Ethnic conflict in theory and ethnic nationalism among the Kurdish people in Iran Iraq and Turkey

Kevin James Parsneau

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ETHNIC CONFLICT IN THEORY AND
ETHNIC NATIONALISM AMONG THE KURDISH PEOPLE
IN IRAN, IRAQ, AND TURKEY

by

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This project outlines the assumptions of three schools of theory about ethnic conflict and relates them to the specific example of Kurdish ethnonationalist violence. The first school, the conflictual modernizationists, blames the social changes and economic competition of modernization for the creation and strengthening of ethnic ties. According to them, ethnic conflict results from modernization. The second school, the primordialists, portrays ethnic identifiers as traits that supersede economic ties. For them, ethnicity and ethnic organization are a natural, pre-modern system of differentiation between competing human groups. They believe that conflict results from deeply felt loyalties to pre-modern identities. These two schools have dominated the debate over the causes of ethnic conflict.

However, the third school analyzed in this project, the constructivists, best describes the conditions that have resulted in Kurdish ethnonationalism. The constructivists believe that ethnicity and nationalism are imagined identities, and that the ideologies of ethnicity and nationality are discourses that reinforce the legitimacy of or call for the destruction of states. According to the constructivists, a state that claims legitimacy based upon an ethnically homogenous citizenry promotes one ethnic identity as that of the nation-state. When the national identity excludes other ethnies within the state's borders, excluded groups resist assimilation, resulting in conflict between the excluded ethny and the state.

The example of Kurdish ethnonationalism exposes the weaknesses of the dominant approaches and the value of constructivism. Thus, future scholars must apply constructivist considerations to their studies of ethnic conflicts.
### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.  INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. CONFLICTUAL MODERNIZATION:</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPETITION THEORISTS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. OTHER CONFLICTUAL MODERNIZATIONIANS</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. PRIMORDIALISTS</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. CONSTRUCTIVISTS</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. KURDISH ETHNONATIONALISM</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. THE KURDS AND THREE APPROACHES TO ETHNICITY</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The issue of ethnic conflict strikes at the heart of most nation-states. A recent study of ethnicity indicated that, while there were only 165 states prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union, there are as many as eight thousand distinct ethnic groups in the world.\(^1\) With so many ethnicities scattered throughout so few states, few so-called nation-states qualify even roughly as ethnic nations.\(^2\) These ethnically heterogenous states provide the conditions for ethnic competition or, even, violence.

In multi-ethnic states, leaders often politicize ethnic identity and promote competition along ethnic lines, causing difficulties for these states. Ethnic conflicts manifest themselves in international complications and domestic crises. Foreign governments intervene on the behalf of

\(^1\)James Mayall, *Nationalism and International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 64. The study based ethnic diversity upon linguistic and cultural differentiation.

minorities or sponsor terrorist groups that organize around ethnic identity. Additionally, the international community sometimes imposes sanctions on states experiencing ethnic conflict. Strong ethnic movements often accompany intolerance and violence, threatening economic and political order. Ethnic conflicts undermine the state at multiple levels to undermine international standing, domestic order, democracy, and legitimacy.3

Studies show that ethnic conflict is the most persistent and problematical form of violence in the modern world. Istvan Kende, studying 120 violent conflicts in Africa from 1946 to 1976, concluded that of the three types of potential conflict, internal anti-regime, internal tribal, and border wars, internal conflicts were the most frequent and deadly. Most of the internal anti-regime and all of the internal tribal conflicts involved groups differentiated by ethnic identity.4

In recognition of the world-wide importance and the complexity of ethnic violence, numerous authors have


attempted to understand this problem. Several schools of ethnic conflict addressed the issue of persistent violence between groups organized along ethnic lines or between such groups and their respective states. Even until the 1960's, theorists assumed that modernization and economic interdependence would erode the pre-modern ties to ethnicity. These Marxist and Liberal theorists, the integrating modernizationists, expected the demise of ethnicity as a means of political organization and the end of ethnic conflict.

When the integrating modernizationists' predictions failed to come true by the end of the 1960's, scholars quit assuming that ethnic conflict would decrease, and they tried to discover the causes of violent ethnic conflict. Three schools of theory have arisen to examine the phenomenon of ethnic conflict. The first of these schools, the conflictual modernizationists, argues that the economic competition and social disruption of modernization increases ethnic conflict. The second school, the primordialists, argues that ethnic conflict results from the assertion of and the defense of psychologically-valued identities. The third school, the constructivists, argues that ethnic conflict results from the construction of national identities that exclude ethnic groups within the states.
The purpose of this project is to examine the different schools of ethnic conflict and the relevance of their theories to a specific example of persistent, violent ethnic conflict--Kurdish ethnonationalism in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. Chapters II, III, IV, and V review the different schools of ethnic conflict. Chapters VI and VII discuss Kurdish ethnonationalism.

Chapter II begins the review with a discussion of the Marxist approach to ethnic conflict and the competition theories that developed from Marxist ideas. These theorists portray ethnic conflict as a reflection of the class conflict. Whereas Marxists assume that loyalties to archaic ethnic ties would fade with modernization, competition theorists believe that the increased economic competition of modernization results in ethnic conflict. They believe that a cultural division of labor, with class lines approximating ethnic lines, causes violence between ethnies. However, these monocausal theories fail to address important issues, such as why ethnic groups choose to organize by ethnicity rather than class. Other, more complex theories of the relationship between modernization and ethnic conflict arose to address their shortcomings.

Chapter III discusses the other conflictual modernizationists. They argue that modernization radically
alters societies. It destroys traditional social structures and replaces them with modern economies and expanded polities. As the people within colonies and new states that are modernizing try to organize their society, ethnic elites utilize ethnic identities for their own economic advantage, and promote ethnic conflict.

The sophisticated conflictual modernization theorists addressed many issues ignored by the Marxists and the competition theorists, but they lacked explanations for the apparent irrationality of ethnic conflict. Conflicting ethnic groups destroyed the economies and the polities along with the material goods over which conflictual modernizationists assumed they were fighting. Furthermore, members of ethnic movements willingly sacrificed not only their economic well-being, but their lives for their ethnic identity. The destructiveness, deadliness, and apparent irrationality of ethnic conflict defies the material, rational assumptions of these theorists.

The primordialists, whose theories are discussed in chapter IV, emphasize the "irrational" elements of ethnic identity. Primordialists examine the psychological value.

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5This project uses the term "irrational" to refer to nonmaterial, non-political, personal needs (as opposed to tangible material resources or political power assumed to be the "rational" goals of modern people). As shall be discussed, modern nation-states rely heavily upon
and emotional meaning of ethnicity. They argue that people draw a sense of worth and belonging from their ethnic identity. Furthermore, unlike class membership which theoretically can be changed, ethnicity is an identity which people have for their entire lives and pass on to their descendants. Thus, they will sacrifice their immediate economic interests for their ethnic group.

At the present time, the conflictual modernizationist and the primordialist approaches dominate discussions of ethnic conflict. Chapter V examines a third school, the constructivists, which has arisen recently and examines the "irrational" loyalties for their popular legitimacy. Likewise, modern people have an "irrational" need to belong to a understandable order. This term is included to demonstrate that conflictual modernizationists' definitions of "modern" and "rational" inherently denigrate "irrational" behaviors which are necessary to societies. The term "irrational" is not intended to denote inferiority or dysfunctionalism and any confusion caused by its use is unintended.

relationship of ethnic identity to the process of "constructing" national identities. Constructivists argue that ethnicity and nationality are imagined identities. They explain ethnicity as a argumentative discourse that legitimizes or delegitimizes the state.

Constructivists find the roots of ethnic violence in the promotion of national identities that threaten other identities within the state. Constructivists argue that, often, the ethnic group that controls the state promotes its ethnic identity as the national identity, and excludes other ethnicities from the national community. Since a state's claim to legitimacy often rests upon its claim of a culturally homogenous citizenry, it perceives alternate identities as a threat. Excluded ethnic groups resist what they perceive as oppression, and states defend themselves through violence, promoting conflict along ethnic lines.

Chapter VI discusses the Kurdish people in Iran, Iraq and Turkey, and the history of Kurdish ethnonationalism. Kurdish leaders, in the name of the Kurdish people, have fought the central governments of these states since their formations. In Iran and Iraq, Kurdish groups have demanded cultural autonomy from the governments. In Turkey, Kurdish ethnonationalists have fought for cultural rights and even a separate state for Kurdish-speakers. Violence between
ethnic Kurds and their respective governments have flared up as recently as the Iran-Iraq War and the Gulf War. The armed conflict continues as the declaration of the Kurdish Federated State in Iraq has destabilized the region.

Chapter VII examines how well each of the major schools of ethnic conflict describes the conditions in Kurdistan. This project argues that while the two dominant schools, the conflictual modernizationists and the primordialists, provide insight into the forces that exacerbate the conflict, the constructivists best describe the causes of Kurdish nationalism. Kurdish nationalists rely upon the traditional structures of authority that remain largely intact. Also, they resisted the central authorities prior to modernization. Thus, modernization did not destroy social order among the Kurds and did not cause ethnic conflict.

Furthermore, the existence of psychologically-valued identities, proposed by primordialists as the source of ethnic conflict, does not necessitate interethnic violence. The Kurds, Persians, Arabs, and Turks have well-developed cultural identities. However, attachment to one's identity does not, in itself, require conflict with other groups. For example, an affinity for one's "Turkishness" does not require animosity towards others' "Kurdishness."
Primordialists misinterpret the origins of ethnic conflict in Kurdistan.

The constructivist theory identifies the source of violence between the Kurds and their ethnic neighbors. The root of the problem lies in the national self-perceptions of the Kurdish nationalists and the leaders of Iran, Iraq and Turkey. Although economic forces, social disruption and well-established ethnic identities exacerbate the ethnic conflict, the unifying mechanisms of the three so-called "nation-states"—Iran's suppression of threats to Islamic unity, Iraq's Ba'thist's aspirations to lead Arab nationalism and Turkey's insistence that the Kurds are "mountain Turks"—necessitate conflict. Their presumed "unifying mechanisms" are dysfunctional and must be moderated or ethnic violence will continue.

Since the example of Kurdish ethnonationalism reveals the weaknesses of the dominant schools and shows the value of constructivism, future studies of ethnic conflict must account for constructivist assumptions. Scholars should quit focusing on the effects of modernization or the residual effects of loyalties to pre-modern ties for the sources of ethnic conflict. While these approaches enhance the understanding of conflicts, the problematical construction of national identities causes of conflicts.
CHAPTER II
CONFLICTUAL MODERNIZATION: COMPETITION THEORISTS

As recently as the 1960s, theorists of ethnic conflict assumed that modernization would reduce ethnic consciousness and ethnic violence. These integrating modernizationists predicted that the pre-modern ties of ethnicity would recede, replaced by ties to the modern state. The interdependence of modern economies and the social structures of modern polities would overwhelm ethnicity as a means for social organization. Despite their optimism, ethnic conflict continued in developing societies and even spread into the developed world.

By the 1960's, most theorists abandoned the idea that "nation-building" would replace ethnic loyalties with loyalties to the centralized states. Modernization and economic interdependence seemed to intensify ethnic differences. Something was fundamentally wrong with the dominant paradigm. Saul Newman writes, "as (ethnic) conflicts increased in number and scope, they were perceived as more than just stubborn relics of a bygone era."¹ As

¹Newman, 454.
political science reevaluated the assumptions of modernization theory, it re-examined the issue of ethnic conflict, attempting to explain the rise in violence.

The conflictual modernizationists picked up where the integrating modernizationists had left off—examining the relationship of economic forces to ethnic upheavals. They decided that the causes of ethnic conflict could be found in economic forces, and that "the relationship between ethnicity and class constitutes a key to understanding ethnic conflicts."² The changes associated with developing economies, according to the conflictual modernizationists, caused ethnic conflict.

The competition theorists are the most straightforward of the conflictual modernizationists. Simply put, competition theorists believe ethnic conflict is the result of economic struggles. They argue that modernization increases the competition for scarce resources, jobs, housing, and economic opportunities, causing conflict to occur along "ethnic boundaries"³ as citizens perceive that


³Fredrik Barth, "Introduction", Ethnic Groups and Boundaries, ed. Fredrik Barth (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), 9-38. Barth's term "ethnic boundary" emphasizes that the important feature in ethnicity is not the actual phenological trait, but the perception of identity. He
their interests are linked to those of their ethnic kin.\footnote{Susan Olzak and Joane Nagel, "Introduction," in Competitive Ethnic Relations, ed. Susan Olzak and Joane Nagel (Boston: Academy Press, 1986), 2.}

Competition occurs either because of a cultural division of labor, according to the dependency subschool, or because of a split labor market, according to the ecology subschool.

Competition theory evolved from Marxist principles. Marx believed that the social disruption caused by capitalist modes of production creates dissatisfaction and revolutionary zeal. However, when class lines coincide with ethnic lines, organization and conflict occur along ethnic lines rather than class lines. According to competition theory, ethnic collective action and competition occur most often when ethnically distinct populations are exploited. Modernizing societies' increased competition for valuable resources ignites ethnic action.

Economic competition creates relative depravity between ethnies and the economic disparity leads to strife. Ethnic conflict in a society results from more than inequalities and scarcity of resources. According to Chong-do Hah and Jeffrey Martin, conflict is most likely when ethnic groups assumes that ethnic boundaries are politically and socially constructed, and can not be objectively determined. "Ethnic boundaries," thus, can be and are crossed, created, and re-created.
sense that what is has is incongruous with "the goods and conditions they think they are capable of attaining or maintaining."^5

Marxists

Karl Marx was one of the early theorists to address the issue of ethnic nationalism. However, Marx saw ethnic and nationalist sympathies as distractions from the class struggle. He portrayed the economic forces of capitalism as forces that would promote universalism over particularism. Socialism would end ethnic tension and consciousness, replacing pre-modern kinship loyalties with modern class loyalties. Ethnicity, as a relic of a bygone era, would disappear during modernization.

Marx's eurocentrism resulted in his failure to anticipate the persistence of ethnic conflict. Marx accepted state boundaries as co-extensive with the boundaries of the societies and economies that he studied. To Marx, language and sympathies determined nationality or ethnicity. He saw the world as clearly delineated national groups. Although relatively clear delineations between national groups described conditions in the Europe during

the post-French-Revolution era to some extent, it did not describe ethnic relations in the rest of the world.6

Marx accepted nations as pre-existing "givens" to such an extent that he believed that the class struggle would occur along national lines. In the Communist Manifesto, he wrote that: "The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie."7 His assumption of a national bourgeoisie conflicts with his assumption of international revolution. One can not assume international worker unity defined in material terms, but organized along non-material, national lines.

