical, social class, and, in some countries, region or canton. Ethnic issues broke into the party system late in relation to these established cleavages and never quite displaced them or the political parties to which they had given rise. Party politics is thus not a perfect reflection of ethnic conflict. States in which such complexity has produced what are essentially multiple, birth or near-birth affiliations are surely at an advantage over those such as Sri Lanka or Kenya in which one ethnic group confronts another, external forces are neutral or disintegrative, and parties reflect just one cleavage line. This is the other end of the continuum.[4]

In Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union many more states are characterized by a predominant ethnic cleavage than by multiple, alternating ethnic axes of conflict. That many of these states also have two or three large ethnic agglomerations confronting each other is due to a combination of social perception and strategic imperatives in a bounded environment.

That social perception is important is suggested by the fact that, despite a tendency to expand group identity to a level of up to half the population of a state (see Chai 1996), many smaller groups survive although they do not approach the 50 percent mark, and in some cases subgroups actually split off from larger groups of which they were formerly a part. Not all boundary change is upward.

Still, there is no denying the utility of larger affiliations or the general trend toward them. That strategy, as well as social perception, is involved is indicated not merely by the trend toward larger groups but also by a trend toward bifurcation of polities and the frequent proclivity (albeit far from ineluctable) for tripolar conflicts to become bipolar, as third groups, those that are smallest or most divided internally, are pressured to align with one of the other two groups.

The dynamics of bifurcation can be understood by adverting to a phenomenon first elaborated, without reference to ethnicity, by Riker (1962: 32–101). Riker exposed the distributive advantages underlying the creation of minimum winning coalitions, which enjoy the support of just over half the electorate. Supporters of the minimum winning coalition could expect significantly greater rewards than they would receive if the winning party had to satisfy 80 or 90 percent of the electorate. Majoritarian rules for the formation of governments create no incentive to seek majorities larger than the required 50 percent plus one.

In the case of ethnic bifurcation, majoritarian political institutions cause a special problem. Segmented electoral markets, each exploited by ethnically based political parties, mean that prospects for alternation in office are thwarted by ascriptive affiliations.

Ironically, majority rule was intended to mean something different, namely, the exercise of choice. In divided societies it instead usually means group headcounts; and majority rule encourages the formation of groups whose number of heads reach the majority threshold. Brubaker (1996: 24, 17) perhaps puts the matter too strongly when he says that political context does not merely constrain but constitutes. Ethnic groups and nations, he contends, are cultural forms "governed by the properties of political fields, not by the properties of collectivities." We know too much by now of the properties of collectivities to accede to the hyperbole, but it is

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certainly true that groups are strongly responsive to the power of political fields, and Brubaker is right to stress the point.

Ethnically based parties, with orientations directed exclusively toward the welfare of the group that comprises the bulk of their members, arise in divided societies for many reasons. Among them are the fact that parties build on antecedent social relations and the tendency to see ethnic relations in competitive, even zero-sum, terms, as we noted in connection with the experiments dealing with apportionment of rewards among even casually formed groups. But there is another, recurrent reason embedded in the formal institutions to which parties respond. As Bates (1974: 470–71) has pointed out, legislative constituencies in most countries are ethnically homogeneous; and once they begin that way they are likely to stay that way in subsequent electoral boundary delimitations. Even in countries where groups tend to be intermixed, the number of heterogeneous constituencies declined soon after independence and kept on declining (Lim 1997). It is safe and rewarding for politicians to make ethnic appeals to homogeneous electorates and more difficult to craft appeals to heterogeneous electorates. Once legislators are elected on the basis of such appeals, they resist changes in constituency composition, but winners in heterogeneous constituencies will not resist such changes unless they have found a formula that enables them to secure votes across group lines.

Politicians who have made ethnic appeals to secure their election from homogeneous constituencies will, of course, find ethnically based parties congenial, and they will not be attracted by the idea of securing election or reelection in such constituencies if they belong to a multiethnic party that, to survive, has to make compromises inimical to the untrammeled interests of their constituents. There are, in short, bottom-up reasons for ethnically based parties to exist once constituencies are homogeneous.