To the extent that Marx predicted the persistence of ethnic nationalism, it was as a tool of the ruling class to distract the proletariat from the class struggle. Like religion, ethnic nationalism was an integral part of the superstructure of society that was created by the dominant economic and political class to justify and legitimize its rule. It used ethnic and national identities to bind together different classes through the creation of a false.

6 Even in the era of the British, Habsburg, and Czarist empires, map makers and diplomats identified regions and peoples within Europe with commonly accepted terms.

a concept of national interest that concealed horizontal class divisions.

According to Marx, ethnic conflict is a mask for class conflict. He wrote that ethnic prejudice is "artificially kept alive and intensified by all the means at the disposal of the ruling classes (and) is the secret of the impotence of the English working class."\(^8\) He treated ethnic nationalist discontent as a disguise for real material discontent and aspirations for class liberation. In this sense, ethnic conflict is more than just a tool of the aristocrats. It is a symptom of a greater struggle. Energies that would be channelled into communist revolutions fuel nationalist movements.

This is not to say that Marx was wholly negative about the effects of ethnicity upon the political realm. Since some ethnic conflicts could hasten the onset of a socialist utopia, Marx supported or repudiated specific nationalist struggles according to his determination of whether their success would advance the proletarian revolution. On the one hand, Marx supported some instances of Irish nationalism, and, on the other, chastised Bohemian and

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Croatian nationalists for seeking freedom from Austrian rule.\footnote{Marx's views on nationalism are scattered throughout his writings. See Mayall, 161. and Jalali and Lipset, 593.}

Marx assumed that nationalism would fade with modernization. As economic competition caused by capitalism increased the hardship experienced by the proletarians, and the revolutionary vanguard educated them, they would recognize their material interests and be less susceptible to appeals to archaic ethnic loyalties. By the 1960's, however, the advances of capitalism and the spread of Marxist ideology in modernizing societies had not reduced the effectiveness of appeals to pre-modern social ties. Marxists could no longer assume that modernization would end ethnic conflict.

Marxist theorists since Marx have addressed some of his oversights concerning ethnic conflict. They argue that it is understandable that Marx, writing in the mid-nineteenth century, underestimated the appeal of ethnicity and nationalism among the working class. According to French Marxist Regis Debray, horizontal class divisions formed later in history than the cultural divisions of ethnicity.\footnote{Regis Debray, "Marxism and the National Question," \textit{New Left Review} 105 (September-October 1977):25-41.}
Thus, ethnicity persists at a deeper psychological level and demands greater subconscious loyalty from people.\textsuperscript{11}

Debray identifies a historically necessary link between ethnic movements and workers' movements. He sees ethnic and national ties as essential elements of communist revolution: "All modern history demonstrates that proletarian dictatorships have only taken root where they fused with a national liberation struggle, or where they have defended a national identity."\textsuperscript{12} Revolutionary leaders can utilize the strength of ethnic ties along with calls for proletarian revolution to advance their cause. Where they have neglected to incorporate ethnic and nationalist loyalties, Debray blames this oversight for their failure.

The enduring legacy of Marxist literature on ethnic nationalism is its emphasis upon the economic sources of conflict. The economic upheavals of the conversions from feudal societies to capitalist societies strained social order. Marx mistakenly believed that the conflicts caused by these strains would occur along class lines instead of ethnic lines. However, later theorists pursued his notion that economic forces lay behind ethnic and national conflict.

\textsuperscript{11}In this sense Debray agrees with Emile Durkheim.

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid, 33.
Much academic research into ethnic conflict supports the case that economic competition between ethnic groups results in conflict. Teodor Shanin notes that the variables usually associated with economic class mobilization also correlate with ethnic mobilization.\textsuperscript{13} Displeasure with one's occupation, differential rates of urbanization, geographic mobility, educational opportunity, and choice of profession correlate with involvement in ethnic nationalist movements.

John Markakis demonstrates how economic forces resulted in conflict among ethnies in Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{14} The Amhara, an Amharigna-speaking, predominantly Christian people of Abyssinain descent, dominate the economic and political life of the country. During the reigns of Menelik and Haile Selassie, Amhara elites consolidated their rule over an ethnically heterogenous, predominantly Muslim peasantry that was expropriated from the land. As a result, leftist nationalists movements arose among other ethnic groups. In Ethiopia's poorest province, Tigray, oppressed ethnics formed the Tigray People's Liberation Front. Other groups


included the Western Somali Liberation Front, the Somali and Abo Liberation Front, and the Afar Liberation Front.\textsuperscript{15}

\textbf{Conditions for Competition and Conflict}

Competition theorists offer two models of the conditions that cause the most marked ethnic conflict: the ecology and the dependency models. The ecology model proposes that different prices for labor between ethnic groups explains persistent, severe ethnic conflict.\textsuperscript{16} When one group undercuts the wages of another ethnic group, the higher-paid, threatened group will seek to protect its advantaged position. According to ecology theorists, this process of threat and defense explains ethnic conflict. Dependency theorists offer a model of a modernized "core" region and less-developed "periphery" regions.\textsuperscript{17} The ethnic group at the rich core exploits the poorer periphery ethnies, thereby raising ethnic tension between the core and periphery groups.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., 124-25.


\textsuperscript{17}Michael Hechter, \textit{Internal Colonialism} (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1974)
Ecology Theory

The ecological theorists borrow their ideas from the science of biology, which shows that species can peacefully coexistence (provided one does not prey upon the other) when they do not depend upon the same sources of food to survive. When, however, multiple groups occupy the same niche in an ecosystem, they are forced to compete.

Similarity, not cultural differences, explains interethnic conflict in ecology theory. "Niche overlap" increases the likelihood of conflict and forces a struggle to the death, or disappearance in the case of an ethnic identity.

When two or more interspersed groups are in fact in at least partial competition within the same niche one would expect one such group to displace the other, or an accommodation involving an increasing complimentarity and interdependence to develop.  

When separate ethnicities attempt to live in the same region, gain the same housing, and compete for the same jobs, ecology theory contends that one must absorb or eliminate the other.

Split Labor Markets

Ecology theorists view a split labor market, one in which members of different ethnic groups whose price of

18 Barth, 20.
labor differs\textsuperscript{19} compete for the same jobs, as the source of conflict. Split labor markets reflect the existence of two or more groups competing for the same niche. "The more alike are the occupational distribution of two groups, the greater the competition between them."\textsuperscript{20} A split labor market is the place, according to Edna Bonacich, where "ethnic antagonism first germinates."\textsuperscript{21}

Several variables, which differ between ethnic groups, determine the price of labor of the workers belonging to an ethnic group. Price of labor is not simply wages, but also a group's resources and motives. For example, some groups consist primarily of members who lack the education and job skills to demand higher wages. Other groups consist primarily of members willing to accept a lower standard of living, or fortune-seeking "sourjourners" that intend to work only to return home. Such groups will accept lower wages, seek fewer rights, and are less likely to organize.

\textsuperscript{19}Bonacich, 549. She describes a split labor market. "To be split, a labor market must contain at least two groups of workers whose price of labor differs for the same work, or would differ if they did the same work."


\textsuperscript{21}Bonacich, 549.
Thus, they present a lower price of labor to employers and threaten higher-priced groups.\textsuperscript{22}

These factors, according to ecology theory, determine whether ethnic conflict is likely to occur and be persistent. Different ethnic groups usually "have lived relatively separately from one another are likely to have developed different employment motives and levels of resources," and, thus, different prices of labor.\textsuperscript{23} If two ethnies have the same price, there is not a conflict. However, it is more likely that one group will have a lower cost of labor than the other and threaten its position.

When a politically powerful ethny feels that it is threatened by another group undercutting its wages, it has two options. Its members may attempt exclusionary tactics or attempt to develop a caste-system. An exclusionary movement tries to deny a threatening ethny physical access, "thereby preserving a non-split, higher priced labor market."\textsuperscript{24} A second possible tactic is the creation of a

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., 548-553 for a detailed discussion of Bonacich's formulas and consideration. She is mainly concerned with immigrant ethnic groups, but also implies that these same variables are active in other ethnic relations.

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid, 554.

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid, 555.
caste system, or an "aristocracy of labor." To create such a system, the higher paid ethnic group legally restricts the undercutting group from certain types of work, limiting them to low esteem, low pay jobs.

Ecological theory explains the occurrence of ethnic violence between subordinate ethnic groups, such as that between blacks in South Africa or between African-Americans and Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles. Such violence results from one group threatening to displace another ethny. Also, it explains ethnic conflict in relatively prosperous regions, since it explains ethnic conflict in terms of a loss of position rather than as a reaction to poverty. People at any income level will resist attempts to undermine their and their family's standard of living.

However, employers and landlords of the dominant ethnic group, presumably the most influential members of a society, should desire a split labor market with new ethnic groups continually undercutting the wages of existing groups. If ethnicity is a rational, economic issue as ecology theory supposes, they would always resist exclusionary or caste-creating measures. At times, however, dominant-culture elites, like subordinate-culture elites, have promoted

\[25\text{Ibid.}\]
ethnic differentiation. Ecology theory fails to account for economic elites that promote ethnic conflict.

Dependency Theory or Internal Colonialism

The central concept of dependency theory is the core-periphery relationship between ethnic groups. Dependency theorists posit a concept of a modernization that originates in "nodes" or central places and then "spreads or diffuses into more remote regions." This results in different levels of modernization within the same country. The ethnic groups that occupy the "core" have higher educational and income levels.

The result of this correspondence in spatial orderings is that those ethnic groups which are most proximate to the locus of the impact of modernity tend to be the most modernized; and thus the competition for the benefits of modernity and for status position in the modern sector can become organized on ethnic line.

The "core" ethny, generally, has the most influence within the state and promotes its culture and identity as the most modern. Resistance to the dominant culture is viewed as anti-modern and backwards.

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27Ibid.
Dependency theorist, Michael Hechter argues that capitalist forms of production create economic disparities between core and peripheral regions that approximate class lines and cause:

a cultural division of labor: a system of stratification where objective cultural distinctions are superimposed upon class lines. High status occupations tend to be reserved for those of the metropolitan culture; while those of indigenous culture cluster at the bottom of the stratification system.²⁸

The division of labor results in the persistence of regional inequality and ethnic solidarity. Divided societies suffer from rebellious ethnic movements among periphery groups and reactionary nationalism among the metropolitan groups.

The cultural division of labor exacerbates the class conflict. Such a society is especially oppressive to the subordinate ethnic group's proletarians and peasants. Pierre van den Berghe argues that in a culturally divided society, "the inequalities of class and ethnicity become CUMULATIVE, and the system of domination becomes doubly oppressive and exploitative."²⁹ The class struggle becomes complicated and worsened by ethnic differences as subordinate ethnics must overcome the barriers of both class and ethnicity.

²⁸Hechter, 30.
²⁹van den Berghe, "Ethnicity and Class in Highland Peru," 75.
Summary

Competition theorists can use the ecological or dependency models for ethnic conflict to assess differing instances of ethnic conflict. The ecological model provides reasons for ethnic tensions among disadvantaged groups competing for resources in the same regions without explaining interregional disputes. The dependency model provides reasons for ethnic movements in the periphery against the core without addressing conflict between impoverished ethnies in the periphery.

Competition theorists fail to account for the motives and actions of ethnic elites. If, for example, ethnic lines roughly coincide with class lines, then it makes more sense for the leaders of ethnic movements in subordinate groups to make their appeals based upon class loyalties rather than ethnic loyalties. This tactic has the advantage that it might induce proletarians among the dominant group to aid the movement. Also, if the grievances of ethnic groups are primarily economic, then the competition theorists must account for their emphasis upon cultural rights and autonomy. They do not.

Also, competition theories fail to account for instances when ethnic groups experience economic disparity but do not conflict. Why, in some instances, do ethnic
groups with different prices of labor not experience ethnic violence? Why, under other circumstances, do ethnic groups experiencing regionally-differentiated modernization peacefully coexist? Both competition models are too simplistic to answer these basic questions.

Monocausal theories, whether they address intraregional or interregional competition, lack the sophistication to explain the complexities of ethnic conflict. Competition theory fails to deal with important questions concerning cases of ethnic conflict. It offers insight into the economic dimension of ethnic conflict, but its conclusions pertain only in specific cases. Other, more sophisticated theories arose to address the shortcomings of the competition theories.
CHAPTER III
OTHER CONFLICTUAL MODERNIZATIONISTS

The competition models left important aspects of ethnic conflict unaddressed, such as the motivations of elites who politicize ethnicity or conflicts between groups experiencing economic parity. Other conflictual modernizationists developed a more sophisticated view of the process of modernization and its effects on ethnic relations. They enhanced competition theory by proposing that the process of modernization, which destroys traditional orders and replaces them with 'modern' structures, entails more than just the increased economic competition. Conflictual modernizationists view modernization as a process with many aspects that affect ethnic relations.

Conflictual modernizationists emphasize that modernization itself entails changes that cause ethnic conflict. It upsets ancient societies and creates a social system where some groups enjoy the elements of modernity that give them advantages over competing groups. Also, formerly isolated groups, because of improved transportation
and communication, find themselves in a broadened, complex polity in which they must compete with other ethnies. The conflictual modernizationists believe that ethnic competition is an inevitable result of modernization and increased group interaction.

According to an early conflictual modernizationist, Karl Deutsch, modernization causes social mobilization, involvement in mass politics, among the citizens of changing societies.\(^1\) The social integration and the economic interdependence of modernization promote assimilation into the new polity. If social mobilization outraces assimilation, then the society will disintegrate.\(^2\)

According to Deutsch, ethnic ties cause:

- consolidation of states whose peoples already share the same language, culture, and major institutions; while the same process may tend to destroy the unity of states whose population is already divided into several groups with different languages or cultures or basic ways of life.\(^3\)

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\(^1\)When he wrote *Nationalism and Social Communication* (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1953), Deutsch proposed that modernization would decrease ethnic conflict. For his changing views on this issue, see Walker Connor, "Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying," : 319-28.

\(^2\)Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Its Alternatives* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1969), 27. By assimilation, Deutsch implies either the destruction of one culture, or the amalgamation of both cultures into one homogenous group.

Thus, Deutsch accounts for the consolidation and persistence of some states and the disintegration of others.

Low rates of social mobilization, as occurred in the creation of modern England and France, or high rates of assimilation, as witnessed when immigrants flocked to the United States, coincide with integrating modernization. High rates of mobilization, as occurred during the sudden creation of many of the Third World states, and low rates of assimilation, as occurs among "secluded populations of villages close to the soil," result in differentiation and disunity. Countries in which assimilation had not occurred prior to the rapid social mobilization of twentieth century industrialization are unlikely to resolve their ethnic problems and differentiation, because modernization worked against them.

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4Deutsch, Nationalism and Its Alternatives, 73 and 126.

5Ibid, 73. Deutsch specifically names the formations of Tanzania, Zambia, and Malavia. He writes, "We have seen that the more gradually the process of social mobilization moves, the more there is time for social and national assimilation to work. Conversely, the more these processes are postponed, the more quickly its various aspects—language, monetization, mass audience, literacy, voting, urbanization, industrialization—must eventually be achieved. But when all these developments have to be crowded into the lifetime of one or two generations, the chances for assimilation to work are much smaller.

6Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication, 126.

7Connor, "Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying," 326.
The Destruction of Traditional Social Order

According to the conflictual modernizationists, the destruction of traditional social order during colonization or modernization constitutes a key element in understanding ethnic conflict. Whether or not they experienced colonization, modernizing societies construct new economic and political orders out of the existing conditions. Citizens, who organize their lives within family or tribal structures, must learn to cope with and assimilate to a new polity of expanded size and complexity.

Traditional status and authority lose their meaning in the changing society. Jobs that once commanded esteem, such as those of the hunter or tribal leader, become outmoded. In a society that increasingly values the goods that money can buy, those in traditional positions of authority can not purchase the products of modernity, and their wages are shameful compared to those of modern clerks, lawyers and teachers. As the structures of old societies fade, people re-establish social relations of status, reward, and power. According to conflictual modernization theory, this reworking of relationships and values is reflected as ethnic conflict. The interplay between the old and the new
stratifications is "crucially significant in explaining the emergence of ethnic groups in the modern era."  

Colonization necessitated disrupting social order and indelibly left its mark upon the ethnic and social stratification of colonized regions. Colonial states created new centers of political activity, attracting diverse members into unfamiliar types of social regulation. European and bureaucratic mentalities rejected loose, vaguely defined, small-scale identities. They were "an anathema to administrative rationality, which demanded a physical map with discrete, bounded units."  

Colonizers created colonial borders with little or no concern for the ethnic makeup of the indigenous populations. Colonial states, once created, "radically altered existing patterns of social stratification and ethnicity." Binding culturally distinct, small populations together under administrative rule, the colonizers created the conditions of later ethnic conflicts.

8 Bates, 462.


10 Ibid., 75. When colonizers did take ethnic identities into account, it was often with the intent of dividing groups and recombining them with dissimilar groups as a "divide-and-rule" tactic, thus aggravating conditions.

11 Ibid., 76.
Europeans fundamentally disrupted ethnic relations in most regions. Except in Islamic regions, pre-colonial life was characterized by smallness of scale and isolation from competing groups. Ethnic and religious communities lacked large-scale political structures. Social organization took place around small scale units like the family, tribe, or village. Thus, cultural affinities were in their essence 'interlocking, overlapping, (and) multiple.'² This fluidity of social and ethnic boundaries, meant an absence of "crystallized ideologies of identity."³ With the onset of modernization, ethnic identities were characterized by larger scale identities with more distinct boundaries.

Modernization and colonization destroyed traditional structures and ways of life. Social status and values lost their meaning in disrupted societies. Small-scale identities were lost in an expanded social order. Modernization replaced ancient patterns of isolation with a system of unequal competition between groups that had experienced differential modernization.

A weakness of the conflictual modernizationist approach is its need for an outside influence to explain conflict within a society. It assumes that an outside force, such as

²Ibid. 79.
³Ibid. 78.
colonization or a central state, destroys traditional social structures and sets in motion the struggle for status and wealth in the new order. However, while ethnic conflict occurs in societies that have experienced the disruption of traditional structures, it also has flared up in industrialized states and in societies whose traditional structures remain largely intact. Lacking an external source of the destruction of traditional order, conflictual modernizationists have difficulties accounting for conflict.

**Differential Modernization**

Differential modernization is central to the assumptions of the conflictual modernizationists. They believed that different ethnic groups modernized at different rates. Europeans favored some groups, coopting them as collaborating indigenes. These groups, for cultural reasons or because conditions forced them, elected to deal with the colonizers on their own terms by acquiring European educations and competing for jobs in the colonial administration. Other groups, though not necessarily favored by the colonizers, inhabited regions closer to the colonial capitals and, thus, were exposed to modernizing.

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14As is the case in Kurdistan, especially Iraq where much of the violence has taken place. See Chapter VII.
forces earlier. Still others resisted colonization and assimilation or inhabited remote regions and, thus, were seen as backwards or unintelligent ethnic groups.

The most modernized groups held the prestigious jobs and the positions in the administrations of the colonies and newly independent states. They gained a headstart vis-a-vis other groups in the competition for the political and economic rewards of the modern world, thereby creating objective class differences between formerly classless ethnic groups. The emerging social classes tended to reinforce ethnic differences, creating "more naked confrontation and greater likelihood of secessionist and other movements of communal nationalism."\(^{15}\)

Inequality between ethnic groups persisted and the effects of colonization outlasted the colonial period. Conflictual modernization theory argued that both the advantaged and disadvantaged groups develop new, economic grievances against other ethnies during modernization. "The seemingly inevitable, uneven economic development of regions triggers animosities among both the benefitted groups and the unfavored ones."\(^{16}\) Unlike group competition in

traditional societies, which occurred between small-scale groups perceived as equals, ethnic competition during modernization implies an unequal race between large-scale groups for advantages within an increasingly pervasive society. Often, those with economic and political advantages under colonialism, used their power to further enhance their advantage.

**Increased Interaction**

Conflictual modernizationists argue that many of the non-economic forces of modernization impact ethnic relations. During modernization, formerly isolated ethnic groups come into contact with others who are different from themselves, with different values, different languages, and different levels of modernization. The larger polity of the modern society intrudes upon their isolated world, regardless of their desires, and they are forced to adjust their lifestyles. Different groups respond to the forces of modernity in different ways. Some assimilate, others resist assimilation, and others attempt to assimilate, but can not. Ethnic groups' reactions to modernity's alterations of social structures determine the likelihood of conflict.

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Conflictual modernizationists blamed increased group interaction of modernity for ethnic conflict. With modernization, societies experience increases in the quantity and quality of transportation and communication. Trains, automobiles, roads, radios, television, and telephones decrease the cultural isolation and autonomy that ethnic groups enjoyed in previous eras.

(Modern forces) curtail the isolation in which an ethnic group could formerly cloak its cultural chasteness from perverting influences of other cultures within the same state. The reaction to such curtailment is very apt to be one of xenophobic hostility.17

People became aware of others who shared their ethnic identity and others who did not. Conflictual modernizationists believe that this awareness leads to discord more often than understanding.18

Modernization expands each individual's potential economic competitors. Modernization "penetrates markets for labor, turning local markets into industry-wide markets."19 Skilled laborers, unskilled laborers, and job-seekers, whether they choose to remain in their traditional homes or

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17Connor, "Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying," 329.
move to the urban centers, find themselves in competition with vast numbers of culturally different people. In a modern economy and polity, tribal and kinship organizations are not powerful enough to compete.

To compete and survive, individuals must seek the help of a broader collective, such as an ethnic nation. For the person remaining in his or her traditional home, the tribal or kinship group has little influence upon political decisions made far away or upon economic forces that can render entire villages jobless. For the immigrant to industrialized cities, the tribal or kinship group is powerless to assist in providing food, shelter and employment. The result is a tendency to broaden their "ethnic boundary." Thus, the "spread of modern economic structures causes a decline in ethnic diversity" and fosters a population activated "on the basis of larger scale identities." Loyalty to and dependence upon family and tribe are replaced by loyalty to and dependence upon a larger ethnic identity.

Ethnic groups play an important role in helping people gain urban employment, income, and education. In Uganda, competition for jobs in the Railway Africa Union formed

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20 Hannan, 254.

21 Ibid; 272.
along ethnic lines.\textsuperscript{22} Since high office in the union often meant promotion, employees fiercely sought these positions. Often, they appealed to the tribal loyalties of those in charge of hiring. In other parts of Africa, "less favored members of an ethnic group place immense pressure on their more advantaged brothers to share the benefits from their advanced positions."\textsuperscript{23}

In a multi-ethnic state, the economic stakes of one's ethnic group losing its position are high. Often ethnicity determines the allocation of government positions and middle-class ethnics owe their livelihoods to jobs in the government bureaucracy.

The state bourgeoisie has little autonomy relative to the state; its standing in society is not rooted in the control of property, wealth, or productive facilities. An individual's class membership is contingent upon remaining within the orbit of established political authority.\textsuperscript{24}

The cost of one's ethnic group's political downfall might be unemployment and poverty. In such a polity, identity and victory, or at least stalemate, in the ethnic conflict becomes a life and death matter.


\textsuperscript{23}Bates, 468.

\textsuperscript{24}Young, "Patterns of Social Change," 81-2.
Politicizing Ethnicity

The conflictual modernizationists examined forces beyond those of simple economic competition. They also attempted to explain when elites will actively promote political organization along ethnic identities, or politicize ethnicity. The broadened polity of the modernizing society increases the effectiveness of the "ethnicity card" in the politics of the new state. The rapid social and economic changes in modernizing societies create the "optimal conditions" for politicizing ethnic identity.25 Crawford Young writes, "The surest way for aspiring leaders to build their constituencies was to mobilize their ethnic clientele."26 Appeals to ethnic identity attach a real interest to a pre-existing affective tie.27 The politics of modernizing societies sets ethnic groups against one another for the rewards of modern economics, and energizes the political strength of ethnicities by attaching them to even larger constituencies.

The political competition between ethnies takes place in an environment of higher stakes and fear. For the

26 Young, "Patterns of Social Change," 89.
citizen of an ethnically divided society, while he or she is being appealed to on the basis of ethnicity, he or she is also aware that other ethnic groups are being similarly courted. Even if he or she is not inclined to mobilize around ethnic identity, he or she may be forced to out of fear of the loss of position in the social stratification system or fear of domination by other ethnic groups.

For elites that politicize ethnicity within a society, the advantages of mobilizing one's ethny holds a second important advantage. Ethnicity is "distinct from all other multiple and secondary sources of identity people acquire because unlike all others, its elements are what make a group a 'candidate for nationhood.'"28 Thus, politicized ethnicity becomes a "crucial principle of political legitimation and deligitimation of systems, states, regimes and governments."29 Ethnicity is so potent as a legitimizing principle that, as Joseph Rothschild points out, people prefer bad rule by their ethnic brothers over good rule by aliens, occupiers, or colonizers.30


29 Rothschild, 2.

While earlier theorists had emphasized the "nation-building" potential of ethnic national identities, the conflictual modernizationists emphasize its "nation-destroying" potential.

The nation itself, the object of every nationalism's endeavors, is artificial, a concept and model of social and cultural organization which is the product of the labours of self-styled nationalists bent on attaining power and reaping the rewards of the political struggle.31

Ethnic elites ask, if a nation is founded upon one ethnicity, then why not found another upon another ethnicity. Ethnicity could be created and re-created for political purposes—used to defend the creation of a nation or promote its independence, on the one hand, and used to attack its existence by supporting separatism or irredentism, on the other hand.32

**Elite Motivations**

Conflictual modernizationists emphasize the role of elites in ethnic conflict. Elites, they argue, are those who have the most influence within a society, and it is

31A. D. Smith, "Nationalism and Historians!

32This is the fundamental assumption of 'instrumentalism,' the way that most conflictual modernizationists portray the formation of ethnic identities. See Chapter IV.
elites that choose to politicize ethnic identity. The conflictual modernizationists look at elite motives in politicizing ethnic identity as a factor in explaining ethnic conflict.

The conflictual modernizationist A. D. Smith, in his book *The Ethnic Revival*, advanced a thesis that disgruntled elites, the professional bureaucrats, are prime instigators of ethnic strife. The intellectuals conceptualize the arguments for any given ethnic group's nationalism, but the intelligentsia, from the upper and middle classes, politicizes ethnicity and carries the message to the masses. He writes, "If the intellectuals are the spearhead of the ethnic revival, the professional intelligentsia form its habitual infantry."

In Smith's scenario, the disappointment of potential bureaucrats fuels ethnic movements. Educated, would-be elites seek employment in metropolitan areas and fail to become employed commensurate to their training. They blame prejudice and ethnic differences for their inability to succeed. They return, disgruntled, to their ethnic groups

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35 Ibid., 108.
and lead ethnic movements against the existing system of social stratification. They demand special cultural rights, which they as the elites of the cultural group can use for political and economic gain, or determine that a separate society is necessary for their success.

Jyotirindra Das Gupta theorized that some conditions decrease the advantage of politicizing ethnicity and, thus, make it less likely that elites will promote it as an organizing principle. Examining the complex cultural divisions of India with its countless ethnic identities, he argued that when the cultural markers of ethnicity were "cross-cutting" instead of "cumulative," ethnicity lost its usefulness for political leaders.\(^{36}\)

In India, major religious communities are split into many language communities which in turn are stratified into castes and class formations. Cross-cutting identifiers reduce the temptation for leaders to employ ethnicity to gain an easy constituency because it decreases the potential political returns. However, when ethnic identifiers are cumulative, with linguistic, religious, regional, or racial

cleavages overlapping, ethnicity is a powerful instrument of advancing political demands.

In the twentieth century, Indian elites have attempted to organize collectives along linguistic ties. Intellectuals created literary societies, cultural organizations and political associations to advance the cause of their respective language, but have been thwarted because language communities often included members of different races, religions, castes and regions.37

For example, in the resource rich, but poverty stricken region of Assam in the 1980s, Assamese ethnic leaders articulated a notion of the "unjust deprivation of the Assamese people."38 Earlier notions of Assamese authenticity had forwarded a concept of a language-based community. Later, however, the movements leaders sought to exclude many Muslim speakers of the language because they were immigrants from neighboring Bangladesh. Other non-Hindi speakers and Muslims from the region drifted away from the movement and were used by Rajiv Gandhi's government to force the Assamese to mitigate their demands.39


38Das Gupta, "India," 241.

39Ibid. 241-42.
Ronald Rogowski used rational choice theory to predict when elites will politicize ethnic identity. He proposed two types of systems: "plural" systems, the classical cultural division of labor "in which one culture monopolizes the elite positions and skills," and "pillarized" systems "in which both cultures have ample numbers of persons with both elite and nonelite skills." He believed that "pillarized" systems experience the highest probability of ethnic violence.

In the rational choice model of ethnic relations, elites employing ethnic ideologies consider their potential benefit from the course of action, the anticipated cost of that action and the likelihood of success. Elites, whether supporting existing state policies or questioning them, choose to politicize ethnicity to "maximize net benefit." According to Rogowski:


41 Ibid. 90.

42 Ibid., 88-89. He proposes the formula Δp*B-C, where B is the benefits of a course of action, C is the anticipated cost of the action, and Δp is the change in the probability of receiving the benefit if the actor takes the course of action.