Policymakers interested in promoting interethnic compromise have occasionally sensed the need for heterogeneous constituencies. Uganda and Kenya have at various times experimented with functional equivalents, that is, the requirement that candidates secure secondary support from differently composed constituencies adjacent to theirs. In 1978 Nigeria required that a successful candidate for president receive an overall plurality plus minimal geographic distribution of his support among Nigeria's states, the latter requirement designed to provide the functional equivalent of heterogeneous support. The winning candidate in the 1979 election managed to meet the dual requirements and, accordingly, behaved moderately in office. The same could not be said of the vast majority of legislators, whom the policymakers had not thought to make dependent on multiethnic support. They came overwhelmingly from homogeneous constituencies and pursued ethnically exclusive policies in office.

In country after country, political parties that began with multiethnic support have become ethnically based, irrespective of the initial wishes of party leaders and often in explicit contradiction to their ideas about the desirability of multiethnic organization. Pan-ethnic nationalists and socialists were reduced, against their wishes, to the status of ethnic-group leaders. Again and again, the competitive configuration is what governs. If group members want a differential apportionment of rewards—including rewards of status, prestige, and symbolic recognition—and if the modern state is able to provide these tangible and intangible rewards, interethnic compromise will not provide what group members want.

Nevertheless, leaders who engage in interethnic compromise could do so with impunity if they could forestall the growth of ethnically based opposition on their flanks. Short of outlawing opposition—which indeed happens in response to this problem—they are unable to do this. If they wait until ethnically based opposition appears, as Sinhalese party leaders did in Sri Lanka in

the 1950s, they will then need to compete with that opposition with the handicap of appearing tardy in taking up the ethnic cause and inauthentic about its espousal—a handicap those Sinhalese leaders did in fact encounter. Hence it is preferable to move early, occupy the ethnic flank, preempt the competition, and try to inhibit its formation altogether, thus preserving monopoly control over the votes of group members. Monopoly control has the additional advantage of quite possibly limiting the degree of ethnically virulent claims that will come with sharp interparty but monoethnic competition on the ethnic flank. With homogeneous constituencies, early action is strongly advisable.

This logic applies equally to the leaders of multiethnic parties, who, if they opt instead to leave and lead ethnically based parties, will end up in a permanent minority position even if they capture all of their group's support, simply because their group constitutes a minority. The alternative in both cases, once competition on the flanks gets going, is to be left with no support at all if these leaders stay with the multiethnic party. Better to capture the support of one's own group, become a leader of a minority party, and hope—generally futilely—for the day when a new multiethnic party or new coalition can be formed.

Typically, therefore, multiethnic parties dissolve before polarization is complete. Their dissolution, however, is usually a large step on the road to polarization.

All of this highlights a point I made earlier in connection with claims that members of ethnic groups learn their antipathy toward other groups from manipulative leaders. Here we see that even the preferences of leaders for multiethnic parties yield to the danger that their supporters will abandon them for monoethnic parties. It is most certainly not the case that all leaders are less bigoted than their followers, but it is equally true that their followers do not need

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to be taught whom to be hostile toward or how to make claims in politics that will disadvantage those they see as ethnic enemies.

This brings us to the question of why politics takes this sort of centrifugal turn. Most of the answer is already in place. As Rabushka and Shepsle (1972: 62–86) explain, intense preferences, distributive politics, and an oversized (more than majority) coalition lead to strongly centrifugal tendencies. All that is missing is the political entrepreneur who, excluded from leadership in the multiethnic party, proceeds to make extreme ethnic claims. The presence of such politicians is the reason that leaders of multiethnic parties—in anticipation if possible, in reaction if necessary—cultivate support on the flank where the political entrepreneur will be located. The alternative course of delivering preferred goods by interethnic compromise is foreclosed by the intensity of preferences along a single axis of ethnicity, which makes the exchange of one value for another a very difficult undertaking (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972: 84).