43 Ibid. 88.
Nationalism is always rational in the sense just given, that is, embraced by the given individual because, and to the extent that, it offers him a greater net benefit (or *mutatis mutandis* a lesser net loss) than do other possible investments of effort.  

He believed that rational choice explains how individuals from each type of ethnic group within a state react to ethnic group dominance—whether by assimilation, isolation, apathy, or radical nationalism.

Thus, according to Rogowski, elites espouse ethnic nationalism most often in "pillarized" systems. This occurs because only groups whose elites believe they can supply all essential skills, or believe that they can compensate for any skills that they lack, will seek the destruction of the status quo.  

Elites will advocate ethnic nationalism when they expect that the future autonomous nation will have a favorable supply-demand ratio for their particular skills. In "plural" societies, on the other hand, upwardly mobile elites face strong pressure to assimilate and will do so, taking the path of least resistance, if mobility is allowed.

By arguing that the economic motives of elites cause ethnic conflict, conflictual modernizationists like Smith

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44Ibid. The benefits sought, according to Rogowski, are economic gain and political authority.

45Rogowski claims that the frequent rise of nationalism in regions that suddenly acquire great wealth or valuable resources, such as oil, proves this thesis.
and Rogowski ignore the cultural aspects of ethnic conflict. They account for mobilization along ethnic lines, but not the emphasis by ethnic elites upon cultural symbols. Why, for example, do marginalized ethnies fear for the destruction of their culture, or the loss of their historical and religious traditions? Also, they do not answer why language and educational policies concerning it play such an important role in the demands of ethnic movements.

**Summary**

The conflictual modernization theorists view modernization as a process that exacerbates ethnic tensions, creating conditions that are likely to result in ethnic conflict. Societies evolving from traditional economic and political structures undergo radical change. An interdependent economy with a centralized authority and a society which increasingly values the rewards that modernity brings replaces traditional means of survival, small scale social organizations, and traditional values.

The differential impact of modernization affects ethnic groups in different ways. As the modernizing, expanding polity incorporates more ethnic groups, some adapt, modernize, and cooperate with colonizing powers, while
others resist the effects of modernization, unable or unwilling to alter their traditional lifestyles. Advantaged groups use their power to improve their position, both economically and politically, vis-à-vis other groups. Economic competition between members of different ethnic groups and a sense that one's fate is inextricably linked to one's ethnic kin energize the importance of ethnic ties.

Elites, armed with the potent ideologies of ethnicity and ethnonationalism, compete for advantages within the changing society, where citizens increasingly rely upon larger ethnic identities as a modern support system. Elites try to gain important economic positions, and those who fail use ethnic ideologies of organization to contest the legitimacy of the status quo. These forces result in large-scale ethnic groups competing with each other for economic and political gains in starkly divided polities.

For conflictual modernizationists, ethnic conflict is essentially the result of rational, materialist interests. Modernization provides the underlying conditions for effective ethnic mobilization. Ethnicity is politicized by elites when it is advantageous, and it is used for rational goals. If conditions favor organization along ethnic lines, elites activate their own ethnic identities to gain positions of economic advantage or political power, or fight
for a separate society in which they can hold these positions.

The conflictual modernizationists enhanced competition theory by addressing the motivations of elites and the reasons for organizing along ethnic lines. However, their reliance upon rational, material interests to explain ethnic conflict result in their theory's inability to answer some important questions about ethnic conflict. While their theory attributes rational motives to the elites, it assumes that nonelites are irrational, willing to sacrifice their jobs, and lives for the advancement of elites. Also, it disregards the "irrational" elements of ethnic conflict. It does not explain why those organizing around ethnicity are willing to destroy the economies and political structures from which they hope to gain the goods of modernity. Nor does it explain the persistence of conflict over several generations, long after the original goals are forgotten.
CHAPTER IV
PRIMORDIALISTS

The primordialists emphasize the uniqueness of ethnicity as a social identifier. Primordialists argue that ethnic identity is unique because, unlike class membership, which can change with economic and occupational changes, people can not alter their ethnic identity. The powerful appeal of ethnicity, understood by "poets, artists, and historians," had been lacking from the social scientist's understanding of ethnic identity. Each person has pre-modern, historical, and cultural ties to those who share his or her ethnicity and, thus, regardless of economics, his or her fate is inextricably linked to that group.

The primordialists explain two aspects of ethnic conflict that the conflictual modernizationists left unexplored. Whereas the conflictual modernizationists examined the rational, material motives of groups organizing along ethnic lines, the primordialists account for their irrational motives and the importance of ethnic or national

"Isaacs, 30-31."
identity to an individual's sense of worth. The conflictual modernizationists theorize about the motives of elites, and characterized nonelites as irrational or easily manipulated by ethnic elites. Primordialists account for nonelite involvement in ethnic movements and why they sacrifice personal benefit for the sake of their ethnic group.

Instrumentalism and Primordialism

Primordialism is best viewed as a theoretical response to instrumentalism. Instrumentalism and primordialism examine how individuals and groups create their ethnic identities. Most conflictual modernizationists followed the instrumentalist concept of identity creation and believed that ethnicity was a created identity, manufactured as a political tool for the advantages of the elites. Primordialists argue that ethnic identity is deeply rooted in the socialization process and the human sense of self worth.

Instrumentalism originated with the Marxists and found a large following among early scholars of ethnic conflict in

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2Donald Horowitz, Ethnic Groups in Conflict (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1985), 147. He writes: "the willingness of group members to sacrifice economic gains for comparative advantage is redolent of ethnic group behavior that casts doubts on materialist theories of conflict."
the 1950's and 1960's. The instrumentalists stressed the creation and re-creation of ethnic identity as a tool or weapon in political and social competition. Marx, and successive Marxists, emphasized the uses of ethnicity to incorporate competing classes within a given nation, for the advantages gained by the ruling classes.

Most conflictual modernizationists, in the tradition of the Marxists, emphasized the value of ethnicity as an organizing principle in social competition for political and economic resources. They argued that ethnic identity has an advantage over other potential organizational principles, because, "it can combine an interest with an affective tie." For instrumentalists, ethnic identity may be somewhat situational, circumstantial and transitory identity, but it provides a pre-existing constituency for those seeking power or those already involved in competition for power. Instrumentalists portray ethnic groups (or at least ethnic elites) as calculating, self-interested actors attempting to maximize their gains through the use of ethnic identity.

Primordialism has experienced three different phases during the study of ethnic conflict. Its roots can be

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Daniel Bell, "Ethnicity and Social Change," in Glazer and Moynihan, 169.
traced back to the simplistic notions of the Liberals, who saw ethnicity and nationhood as a given, a self-evident, natural principle of human organization. It enjoyed a resurgence in the writings of Durkheim and the "strain" theorists, who portrayed individual humans as incomplete animals that fulfil themselves through their social organizations.

Later, primordialism was revived as a critique of instrumentalism. Primordialism, "renovated by its dialogue with instrumentalism," re-emerged to explore ethnicity's psychological and cultural dimensions that explain the often irrational nature of ethnic conflict.\(^4\) Fredrik Barth presented ethnic identity as a set of cues, symbols, and values (ethnic markers) that provided a person's distinctiveness; separating his group from the "others."\(^5\) Van den Berghe related ethnicity as "an extended form of kin selection," and an almost instinctual loyalty.\(^6\)

Ethnicity, in its capacity as a psychological link to the ancient past of ancestors and the unknown future of


\(^5\)Barth, 9-38.

descendants, has a uniquely emotional charge. By examining the emotional side of ethnicity and the "irrational" needs it fulfills for those emphasizing their ethnic identity, primordialists explain the deep-seated anxieties, the fears for the loss of a valued past, the insecurities about the future, the horror of cultural extinction, and the levels of aggression witnessed in ethnic competition, which are unexplainable in terms of material interests.

**Durkheim**

Emile Durkheim's wrote that the moral unity of a society is based upon a collective consciousness of "shared" experience, represented by and celebrated in common sacred symbols and "primordial" identification. These symbols, which can include anything from religious traditions to common physical traits, are the indispensable glue which holds society together. Durkheim believed that these sacred symbols worked best at unifying primitive societies.

With modernization, societies experience specialization of labor. Durkheim expected economic interdependence to gradually replace primordial symbols as the source of unity in advanced societies, and the primordial ties of ethnicity.

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to disappear with modernization. He thought that the emotional strength of the "sacred symbols" would fade as they became less necessary for the unity of a society. Durkheim, like Marx, misinterpreted ethnicity as a relic of bygone eras.

**Strain Theorists**

Strain theorists, like Neil J. Smelser and Clifford Geertz, borrowed from Durkheim's theories and concluded that ethnic conflict would surge as a problem for societies, but would eventually disappear. As societies evolve from a reliance upon primordial ties to a reliance upon economic interdependence for social unity, strain theorists believe that many will suffer from "isolation combined with general 'culture shock.'" These unintegrated citizens cling to archaic ethnic identifiers for psychological security until their society achieves levels of structural integration high enough to include all of its members.

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10 see Newman, 454-5.

11 Smelser, 326.
Strain theorists posit the chronic malintegration of society. Social friction is persistent and will always require unifying ideologies like nationalism or ethnicity.

No social arrangement is or can be completely successful in coping with the functional problems it inevitably faces. All are riddled with insoluble antimonies: between liberty and political order, stability and change, efficiency and humanity, precision and flexibility, and so forth.\textsuperscript{12}

To maintain social unity, societies, leaders and people, resort to ideologies, like ethnicity. These ideologies hold the society together until their inherent inconsistencies cause them to lose their power as symbols of unity.

In \textit{Old Societies and New States}, Geertz outlines the pattern for pre-industrial, modernizing state's attempts to maintain social unity.\textsuperscript{13} According to him, primitive societies rely exclusively upon ethnic kinship ties for social unity. The strains of colonization can be reduced by a continued emphasis upon race, language, religion, and customs.\textsuperscript{14} Often societies in contact with colonizing powers experienced a resurgence in religion and xenophobic adherence to ancient customs. Ethnic ties become

\textsuperscript{12}Geertz, "Ideology as a Cultural System," 54.


\textsuperscript{14}Smelser, \textit{The Theory of Collective Behavior}, 354.
politicized between colonized and colonizing populations.¹⁵ Eventually, the strain theorists believed, ethnicity loses its unifying authority. Kinship, tribe, language, region or custom lack the unifying power necessary to maintain order in a modern society.

Strain theorists believe that unity in a modern society can only be maintained by calls to loyalty to a civil state. In a heterogenous colony or new nation, elites politicizing ethnicity would more likely emphasize factors of dissimilarity than factors of commonality. Since appeals to ethnic loyalty are divisive, societies must foster loyalty to the civic state. Geertz wrongly assumes that, since ethnicity becomes dysfunctional, societies will no longer utilize it as a mechanism of unity.

While Durkheim and the strain theorists identified the deep psychological roots of ethnicity, they exaggerated the ability of governments to foster loyalties to the civic state. Although appeals to ethnic loyalties are often divisive within a state, many states have persisted in such appeals, equivocating loyalty to the ethnic nation (most often the dominant ethnic group's identity) with civic loyalty, and politicized ethnic identity among subordinate groups. The results are destructive because ethnic

¹⁵Geertz, Old Societies and New States, 112-7.
identities were not as malleable as predicted. The state leaders did not create loyalties to the centralized state as strong as those that remained attached to ethnic identity.

Like later primordialists, Durkheim and the strain theorists essentially viewed ethnic identities as dysfunctional. While the instrumentalists portray ethnicity as a tool of elites to combat a civic unity that is disadvantageous to them, primordialists portray ethnicity as a psychological force that causes the same sort of disintegration. However, if one views ethnic identity as only a persistent relic of antiquity that complicates modernization, one implicitly criticizes those employing ethnic ideologies as disintegrationists. Primordialists and instrumentalists alike do not take seriously the demands of ethnic movements for cultural rights (except as obstacles to modernization).

**The Source of Conflict**

The group drive to increase or maintain status relative to other groups is the dynamic that causes ethnic conflict, according to the primordialists. For both rational and irrational reasons, the fates of individuals are attached to their ethnic groups. They gain economic advantages or suffer disadvantages according to group membership. Their
ethnic identity will be passed on to their descendants, so they worry that their ethnic group might be relegated to the position of "hewers of wood and water drawers."\textsuperscript{16} Thus, primordialists argue, they worry about their group's position within society.

Individuals also receive a sense of psychological worth from the status of their ethnic group. R. Paul Shaw and Yuwa Wong argue that humans have an inherent survival mechanism that connects them to their group. This mechanism, which developed in the prehistoric past for the protection of kin and tribal groups, is misplaced in the modern world.\textsuperscript{17} Individuals, through a process of channelled cognition, commit loyalties to their ethnic groups that evolution designed for smaller groups.\textsuperscript{18}

Shaw and Wong envision this identification process as a system of concentric circles of potential loyalties, with the individual at the center and the civic state at the outside ring.\textsuperscript{19} The factors that influence at which level an individual chooses to commit his or her loyalties are the

\textsuperscript{16}Horowitz, 175-76.


\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 65-68.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid. 107. They note that identity with all humanity is also possible.
same as those that are associated with ethnic group boundaries: phenotypical characteristics, common language, common homeland, common religion, and the belief in common descent. Thus, an identification mechanism for the defense of the prehistoric tribe creates a sense of altruism and the tendency for self-sacrifice within individuals that identify with their ethnic nation.  

William Bloom, another social scientist that related theories of identification to examine nationalism, explained the importance of the group identity to the sense of security of individuals. A change of "historical circumstances," which threaten a "generalized identification (such as ethnicity)" will also threaten the "identity of each individual within that group." Sometimes, 

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20 Shaw and Wong imply that the primary location for these loyalties of modern people is the nation-state. William Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990) argues that nation-states have an advantage even over ethnicity, clan, tribe or sect, because they monopolize the use of force and are considered the norm in modern societies. However, in a modernizing society, this "norm" is not universally accepted and, thus, some states are unable to direct the loyalty toward themselves and the loyalties of their citizens remain committed to identities represented by circles nearer the center, like ethnicity.

21 Bloom, 39.
individuals are prepared to die rather than "betray the belief and negate an identity."\textsuperscript{22}

Portraying ethnic and national identities as mechanisms of prehistoric social unity that have lost their meanings in the modern era presents several problems. For example, the primordialists need to account for why individual loyalties shift focus from the small group or tribe to the nation or state. The former are collections of personally known people, while the latter imply a vast community of unseen strangers. To postulate that such a shift has occurred on an international scale, primordialists must provide a reason for it. Alternatively, if one assumes that archaic kinship ties are transferred to modern nations, why are they not transferred to mankind as a whole?

**The Importance of the Ethnic Group**

As a consequence of the unique quality of ethnic identity, the status of an individual's ethnic group when compared to other groups is often more important to that individual's sense of belonging or self-esteem than his or her relative status when compared to other individuals in a society.\textsuperscript{23} People derive a sense of self worth from two

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid, 72.

\textsuperscript{23}Isaacs, 34-36.
sources: their value as an individual and their value as a member of a group. Individual worth, however, is meaningful only within an enclosure of a homogenous group, comparing oneself to one's comparable equals. An individual can derive his or her worth from his or her personal achievements, but such "sources of belongingness and self esteem serve only where basic group identity (ethnicity) differences do not get in the way."\textsuperscript{24}

Thus, the Chinese feel pride in their great past, and ex-untouchables of India do not escape feelings of negativity. People can derive self worth from different sources, and the relative esteem of ethnic group identity is of utmost importance, but most people need all they can get from all sources.\textsuperscript{25} This aspect of ethnic identity accounts for its political authority and the stakes involved in loyalty to one's group.

**The Invidious Comparison Model**

Donald Horowitz provides a model of how ethnic groups formulate their identities, and their evaluations of their ethnic identities. He portrays it as a confused and complicated process that occurs during colonization. As

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., 34.

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., 35.
Europeans sought to govern their vast new territories, they evaluated indigenous cultures, favored groups that cooperated, and sought the aid of these indigenous groups in rule. Groups that more easily adapted to European domination became identified as "advanced," "civilized," and "reasonable." Groups that resisted were seen as "savages," and those who failed to adapt as "backwards." This process created tensions among indigenous ethnic groups, pretension among successful groups, and resentment among unsuccessful groups.

These ethnic evaluations were used by colonizers for their own purposes, to divide and conquer the indigenous peoples. Colonizers selected certain groups to assist in administration, staff the bureaucracy, and fight in the army. They relegated others to menial tasks and manual labor, more fitting their presumed capabilities.

With time, the presumed cultural differences among ethnic groups became magnified in intensity. The experience of success or failure as measured against European standards strengthened the meaning of ethnic affiliations. Those favored by Europeans, viewed as advanced and intelligent, succeeded in a Westernized society and those viewed as backwards and ignorant failed.

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26Horowitz, 151-54.
The colonialist thus set in motion a comparative process by which aptitudes and disabilities imputed to ethnic groups were to be evaluated. Those evaluations, solidly based in groups disparities that emerged, could not be dismissed as the irrelevant invention of a foreign overlord. Like the new polity and economy in which the disparities were embedded, the evaluations took hold.27

Ethnic evaluations became self-fulfilling prophesies. Ethnic groups' presumed differences, imposed by their colonizers, became real to the indigenous ethnies.

As a result of this process, ethnic groups developed assumed cultural traits. Positive and advanced attributes included: enterprising, aggressive, industrious, arrogant, intelligent, pushy, cunning, ambitious, and coarse. Negative and backwards attributes included: lazy, indolent, lacking initiative, polite, ignorant, submissive, dependent, easygoing, and proud.28 These traits became an important element of each colonized person's ethnic identity.

According to the invidious comparison theory, the members of each ethnic group collectively choose which pre-modern traits to value and maintain (a society may view a part of its identity as simultaneously backwards and, yet, invaluable because it differentiates their group from others). Other ethnic markers and customs fade, victims of

27Ibid., 164.

28Ibid., 169.
modernity.29 The remaining group attributes determine the success or failure, advanced-ness or backwardness of the group.30 An individual identifies himself or herself as a member of an ethnic group, his or her group's evaluations of itself and the group's comparison to others becomes vital, and he or she fights for the relative advancement of his or her group.

The demand to catch up to other groups or maintain status in this system of "invidious comparison" between ethnic groups creates ethnic conflict. As Horowitz imagines, colonization broadens the polity for an ethnic community, bringing it into contact with ethnic strangers who have mastered the skills of modernity better than itself.31 Backwards groups, with severe anxiety about the threats emanating from other groups, push to catch up or face habitual subordination.32 Advanced groups perceive the threat to their position and seek to maintain the advantages they have achieved from modernization.

29Ibid., 172.

30Ibid., 151-54. Horowitz includes discussions of how location, natural resources, and educational opportunity also determine a group's status. However, it is the resulting evaluations of advanced-ness and backwardness that causes conflict.

31Ibid., 165-66.

32Ibid., 173-76.
In addition to the pressure caused by the presence of ethnic strangers, members of ethnic groups are pushed to catch up by their own elites. The sentimentality for backwards traits often exhibited by former colonizers for the "dignity, politeness, and nobility" of indigenous peoples, finds no counterpart in the urges of their leaders to modernize, and assume advanced attributes, customs and habits.\textsuperscript{33} The pursuit of group status, along with the power and prestige that accompany it, assumes primary importance to group members.

Individual identity and group fate are inextricably linked. Members of groups strive to associate that group's presumed attributes to a positive identity.

Since the individual "sense of identity is the feeling of being a worthy person because he fits into a coherent and valued order of things," ego identity depends heavily on affiliations. A threat to the value of those affiliations produces anxiety and defense.\textsuperscript{34}

Thus, the struggle for status among the various ethnic groups in a society takes on a deeply personal meaning to the members of ethnic groups.

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid., 174.

The stakes are high for ethnic groups trying to catch up to their advanced counterparts. Members of ethnic groups fear subordination. They do not want themselves, their descendants, and their fellow group members to become relegated to low-esteem, low-paying jobs. Likewise, they do not want their ethnic identity to suffer low prestige in comparison to other groups. They tend to view conciliatory leaders as excessively generous and even traitorous. Every issue becomes a survival issue. The fear of extinction is a powerful threat and a rationale for hostility.

Once ethnic evaluations, verbalized and delineated, sink in and take on a subconscious role in a society, they are an important determinant in ethnic conflict. These evaluations, based on stereotypes, become culture. Following independence, political events highlight and politicize these stereotypes. Conflict between groups erupts in a struggle for pre-eminence in the society.

**Summary**

The primordialist approach to the study of ethnic conflict keeps scholars attentive to the power of ethnicity to overwhelm economic and class considerations. Ethnic identity links humans to their ancestral past as well as their descendants’ future. As such, it holds a
psychological meaning that surpasses the importance of a single life or lifetime. Simultaneously, it links people to a group whose collective social status holds deep, subconscious relevance to the ethny member. The social strain of modernization increases the need for both self-worth and finding emotionally-linked allies.

Primordialism also demonstrates that ethnic conflict becomes so murderously intense and destructive beyond the economic goals of the elites and persistent beyond its uses by the elites, because of the "unique" meaning it holds for individuals. Those motivated by ethnic ideologies compete not only for economic advancement, they also act out of pride in identity, a fear of subordination, and a horror for the extinction of a valued affiliation. This nonmaterial, "irrational" element of group identity in ethnic conflict explains why elites and nonelites willingly destroy the political and economic structures over which they fight.

Primordialists account for the emotional power of the "affective ties" of ethnicity that instrumentalists see as a useful organizing principle. Roughly speaking, elites employ ethnic ideologies, which they may or may not feel emotional attachment to themselves, for their own purposes, as an instrument of political organization. The psychological strength of ethnicity, the implication of the
individual's shared fate with his ethnic kin, explains why the masses follow.

While instrumentalists tend to exaggerate the malleability of ethnic identities, primordialists downplay the political manipulation of ethnic boundaries. The invidious comparison model assumes that groups, as they adjust to modernity, choose some primordial traits to value and maintain as group identifiers, while other traits fade. With the fading of traits, ethnic boundaries broaden to expand the size of the group. Which traits are maintained and which traits are dropped determine which people are included and which are excluded from the identity. If this is a conscious political act, it begs the question of who politically gains from the resultant inclusions and exclusion.

Also, the primordialists rely upon some force to upset the pre-modern social relations among ethnies. In the absence of an obvious influence, such as colonization or modernization, the primordialists must explain what sets in motion the process of conflictual ethnic group comparison. They account for the onset of the invidious comparison process when colonization causes groups to jealously compare themselves by the colonizers standards of "advanced-ness" and "backwardness." However, how does this occur in
industrialized countries which experience ethnic antagonism? Whose values determine the relative positions of groups? Lacking their own explanations for the initial causes of conflict between ethnies, the primordialists must rely upon the theories of the conflictual modernizationists.

Finally, the existence of strong identities in itself does not necessitate conflict. A strong sense of loyalty to one ethnic identity does not require animosity towards another ethny. Primordialists cannot account for well-developed ethnic identities, which suffered from colonialism and are established in the primordial past, but do not experience violence.
The third important school of ethnic conflict, the constructivists, challenges the basic assumptions about the formulation of ethnic and identity of the conflictual modernizationists and the primordialists. Other theorists see ethnicity as a demarcation of conflicting groups or as an instrument of political manipulation, but the constructivists believe that the creation of national communities, using ethnic identity as a basis for legitimation, results in conflict.

The conflictual modernizationists and the primordialists share certain basic beliefs about ethnic identity. They both believe that identity is created and re-created, sometimes consciously by ethnic elites or state authorities (as instrumentalists usually emphasize), and sometimes unconsciously among masses and elites alike, limited by ascriptive ties (as primordialists usually emphasize). Often, according to instrumentalists and primordialists, ethnicity is politicized, created or re-
created in anticipation of competition, during competition, or in response to competition.

Constructivists, however, identify the source of conflict as the way in which ethnicity is imagined. They agree that ethnic identities are created and re-created during conflicts. However, while others portray this creation and re-creation as the result of the conflict, constructivists portray the conflict as the result of the creation and re-creation.

The question of the relationship between conflict and the manipulation of identity is more than a simple "chicken or the egg" debate. Others assume that some other force (modernization or colonization for the conflictual modernizationists) starts conflicts that set in motion the creation and re-creation of identities (by expanding or contracting "ethnic boundaries") for advantages in the conflict. However, constructivists believe that the cause of the conflict is the political attempts to establish, create, and re-create national identities.

The constructivists argue that nations must develop, or construct, identities that explain the unity of their members beyond the simple legitimation of the civil state. To persist in modernity, nations and ethnic nations must create a consciousness of the greater nation such that the
members of the group perceive a common bond with others that they never have met or never will meet. Social ties, such as common culture, language, race, ethnicity, religion, or sense of history foster unification. When individuals are excluded from the national identity, or drawn to alternative identities, the divided society suffers competition or conflict.

According to the constructivists, modern ethnic identity is an ideology that results from intentional political efforts and accidents of history. Standardizing languages, drawing maps, taking census and writing national histories constructs the social reality of a nation. The viability and attraction of the constructed nation depends upon its ability to establish its legitimacy in history.

Nations and ethnic identities define themselves, in a sense, by what they are not—what is outside the identity. Thus, some identities base themselves upon opposition to outsiders. Nineteenth and twentieth century colonial nationalists, for example, identified themselves and their nations as "not European." The outside-inside identity relationship plays an important role in constructivist theory of ethnic conflict.
The National Myth

Constructivists assert that a nation-state must create a national culture at some level if it is to survive. "Nations need myths to live by," according to James Mayall and Mark Simpson.¹ Ethnicities, like ideologies, contain varying capacities to attract followers. Ethnicities and nations must establish themselves in the mythical past to achieve legitimacy among their potential adherents. The communality of the group is celebrated in rituals and symbols that are deliberate political inventions to create the essence of nationhood.²

The ability to construct a useable national myth determines a nation's or an ethnic identity's viability. For a nation-state, the inability to create a national culture and focus loyalties upon the centralized state results in conflict and secession. Likewise, the existence of an ethnic culture, or any competing identity that attracts strong loyalties counter to the central authority, causes a competition for legitimacy. Strong identities


challenge a state's legitimacy and offer potential ethnic nationalisms that weaken its authority.

The works of Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, and Terence Ranger discuss how ethnicity and the nation are imagined. They write that the "historical" traditions of nations are invented. Nationalists promote symbols and historical traditions that create a sense that the nation has existed since the prehistoric past. The nation and patriotic loyalty to it, thus, are defensible as respect for the past and the practical acceptance of a historical "given."

According to Gellner, "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist." The nation-state system and modern economies require nation-states. They are necessary for international legitimacy and are the mechanisms for legal regulation of modern economies. The imperatives of industrial society, which necessitate homogeneity, pressures societies to become homogenous. This pressure "eventually appears on the surface in the form of nationality."

Nationality, then, is a fabrication, created by nationalists to justify statehood.

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In The Invention of Tradition, Hobsbawm and Ranger emphasize the artificial nature of national identity. Hugh Trevor-Roper\(^5\) points out that many Scottish customs, such as the kilt, were actually the invention of late nineteenth century nationalist.\(^6\) Falsified pasts were fabricated in many ways and symbols of so-called national traditions were presented as respect for the past and respect for the historical roots of the nation.

Historical continuity had to be invented for nationalism. This was achieved through:

semi-fiction (Boadicea, Vercingetorix, Arminus the Cheruscan) or by forgery (Ossian, the Czech medieval manuscripts). It is also clear that entirely new symbols and devices came into existence as part of national movements and states, such as the national anthem, the national flag, or the personification of 'the nation' in symbol or image, either official, as with Marianne and Germania, or unofficial, as in the cartoon stereotypes of John Bull, the lean Yankee Uncle Sam and the 'German Michel.'\(^7\)

In the age of nationalism, Europeans invented many of the public symbols associated with the nation.


\(^6\)The kilt was imposed by eighteenth century English Quakers who wanted their scantily clad Scottish factory workers properly dressed. It was later revived among the British gentry by those who wanted to advertise their highland roots.

\(^7\)Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in Hobsbawm and Ranger, 7.
The invention of tradition was not limited to Europe. Ranger describes how Africa imported the concepts of "the tribe" and "the nation" from Europe. Before the "false" Africa of the colonialist era, Ranger claims that there was an Africa where tribal identities were radically different. In another work, Ranger describes how people speaking dialects referred to as Shona were divided into hundreds of tribes by the Rhodesian government, and how Methodist Episcopal, Dutch Reformed, Jesuit, and Trappist missions created the Manyika, Karanga and Zezuru languages.