None of this is completely inevitable. Elsewhere I have tried to explain that institutions can alter conflict outcomes (Horowitz 1989); that some electoral institutions are more hospitable to maintaining interethnic moderation than others because they counter the centrifugal incentive structure of politicians (Horowitz 1991: 163–203); that devolution to substate units can mitigate bifurcation by activating lower-level identities (Horowitz 1985: 601–13); and that, on the other hand, some decision rules actually foster ethnic exclusion and can even promote minority rule (Horowitz 1993:28-31). Obviously, these variations create opportunities for the amelioration of conflict. However, under most conditions leaders are likely to be punished for opting for ameliorative institutions, just as they are punished for embarking on a compromise course in general. There is a large literature on ethnic conflict management (for example, McGarry and

O'Leary 1993), but little systematic work on the timing and conditions conducive to embarking on a course of conflict management.

Speculations on Synthesis

I claimed earlier that various perspectives on ethnic conflict were not as mutually incompatible as they might seem. I suggested, too, that while passion and interest sometimes operate separately, there are also reasons why they are so often found together (those with interests seek to harness passions). One can now also connect patterns of group formation and group loyalty to ethnic political behavior in the institutional framework of the democratic state. We have seen that ethnic groups are formed and re-formed in bounded fields, based on a sense of similarity of character and common fate. The tendency of people to form groups, cleave from others, compare themselves with others, and discriminate against others implies, to say the least, a less-than-maximal sociality. Here we have seen that the democratic state provides a frame within which ethnic conflict is played out. In democratic politics, too, maximal inclusiveness is a strongly disfavored outcome, and there are strong incentives to maximize differences in the issue positions and the rewards obtained by groups. To be sure, some intergroup differentiation has taken place in anticipation of competition within the political system of the state (Chai 1996). If this were all there were to it, if groups were only organized for politics in institutional settings, the isomorphism of the two processes would be illusory, for the two would amount to the same thing. Indeed, both might be reducible to Riker's minimum winning coalition theorem. But what is striking is that intergroup differentiation has the same characteristics even in noninstitutional settings, including experimental settings. This might lead upon further exploration to a

conclusion that the minimum winning coalition theorem is actually an instance of the more general human tendency to cleave, compare, and apportion rewards in a biased fashion.[5]

I do not mean to make such a claim with any special vigor. I advance it merely as a speculation to undermine further the prevailing wisdom that processes characterized as either affective or calculative do not have some prominent underlying similarities. One could make an even more radical claim—that the attraction of analysts to seemingly irreconcilable hard and soft positions on all these issues are themselves a manifestation of the same underlying propensities to cleavage, comparison, and self-definition by opposition. If I am right that there is less mutual exclusivity than supposed by those who have taken the opposed positions, then this speculation would be of interest far beyond the field of ethnic conflict.

Be that as it may, it seems to me that the current state of affairs demands a new synthesis. I am sure I have not produced any such synthesis here, and I probably have not done justice to any of the prevailing positions in attempting to articulate a medium-hard, medium-soft, at once structural and strategic perspective. But I hope I have shown that there is promise in the combination.

Notes

1. For helpful observations on elites and masses, see Petersen (forthcoming: ch. 2).

2. Some of the writers I have cited, such as Fearon (1994), are careful to confine themselves to a particular slice of conflict behavior, such as separatist warfare. Their analysis, however, is founded on broader assumptions and has broader implications for conflict theory, which is why I placed them where I did.

3. Where values are arrayed along a continuum, subjects simplify the array by compressing small differences to something approaching their median value (assimilation effects) and exaggerating larger differences (contrast effects) (see Eiser 1990). Another way to put this is to say that differences judged to belong to the same class (for example, heavy) are perceptually reduced, while those judged to belong to a different class than the first (for example, light) are judged to be more different from the first class than they actually are. These phenomena constitute intraclass assimilation and interclass accentuation (see also Zebrowitz 1990: 53).

4. In this paragraph I have drawn on Horowitz 1993.

5. After all, one of the advantages of the ingroup-outgroup models I have described is that they are sensitive to context and so fit well with the state's framing of interactions.

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