The French National Identity

The dominant way for nations to imagine or define their nationality, the French model, necessitated problems for the ethnically heterogenous imitators that followed it. French nationalists, during the French Revolution, formulated a


9 An important debate rages among constructivists. They argue whether, amid the constructed identities, there ever were "genuine" nationalities. Anderson criticizes the usefulness of the "genuine-ness" paradigm, while Hobsbawm and Ranger imply that "genuine" nationalities would not be as problematical as the constructed ones.

concept of nationhood that envisioned the legitimate nation as a state governing an ethnically homogenous, sovereign people. Others that tried to adhere to this model discovered that the ethnies that were excluded from the national culture within their states claimed to be separate peoples deserving their own state.

Benedict Anderson traces the formulation of the French model of an ethnic nation. The leaders of the French Revolution advanced a concept of the nation that included those of European descent who spoke French as their first language. Adherence to this linguistic standard was enforced throughout the regions formerly under Bourbon control. "Frenchness," speaking standardized French and recognizing Paris as the central authority, was violently imposed by the Revolutionary government.

The French model of the homogenous and linguistic "nation" entails a mythical attachment between the native-born speakers of the language that dominates a geographic region and the land of that region. Dominant-language speakers came to presume that ethnically and linguistically

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12Anderson, Imagined Communities, 67-82.
different people did not belong and that even learning the language did not entitle one to enter into the national community. One needed to be born into it.

The lexicographic revolution in Europe, however, created and gradually spread, the conviction that languages (in Europe at least) were, so to speak, the personal property of quite specific groups— their daily speakers and readers— and moreover that these groups, imagined as communities, were entitled to their autonomous place in a fraternity of equals.\(^{13}\)

Other nationalisms of the same era, such as those that arose in Germany as a response to the French invasion, also asserted the French model of an imagined nation. Germans, for a large part, defined their nationality in terms of opposition to France.\(^{14}\) Important nationalist songs like "\textit{Wacht am Rhein}\" emphasize that Germany arose in military struggle against the French. Despite this, or possibly because of it, Germans imagine their ethnic nationality in a fashion similar to the French— people of European descent, born in a land called "Germany," and who speak German as their first language.

According to constructivist theory, the imposition of ethnic homogeneity, implied by the French model of a legitimate nation, and the demands for nationhood by those

\(^{13}\text{Ibid., 84.}\)

\(^{14}\)Hobsbawm, "\textit{Mass Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914,}\" in Hobsbawm and Ranger, 277-278.
who argue for the existence of their ethnic nation cause ethnic violence. States attempt to integrate and homogenize their diverse populations to meet international standards of nationhood and to eliminate potential threats of separatist or irredentist movements. Ethnies, whose elites created a strong enough "imagined community" to survive, resist integration.

Other Models

Although the French model dominated throughout the twentieth century, Anderson outlines other versions of nationalism that existed. The North American model, the first nationalist movement, pre-dated the French model. Additionally, the regions affected by the collapse of the Spanish Empire between 1810 and 1830 experienced a style different from Europe. These models defined their respective nations without ethnic descent.

North American nationalism was qualitatively different from the French model. Although the leaders of the American Revolution were predominantly Protestants of English descent, inclusion in the nation was not based upon ethnic descent.\textsuperscript{15} Black slaves and indigenous peoples were excluded, as were Catholics, and later Southern European and

\textsuperscript{15}Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities}, 47-65.
Asian immigrants. Inclusion in the constructed national community was not based upon one's ancestors' presumed inhabitance in the country since supposedly everyone's ancestors had immigrated at some time. Unlike in France, the descendants of immigrants could readily assimilate to the dominant culture (much more easily provided they were white Protestants). While white Protestants enjoyed many social advantages, Americans lacked a sense that being "American" was rooted in a historic connection to the land or the dominant language.

Those of European descent in Latin America imagined their nations in a similar fashion. The nations associated with the despotisms, rebellions, and civil wars that followed the collapse of Spain shared with North America that, so long as one could speak the language of the economic elites (English in North America, Spanish or Portuguese in Central and South America), ethnicity was not a barrier to inclusion within the nation. Generally, governments in the Western Hemisphere ruled in the name of a

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16Note, however, that there is prestige attached to one's family having long-term residence in the new world.

17Anderson, Imagined Communities, 47-65.
sovereign people (though not necessarily democratically) that was not ethnically exclusive.\textsuperscript{18}

The nationalities of the following eras were imagined in two different ways: the anti-colonial version and the French version.\textsuperscript{19} The nationalisms of the early twentieth century, those that followed the collapse of the Habsburg, Ottoman, Russian, and Ch'ing empires, and the nationalisms of the post World War II eras, following the collapse of the bourgeois empires of France, Britain, Holland, Belgium, and Portugal often followed the anti-colonial model of nationalism. However, the leaders in these newly independent states eventually forwarded the French, linguistic, ethnically homogenous model.

The usually temporary third version of nationalism, developed among ethnic elites who had been discriminated against by Europeans, was essentially anti-European in nature. The "nation" in many post-colonial states consisted of all non-Europeans. Ethnic elites, who had attempted to assimilate to Western culture, competed for jobs in the

\textsuperscript{18} van den Berghe notes that indigenous peoples and those of European or part-European descent are visually indistinguishable. Pierre van den Berghe, "The Ixil Triangle," in State Violence and Ethnicity, ed. Pierre van den Berghe (Niwot, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1990), 253-288.

colonial bureaucracies. Like the North American and Latin American creole pioneers of earlier eras, these indigenous elites found that they were limited to lateral movements within the bureaucracies, and denied the prestigious promotions to the European capitals. In their frustrated "journeys" from post to post within the colonies, these elites met fellow ethnic "sojourners" who shared their fate. Among these elites, the new form of nationalism arose.

Anderson relates the story of Bipin Chandra Pal of India in 1932. He was educated in England and subjected to the same civil service exams as his England-born competitors. However, regardless of how well he performed within a supposed meritocracy, his ethnic identity restricted him to work within the Indian subcontinent. Thwarted elites, like Bipin Chandra Pal, imagined a community of "thousands and thousands like themselves," similarly frustrated. The social barriers against the members of their imagined community convinced the elites that they needed and deserved a nation of their own, independent of the Europeans.

20 Anderson uses "creole" to denote native-born people of European descent.

21 Anderson, Imagined Communities, 92-93.

22 Ibid., 77.
To create the new "nationalities", elites not only first imagined the community, they formulated the definitions of it. The attitudes of these nationalist elites ("culture-brokers") shaped what ethnic markers—language, culture, religions—became included within the boundaries and textures of the new identity. Early on, the definitions were broadly inclusive of non-European ethnies.

Following independence, however, nationalisms that were essentially anti-European evolved in the face of pressures from ethnonationalisms among groups that forwarded a French model of nationalism. Former colonies lacked a "usable pre-colonial past from which a modern national myth (could) be constructed." Separatist groups, advancing an "ethnic homogeneity" concept of the nation forwarded competing claims to legitimacy. Many of these groups were capable of creating a national myth for their ethnic identity that questioned the legitimacy of the central governments. The governments that survived often were captured by groups that enforced a linguistic, ethnically homogenous model of nationalism, despite the reality of the ethnic identities within the populace.

23Vail, 11.

24Mayall and Simpson, 10.
Problems For The French Model

The imposition of linguistic and ethnic homogeneity along the French style of nationalism causes the repression of dissident ethnicities. For example, Anderson places the blame for the bloody, genocidal policies of the Khmer Rouge less on the cruelty, paranoia, and megalomania of its Khmer-speaking leadership than on their efforts to follow the models of the French and their national revolution. The inherent conflict between the Khmer Rouge's vision of Cambodia and its ethnic reality resulted in a genocidal campaign to prevent a challenge to nationalist rule.

The conflictual modernizationists and the primordialists that follow instrumentalist or primordialist concepts of ethnicity often have difficulty explaining instances of ethnic cooperation. They can not account for why and under what circumstances ethnic groups co-exist. Their theories fail to explain economic disparity and competition between ethnic groups without conflict. Nor do they explain cases of well-established identities within the same state that enjoy peaceful relations.

Constructivism accounts for these cases by examining the ways in which identities are constructed. Inclusive nationalisms, which do not exclude groups on the bases of language, religion, culture or race, experience less
violence, because separatism and anti-state ethnic violence develops "in a large part in reaction to insensitive policies of the central authorities." Exclusive societies foster dissent among those that do not share the identity propagated in the national myth.

Constructivists propose that national identities, those formed to legitimize the state, must be inclusive enough to incorporate the potential ethnic identities within the state. Elites and collectives, for reasons outlined in instrumentalist and primordialist literature, may seek to establish their legitimacy counter to the state's. The interplay between the national state's proposed identity and those alternatives to it determines the forces of ethnic conflict and whether the different sides pursue violent resolutions. Constructivist literature is rich with examples of community identity formation and how those formations affect the viability of states, ethnies, the levels of violence in ethnic conflict, and the probability of conflict resolution. Multiple or powerful ethnies, whether imagined or not, and inflexibility by dominant or subordinant groups are a constructivist's recipe for persistent violence.  

\[^{25}\text{Mayall and Simpson, 15.}\]

\[^{26}\text{Ibid., 14-18.}\]
Inclusive Nationalisms

Juan J. Linz offers a developing form of communal identity that suggests inclusiveness. He studied surveys from the Spanish and French Basque regions, Catalonia, Galicia, and Valencia and determined that traditional nationalist movements offer primordialist conceptions of nationalism, rooted in common ancestry and language. However, often ethnic political movements use a territorial definition of identity in their drive for regional autonomy. These nationalists shed their ties to their supposed historical past, reducing the "tensions imbedded in their ethnic ideology," and including "alien" ethnics for political expediency.

Considering the odds against India, with its numerous, established ethnic groups, its leaders have succeeded because, "since 1947, there has been a tacit understanding that if the Indian state is to survive, the government has no alternative but to come to terms with—indeed to accommodate—diversity." India abandoned its early


28Newman, 471.

29Mayall and Simpson, 14.
attempts to establish Hindi as its official language, particularly due to Tamil pressure.\textsuperscript{30} Indian "nationality" has come to be based upon commitment to a secular state with a vast majority of Hindus. Thus, a large part of the Indian image of its nationality rests upon the "most flexible (and least overtly political) of the great world religions."\textsuperscript{31}

Efforts to create inclusive national communities often fail. Ethiopia might reduce ethnic and separatist violence by forming a more coherent Ethiopian state, rewriting its history to show the common "Hamatic" tradition of Somalis, Oromos, Amhars, and Eritreans.\textsuperscript{32} David Laitin points out the advantages of various possible identities, but concludes that the colonial experience of the region has rendered them impossible.\textsuperscript{33}

The worse case scenario, in constructivist theory, is the control of the state by a mono-cultural, intolerant authority. In these cases, the dominant culture, in its "nation-building" efforts, is insensitive or deliberately

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., 15.


\textsuperscript{33}Ibid.
belligerent to alternative ethnic cultures and tries to enhance the security of the state by eliminating "alternative foci of loyalty."\(^{34}\)

Dominant cultural elites in the society have been able to preserve their dominance through the instrument of state power, and, to varying extents, the process of the formation of the state has encouraged the close link between the ethnic nationalism of the dominant group and state nationalism: the cultural symbolism of the dominant group thus forming the basis for the articulation of state-national identity. The ethnic attachments of the dominant community in such states is strengthened and transformed by its translation into state nationalism.\(^{35}\)

This leaves other ethnies with the choice between assimilating or resisting. However, as the primordialists argued, people sacrifice and die for their ethnic identity. The determination of the dominant culture to absorb or exterminate minorities creates antithetical ethnic nationalisms to oppose its efforts.

**Summary**

Often, inflexible, mono-cultural regimes fall into the trap of seeing themselves as forces for modernization and integration. They perceive that their concept of the nation...
is the advanced or modern version. Alternative ethnic and
national identities, consequently, must be fragmenting and
disintegrating forces of primitiveness. Anderson cites
Indonesia's "bloody integration" of East Timor between 1975
and 1980. The regime in Jakarta perceived and portrayed
its battle as one against "disintegrationist,"
"separatists," and "anti-Indonesian elements." Such
ideologies encourage leaders to believe that they stand for
progress and peace, while their adversaries represent narrow
nationalism, sectionalism and terrorism.

Two trends emerge from the constructivist school's
theories on ethnic nationalism and ethnic conflict. First,
etnic nationalism arises in opposition to an oppressing
force. Second, exclusive national identities, those
legitimizing, defining, and enforcing the nation-state as an
ethnically homogenous community, promote ethnic conflict.

The history of nationalism shows that opposition
movements often develop ethnic nationalist ideologies in
response to oppression. As Heribert Adam wrote, "People
establish their identity in opposition to oppressors as the

36 This may in part be because of the role of the social
sciences in examining ethnic conflict and nationalism in
terms of modernity.

first step to real resistance."38 Americans developed a nationalism based upon a revolution against the British monarchy. German nationality defined itself in military opposition to Napoleon's France. Early nationalists in African and Asian colonial territories organized themselves as anti-European identities, and, later, disenfranchised ethnicities within these states formed in opposition to their central governments.

Constructivist theory emphasizes that nation-states must recognize strong identities and accommodate diversity. Regardless of the "falseness" or "genuineness" of an identity, forceful attempts to homogenize societies create resistance. Ethnic identities opposed to the national identity will be reinforced or created in response to oppression.

CHAPTER VI
KURDISH ETHNONATIONALISM

Violent Kurdish ethnic nationalism threatens the stability and territorial integrities of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. In these states, Kurdish nationalists claim to represent a people that are linguistically and culturally distinct from the dominant national groups—Persians, Arabs, and Turks, respectively. Thus, they conclude that they deserve their own ethnic state or, at least, recognition of their ethnic nationality as distinct.

In each of these states, the Kurdish peoples represent a significant portion of the population. Estimates of the numbers of Kurds are highly controversial, with states undercounting and Kurdish nationalists exaggerating. Nonetheless, estimates place the Kurdish population between 18 and 20 million people. Between 4 and 6 million people of Kurdish descent live in Iran (out of 50 million citizens), and roughly 4 million of Iraq's population (12 million) are Kurds. Turkey, with between 8 and 11 million Kurds (in a population of 55 million), has the largest population of
ethnic Kurds.\textsuperscript{1} Despite the numbers of Kurdish residents within these states, neither Iran, Iraq, nor Turkey are prepared to grant statehood or even cultural autonomy to their Kurdish population.

In spite of long-term efforts by these three states, Kurdish nationalism persists as a threat to their stability and unity. Since the formation of the Turkish national state, its government has brutally suppressed its Kurdish people, outlawing their language and using the army to enforce martial law throughout the region. Iran has crushed several Kurdish rebellions and employed state terrorism against Kurdish nationalist writers and elites. Iraq has also used state terrorism, including the recent genocidal chemical warfare tactics employed in 1988 against the town of Halabja where 5000 died.\textsuperscript{2} Nonetheless, the Kurdish resistance movements defy the state authorities.

\textbf{The Kurds}

According to most accounts, the Kurds descended from the Medes, an Indo-European population group that moved into

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Joel Krieger, ed., \textit{The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 518.
\item \textsuperscript{2} Nader Entasser, \textit{Kurdish Ethnonationalism} (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 1992), 138.
\end{itemize}
the Iranian plateau before 600 BC.³ Like Persians, Pushtus
and Tajiks, the Kurds are an Iranian people. Historically,
the term "Kurd" denoted non-Arab nomads, but, by the seventh
century BC, it referred to all peoples inhabiting the Zagros
Mountain regions of northwestern Iran.⁴ The Kurds
intermingled with other tribes and ethnic groups in the
area, but their culture has remained distinct from those of
the surrounding regions.

The region's geography has kept the Kurds separate from
the Arabs, Persians, and Turks. Kurdistan sits on the
rugged and mountainous boundaries of the former Ottoman and
Persian Empires. Historically, both cultures viewed it the
natural boundary between them.⁵ Neither culture penetrated
Kurdistan long enough to assimilate the various tribes that
lived there, and the Kurds remained separate.

Their mountains, according to the noted scholar Mehrdad
Izady, define the Kurdish people's identity and culture.⁶
The Kurdish saying "Level the mountains and the Kurds will
be no more" demonstrates how the mountains have protected

³Mehrdad Izady, The Kurds: A Concise Handbook

⁴Charles MacDonald, "The Kurdish Question in the
1980s," in Esman and Rabinovich, 234-35.

⁵Entasser, 3.

⁶Izady, 186-191.
the Kurds from outsiders and sustained them throughout their history. Kurds who have left the mountains are seldom considered to be Kurds, while members of other ethnic groups that have settled in the mountains have become "kurdified beyond all recognition." 

However, just as the mountains have shielded the inhabitants of Kurdistan from outside influences, they have prevented easy communication among the Kurds themselves. There is little communication or trade between Kurdish communities. Organization has tended to remain tribal, and the Kurdish language is divided into numerous dialects, the speakers of which can not communicate with other Kurdish speakers. Thus, culturally and linguistically, the Kurdish society is fragmented and diverse.

The Kurdish Language

Most modern nationalist movements recognize common language as an important ingredient to the development of an ethnic nation. The Kurdish language belongs to the Iranian branch of the Indo-European languages and, thus, fundamentally differs from the Semetic Arabic and Altaic Turkish, and is similar to Persian. It is, however,

7Ibid., 188-89.

8Ibid.
distinct from Persian and unintelligible to speakers of that language. The mountainous terrain that isolates Kurdish-speaking groups and the lack of a central authority to standardize the language have reinforced linguistic diversity among Kurdish speakers.

Although there exist scores of subdialects, there are two main dialects of the Kurdish language: Kurmanji and Pahlawani (Dimili-Gurani). Kurmanji, some subdialect of which is spoken by most Kurds, consists of two main groups of subdialects: North Kurmanji (Bahdinani), of which there are 15 million speakers in Turkey, Syria, and the Caucuses; and South Kurmanji (Sorani), of which there are 6 million speakers in Iran and Iraq. North Kurmanji is arguably the literary language of the Kurds and is considered the most prestigious. Versions of Dimili, also known as Zaza, are spoken by roughly 4 million Kurds throughout Iran, Iraq, and Anatolia; and Gurani is spoken by the roughly 3 million speakers of its two subdivisions, Laki and Awramani.

These dialects are mutually exclusive and unintelligible to speakers of other dialects of Kurdish. Writers of the Kurdish dialects even disagree about a common

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9 Some scholars refer to the major divisions of Kurdish as languages within a Kurdish family of languages, rather than as dialects of a single language. See Entasser, 4-5.

10 Izady, 167-75.
alphabet. Kurds in Turkey and Syria publish in the Latin alphabet, and many Iranian intellectuals support this practice. Most literate Kurds in Iran, however, use the Arabic. Additionally the Kurds in Armenia and the Caucuses have published in the Armenian alphabet since the 1920s, and some Kurds in the former Soviet Union use the Cyrillic alphabet.\textsuperscript{1} Despite the heterogeneity of their language, there exists, among Kurdish nationalists, a sense of a common language.

\textbf{Religion}

Prior to the influence of Islam, most Kurds followed the Persian religion of Zoroastrianism. Now, the majority of Kurds are Muslims, three-fifths of whom are practicing Sunnis. The Shi'a sect of Islam, Judaism and Christianity also have significant followings among the Kurdish people. There are followers of the Alawite sect of Islam, considered heretical to the orthodox Muslims. Also, there are a number of Sufi orders. Additionally, a renewed interest in Zoroastrianism developed among intellectuals at the beginning of the twentieth century.

\textsuperscript{1}MacDonald, 238.
Yazidism, an ancient religion of unknown origins, also has a significant following among the Kurds. Yazidism, referred to as "devil worship" by orthodox Muslims, actually professes to be one of several "cults of angels." It is exclusive to Kurdistan and has only nominal roots in Islam, Christianity, Judaism, and eastern religions, but its rights and practices are wholly foreign to Muslims.

The History of Kurdish Nationalism

The modern Kurdish movements in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey have persisted as problems for the central governments, but only posed serious threats to them when historical circumstances or external forces weakened the states. The heterogeneity of the Kurdish language, regionalism due to Kurdistan's terrain, political divisions among Kurdish leaders, and the Kurds' inability to unite at opportunistic times have allowed the central governments to recover and stabilize their regimes. After infighting among the Kurds or the withdrawal of outside support further weakens them, the threatened state usually responds with brute force against Kurdish civilians and soldiers.

12 for discussion of the angel cults among the Kurds see Izady, 137-58.
Kurdish nationalism began with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century.\textsuperscript{13} The 1920 Treaty of Sevres envisioned a Kurdistan granted local autonomy with the prospect of independence within a year, if the local population desired it and the League of Nations Council recommended independence. Though the Treaty of Sevres was never ratified, the aspirations that it aroused persist today, represented in violent ethnic conflict in Kurdistan.

Under Ottoman rule, Kurdish rebellion existed as resistance to the central authority, rather than as ethnic nationalism. The revolts of the Baban (1806-8), of Badr Khan (1843-47), and Mir Muhammad (1883-6) against the Turks, and the revolt of Sheikh Ubaidella against the Persians were "essentially revolts of traditional rulers who resented the increasing encroachments on their authority."\textsuperscript{14} Although Ubaidellah tried to use nationalist rhetoric to find allies, all these conflicts arose from indignation caused by

\textsuperscript{13}Martin van Bruinessen, "Kurdish Tribes and the State of Iran," in The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran and Afghanistan, ed. Richard Tapper (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 370-76. He discusses the relations of Kurdish tribes to the Ottoman state as the beginnings of Kurdish separatism.

taxation, conscription and Kurdish leaders being treated as lesser partners.\textsuperscript{15}

Nationalism is a Western concept and was alien to the cultures under Ottoman domination. The Ottoman Empire based its unity upon the common religion of Islam, or "Ottoman Harmony," a "view of the world and of history which was shared by different religions and linguistic communities of the empire."\textsuperscript{16} However, some intellectual Kurds, exposed to European ideas, promoted nationalism as a means to preserve their culture. The newspaper, Kurdistan, began publication in 1898 and Kurdish political and literary societies and clubs were formed.\textsuperscript{17} Some secret societies called for Kurdish independence, but had little effect without the support of the powerful tribal chiefs.\textsuperscript{18}

The close of World War I offered an opportunity for an independent Kurdistan that ended with the disappointment of the new Kurdish nationalist movement. The influences of the

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16}Yves Besson, "Identity crisis as a paradigm of Middle Eastern conflictuality," International Social Science Journal 43 (February 1991): 137. Nationalism was a threat to the Ottoman Empire and was the primary force responsible for its collapse.

\textsuperscript{17}Izady, 59.

defeated Ottomans and the occupied Persians over Kurdistan evaporated and encouraged Kurdish nationalists to push for autonomy. However, Reza Shah took over the Iranian rulership in 1921 and Mustafa Kemal's successful war of independence re-established authority in Istanbul.

Kurdish hopes for an independent Kurdistan were further damaged when the British created the Arab-dominated state of Iraq and included the oil-rich province of Mosul. They incorporated the largely Kurdish region within the new state. The Baghdad government would have had to respect the Kurdish autonomy mandated by the Treaty of Sevres, but the Allies and Kemal renegotiated the treaty and dropped the issue of Kurdish independence in the Treaty of Lausanne.

In the post-war period, there were numerous small-scale Kurdish revolts against the central governments in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. The fighting was most brutal in Turkey, where the Turkish government attempted to "turkify" its Kurds and mold the new state into an ethnically homogenous nation-state, fitting the internationally legitimate standard. Although the Treaty of Lausanne required the Turkish government to guarantee the religious rights of non-Muslims and the freedom of speech for non-Turks, the Turks declared their nation the Republic of Turkey.\(^{19}\) They banned

\(^{19}\) Izady, 61.
all Kurdish organizations, including religious organizations, and Kurdish publications.

Sheikh Said led the first major revolt against the central authorities in 1925, and was crushed by the Turkish Republican Army. Other major resistance efforts by the Kurds occurred during the Khoyboun revolt, which was crushed in 1932, and the rebellion in the region of Darsim in 1937. It was also put down with great ferocity.\(^{20}\)

Two revolts in Iraq demonstrate the difficulties for Kurdish nationalist movements during this period. In 1922, Shayk Mahmud declared himself the king of an independent Kurdistan under the banner of the "Free Kurdistan Movement." For the most part, though, he was unable to assert his rule outside his home district of Sulaymania.\(^{21}\) Besides fighting British and Iraqi forces, he had to deal with Kurdish tribal chiefs that opposed his authority, and Kurdish intellectuals who denounced him as "feudal."\(^{22}\) Shayk Mahmud's revolt resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Sadabad, in which Iraq, Turkey, and Iran agreed to coordinate defense policies against internal and external threats.\(^{23}\)

\(^{20}\) Sluggett, 180.

\(^{21}\) Sluggett, 179 and Entasser, 52-54.

\(^{22}\) Izady, 64.

\(^{23}\) Entasser, 54.
In 1927, Shayk Ahmad, a religious leader, began a rebellion against British, Turkish, and Iraqi forces. He too faced the resistance of Kurdish dissenters. He promoted a new religion, which combined Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as a mechanism to unify the Kurds, but was unsuccessful. Eventually, British and Iraqi troops chased him to Turkey, where Turkish forces captured and arrested him. Leadership of the Barzani clan's military forces passed to Ahmad's brother, Mustafa Barzani.

The Republic of Mahabad

The 1945 Republic of Mahabad, backed by the Soviets, offered another chance at a Kurdish ethnic nation. After the occupation of Iran in 1940 by the British and the Soviets, the Iranian Kurdish movement seized the opportunity of the government's weakness to declare its independence. President Qazi Muhammad assumed the republic's civilian leadership, and Mustafa Barzani travelled from Iraq to join as its military leader.

The republic, however, lacked the ability to survive without Soviet backing. When Moscow withdrew its support, in exchange for promises of oil concessions from Teheran,

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24 Izady, 64.

25 Sluggett, 183-86.
Iranian national forces attacked and crushed the Kurdish resistance. They captured and executed Qazi Muhammad and Barzani fled to the USSR. The republic had lasted only one year.

The Post Republic Era: The KDP in Iraq

Barzani returned to Iraq in 1958 after a group of army officers led by Colonel Abdul Karim Qasim overthrew the monarchy in Baghdad. The new government had a uneasy truce with Barzani and his Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP). It used the Kurds against its foes, the Arab nationalists, the Ba'thists, and the communists. Barzani used the truce to increase his authority among Iraqi Kurds. Qasim, who was rumored to be an arabized Kurd, consolidated his power and began to perceive Barzani as a threat to the regime. He negotiated with Barzani's Kurdish rivals, most notably Jalal Talabani and his Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), and

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27Turner, 400.

28Entasser, 59.

29Izady, 67. The officer's rebellion leaders were originally friendly, if not openly sympathetic to the Kurdish cause. However, the arab nationalists among them could not have supported any change that would have weakened the Iraqi state. Sluggett, 188.
sought to neutralize the KDP. The two sides fought to a standstill until they signed a cease-fire in 1963, agreeing to cooperate against the Ba'athists and Arab nationalists.

In 1963, an alliance between the Ba'athists and other anti-Qasim forces overthrew Qasim. The new president, Abdul Salam Aref, a non-Ba'athist, promised the KDP Kurdish autonomy within the framework of an Iraqi state, in order to gain time to put down the communists. Leftist elements within the KDP, accusing Barzani of being too "feudal," thwarted attempts to improve relations with the shaky regime. Aref, accusing the KDP of making impossible demands, sent the Iraqi army north to attack. Barzani, to strengthen his authority within the KDP, accepted arms from the Iranian government. Because of this tactic, Barzani was viewed as a stooge of the Shah. After he established close ties with Iran, it became less likely that Kurdish rights could be recognized "within the framework of an Iraqi state."

When the Ba'athists overthrew Aref's government in 1968, they also sought a truce with the Kurds in order to consolidate their power. As happened during Aref's rule, the Iraqi government and the Kurds could not agree upon

30 Entasser, 65.

31 Turner, 401.
terms and returned to armed struggle. The Ba'thists had the backing of the Soviets, while the KDP received weapons from the CIA, Israel and Iran.

Unfortunately for the KDP, their powerful allies only supported them as a means to destabilize the Iraqi government. They considered outright Kurdish victory undesirable, since it would incite nationalist sympathies among Iranian Kurds. After the Shah signed the Algiers Agreement in 1975, he stopped supporting the Kurds. The Ba'th government, bolstered by its rapprochement with Teheran, attacked the unsupported Kurds. It destroyed Kurdish villages, arresting and killing civilians and began a policy of "arabization" of its Kurdish regions. Once again, Kurdish hopes had been raised, only to end in brutality against civilians.

The Iranian Revolution

The 1979 Iranian revolution presented the Iranian Kurds with their first opportunity for independence since the

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32 Although they signed an agreement that the Kurdish language would have the status of a national language alongside Arabic and that there would be a Kurdish Vice President, neither side took this agreement seriously. Entasser, 70.

33 Entasser, 71.

34 Izady, 68.
Mahabad Republic. The long-suppressed Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) and the Komala took advantage of the chaos in Teheran to create a local autonomous zone for Iranian Kurdistan. Once the Islamic Republic re-established order, it moved against the Kurds.\textsuperscript{35} Claiming that the KDPI and the Komala were attempting to dismember Iran, it discredited them as anti-Islamic.\textsuperscript{36} It allied with other Kurds, including Barzani and some tribal chiefs, and attacked. Teheran was willing to accept minority rights for religious groups, but unwilling to grant rights based upon non-Islamic principles.

\textbf{The Iran-Iraq War}

Although it brutally suppressed its own Kurdish nationalists, the Iranian government supported Iraq's Kurds against Baghdad during the Iran-Iraq War. After Iraq attacked Iran in 1980, the KDP, with its headquarters in Teheran, received arms and the support of the Iranian army. Although the war bogged down in the south, Iran's most successful offensives were aided by Kurds in the North.

In desperation, Saddam Hussein promised the KDP's rival Kurdish group, Talabani's PUK, terms that were more generous

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\textsuperscript{35}Izady, 69. \\
\textsuperscript{36}Ghareeb, 16-17. 
\end{flushright}
than those Barzani had been given in 1970—regional autonomy in northern Iraq and a budget equivalent to 25-30 percent of the Iraqi state budget. It is doubtful that Hussein planned to keep his promise, but the alliance helped him counter the Iranians.

After the war ended in 1988, Hussein sought revenge upon the Kurds. Iraqi troops fought the KDP, employing a "scorched earth" policy against its Kurdish regions. They bulldozed and dynamited buildings, poured cement down wells, and used chemical weapons. In the most gruesome use of chemical weapons since World War I, the Iraqis killed 5000 civilians in the city of Halabja in 1988. The Kurdish insurrection collapsed within a year.

The Gulf War

The Allied victory during the 1991 Gulf War, began the most recent era of Kurdish nationalism. Following the Ba'thist's defeat, a coalition of Kurds, including the KDP and the PUK who were tentatively allied, seized control of the Kurdish regions of Iraq, while the Iraqi Republican Guard was busy suppressing a Shiite rebellion in the south.

37Izady, 69.
38Entasser, 132.
39Ibid., 138.
As soon as it finished, however, it attacked the Kurds. It crushed coalition forces, while nearly 1.2 million refugees fled to Iran and 500,000 fled towards Turkey.\textsuperscript{40} The Allied forces, mostly British and American, tried to stop the mass retreat and genocide, establishing a no-fly zone north of the 36th parallel. Within this region, the Kurdish coalition declared a Kurdish Federated State under the leadership of the PUK and the KDP.

To the chagrin of the West and its ally Turkey, the declared Kurdish Federated State has encouraged Kurdish nationalism in that state. In Turkey, Turgot Ozal had reversed the government's lifelong policy of oppression towards its Kurds. It no longer insisted that Kurds were "Mountain Turks," and, in February of 1991, it granted them linguistic rights.\textsuperscript{41} Also, it recognized the celebration of the Iranian New Year (\textit{Newroz}), the most important Kurdish holiday.

Despite the relative relaxation of its Kurdish policy in the state, the main Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey, the PKK (\textit{Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan}—Kurdish Worker's Party) grew. Formed in 1979, the PKK gained strength from Turkish government suppression. Ankara,

\textsuperscript{40}\textsuperscript{Izady, 70.}

\textsuperscript{41}\textit{Christian Science Monitor} (February 7 1991), p.5.
hoping to destroy the Marxist guerilla movement, raised local Kurdish militias against it. The brutality of the police and the militia, forced local civilians to chose between the government and the PKK. Many chose the PKK.42

The post-Gulf War rise of Kurdish ethnic nationalism has proven to be a greater challenge to the Turkish government than to the war's loser, Saddam Hussein.43 The existence of a de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq has aroused nationalist sentiments among Turkey's southeastern Kurdish populace. Also, PKK guerrillas have used the no-fly zone as a hideout from which to launch attacks against the Turkish government. The Turkish army has repeatedly had to send forces into northern Iraq after them.

While the foreign ministers of Turkey, Iran, and Syria (a long-time supporter of the PKK) agreed to coordinate their policies toward Kurdish nationalism, the leadership of the Kurds is not unified.44 Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of


44Robert Olson, "The Kurdish Question and Geopolitic and Geostrategic Changes in the Middle East after the Gulf War," Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies 17 (Summer 1994): 46.
the PKK has denounced both Masoud Barzani (Mustafa's son) and Talabani as traitors to all Kurds. The leaders of the Kurdish Federated State, for their part, have cooperated with the Turkish government in its fight against the PKK, disdaining the use of their autonomous zone for use against Turkey, whose Incirlik Air Base is essential to the maintenance of the protection zone.

Summary

The history of Kurdish nationalism has been the repetition of a pattern which is not likely to end. Kurdish nationalists have only had success in Iran, Iraq, or Turkey during periods of instability for the central government. During chaotic periods, the governments in Teheran, Baghdad, Ankara, or Istanbul have used different tactics to reduce the threat of Kurdish nationalism. They have negotiated temporary truces with Kurdish movements, which the Kurdish leaders accepted in order to strengthen themselves within Kurdistan. The Kurds have been unable to unify and the central governments have reasserted their authority. Also, they have fostered feuds among the Kurdish leaders. Kurdish interests have fought among themselves or allowed themselves

46Olson, 48-49.
to be used by outside powers against whichever group appeared to lead Kurdish ethnic nationalism. When the central governments re-established authority, they renege upon any promises made during times of instability and take revenge upon Kurdish groups and civilians.
CHAPTER VII
THE KURDS AND THREE APPROACHES TO ETHNICITY

The two dominant schools of ethnic conflict, the conflictual modernizationists and the primordialists, provide insight into the forces that exacerbate the ethnic violence in Kurdistan. Conflictual modernizationists identify the economic disparities between the peoples of the Kurdistan and their respective economic centers in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey as factors that deepen ethnic hatred. Likewise, the primordialists make a case for strong, valued Kurdish, Persian, Arab, and Turkish identities that command deep, psychological loyalties. Although they have identified forces that worsen the conflict and hinder its resolutions, neither school isolates the root causes of the conflicts.

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2 Throughout *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Horowitz portrays the Kurds in Iraq as a prime example of a stigmatized "backwards" identity and a prime candidate for secessionism.
The constructivist approach to ethnic conflicts reveals the source of violence in Kurdistan and accounts for factors that thwart the unification of the Kurds. The inability of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey to create national communities that include the Kurds, and these states' suppressions of the Kurdish identity caused Kurdish nationalism. However, the Kurds have been unable to unify because of their linguistic and religious diversity, and their divided leadership. The governments have utilized this disunity to counter the threat to their states and ethnic violence has persisted.

An examination of economic variables that influence ethnic conflict illustrates important factors in the persistence of violence in Kurdistan. The dependency model of regionally-differentiated ethnic groups describes the conditions among Kurds. They suffer from economic discrimination along ethnic lines and, thus, justify their demands for autonomy in terms of economic grievances.

However, evidence shows that the conflictual modernizationists misinterpret the situation in Kurdistan. First, conflictual modernization theory assumes that ethnic conflict results from attempts to re-establish social order after traditional structures have collapsed under the pressures of modernization. In Kurdistan, however, traditional social structures have remained intact, and are
the sources of power for many ethnic elites. Second, the conflictual modernizationists suppose that disgruntled, modernized elites will politicize ethnicity. This assumption ignores the importance of traditional elites who oppose assimilation in Iraq and Iran and who cooperate in Turkey. Finally, the conflict between Kurds and their ethnic neighbors began prior to the modernizing influences of state programs and, thus, could not have resulted from modernization. While the conflictual modernizationist scenario approximates events in Kurdistan, it fails to account for the origins of ethnic violence.

Ethnic identities in the Middle East are ancient and well-developed. Primordialists claim that such identities have a psychological strength that defies rational, economic explanations. The Kurdish, Persian, Arab, and Turkish identities involved in the violence in Kurdistan consist of the ethnic markers that primordialists claim will command loyalty and self-sacrifice. The psychological appeal of ethnic organization in the region and the willingness to die for, or commit atrocities in defense of these identities plays an important role in the violence in the region.

However, while primordialists explain the irrational destructiveness of the violence and its tendency to persist over generations, they offer no suggestions concerning the
cause of conflict. Well-developed, differentiated cultures do not, of themselves, necessitate violent conflict. Thus, theorists that apply primordialist explanations to ethnic conflict must resort to economic explanations to account for the origins of violence. Neither of the two dominant schools reveals the source of the conflict in Kurdistan.

**Conflictual Modernization and the Kurds**

Of the two competition models, the ecology model and the dependency model, the latter best describes the conditions among the Kurdish peoples in the peripheries of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. Direct economic competition, proposed by the ecology model, does not apply to the Kurds. Kurds who leave Kurdistan to join the central economies of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey usually assimilate to the dominant cultures. According to Izady, "the list of naturally assimilated Kurds is a long one."³ Karim Sanjabi, the leader of the National Front Party in Iran, President Qasim in Iraq, and General Kenan Evren in Turkey are only some examples of Kurds who have shed their ethnic identity and succeeded within the dominant cultures.⁴ Most of the ethnic

³Izady, 110.

⁴Ibid., 110. Saddam Hussein himself is partly Kurdish through his father's family.
violence in the Kurdish conflict relates to the core-periphery relationships between the Persian, Arab, and Turkish centers and the peripheries in Kurdistan.

Dependency theory's depiction of regionally different rates of modernization describes conditions in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. The Kurdish regions in all three states suffer from economic underdevelopment relative to the regions of the dominant ethnic groups. The policies of the central governments have prevented the Kurds from benefitting from the natural resources of Kurdistan. Petroleum refinement, the most valuable export, has been developed to the advantage of the central economies. At the Kirkuk and Khanaqin refineries in Iraq, and the Batman refinery in Turkey, for example, the only help to the local economy is jobs for unskilled laborers. The exportable, manufactured goods of Kurdistan are limited to souvenir handicrafts and artwork.

In Iran, uneven modernization during the Pahlavi monarchy resulted in ethnic inequality. The government took control of agriculture, pushing Kurds and other peasants off of their land. Periphery ethnies provided the low-paid,  

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5Nagel, 280-81.  
6Izady, 232.  
7Ibid., 231.
unskilled labor force employed in the monarchy's housing-construction and road-building projects. As a result, Kurds have remained poorer and less educated than Persians. Only 20 percent of the homes in Kurdish regions have electricity, compared to 87 percent in Persian regions, and the Kurdish literacy rate is only 30 percent compared to 66 percent in Persian provinces.

The Ba'athist government's main development projects in Iraqi Kurdistan have been limited to the construction of "cluster villages" and roads. Kurdish intellectuals have criticized these projects as self-interested on the part of Baghdad. According to critics, the government built the "cluster villages" of compact housing for the residents of Kurdistan only to isolate the guerrillas from the local populace, and to facilitate the monitoring of the Kurds. The roads ease the mobilization of the Iraqi army against the Kurdish rebels.

The situation is similar in Turkey, where the rapid economic growth that benefitted the cities on the Aegean and

\[8^{\text{Entasser, 6-7.}}\]


\[10^{\text{Entasser, 8.}}\]
Mediterranean coasts bypassed the rural southeast.\textsuperscript{11} The per capita GDP of Kurdish regions is less than half the national average and unemployment is estimated at 25 percent, twice the national average. In a state where the literacy rate is 77 percent, the literacy rate among the Kurds is only 48 percent.\textsuperscript{12}

The people inhabiting the Kurdish regions of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey suffer from economic hardship distributed along ethnic lines, a cultural division of labor. The Kurds have few avenues for economic advancement. Their regions are comparatively "backwards" and feudal. These conditions foster the sense of a prosperous center "colonizing" and exploiting the poverty-stricken periphery.

Despite the animosity caused by economic differences between ethinnies, the dependency model misinterprets the source of the conflict. Competition theorists assume that economic disparity and competition cause conflict. Once they find a "core-periphery" relationship, they assume that they have found the source of conflict. Joane Nagel, a conflictual modernizationist, tried to explain the ethnic conflict in Kurdistan with dependency theory, but could not

\footnote{Philip Robins, "The Overlord State: Turkish policy and the Kurdish issue," \textit{International Affairs} 69 (October 1993): 663.}

\footnote{Ibid., 663.}
account for the persistence of violence there in terms of economic variables.\textsuperscript{13} She resorted to citing the level of organization among Kurds, and extra-national involvement in the conflict to supplement the dependency model's explanation of persistent separatism among Kurds.\textsuperscript{14} Although economic differentiation provides Kurdish rebels with grievances against the central governments, it is not the source of the conflict.

\textbf{The Destruction of Social Order}

Conflictual modernization theory assumes that modernization destroys traditional social order. Accordingly, old structures of authority recede in importance during modernization. Elites must compete for positions of political power, while economic displacement makes nonelites susceptible to appeals to ethnic identity. Ethnic elites politicize ethnicity for their own purposes, and nonelites follow. However, modernization and the destruction of social order has not occurred in Kurdistan.

\textsuperscript{13}Nagel, 279-97.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 289-93. As shall be discussed later, organization (disorganization) among the Kurdish separatists benefits the central governments and militates against persistence by the separatists.
The Kurdish regions of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey remain much as they were before the creation of these states.

The economic infrastructure of Kurdistan has only changed slightly and its pre-modern social structure remains intact. After the 1932 Shayk Mahmud revolt was put down, tribal leaders asserted their political primacy in the absence of local competition. They formed political parties and guerrilla forces. Kurdish leaders use names that imply modern political parties, but their legitimacy as rulers depends upon their authority as tribal and clan leaders.

Almost anyone of political importance carries a tribal surname. Jalal Talabani, Mustafa Barzani, Masoud Barzani, Rasul Mamand, and Abdul-Rahman Qassemloou all of whom carry the names of their respective tribes are only the best known.15

The highest focus of loyalty for the majority of Kurds remains the traditional tribal political structures.

The governments of Iran and Turkey have undermined, to some extent, the traditional structures of authority in their Kurdish regions, and the Kurdish resistance movements there reflect the differences relative to the conditions in Iraq. The KDPI in Iran is less tribal than either the KDP or the PUK. It is made up of mostly urban elites, but maintains its ties to the traditional tribal structures,

15Izady, 205.
which remain intact within Iranian Kurdistan. The Komala is a more modern, socialist organization, but, like other leftist and moderately leftist organizations, it has also needed its connections with tribal structures. Although they are less dependent upon the tribal leadership, the Kurdish movements in Iran benefit from the intact structures of traditional order.

In Turkey, the government has supported some traditional structures while undermining others. The Kurdish regions of the Turkish Republic remain semi-feudal. The government backs local Kurdish landlords and recruits the Village Guards from among clans that remain loyal to the state. According to a Turkish military officer, "Half the men join the PKK. The other half move to the cities where they become militia." Kurdish loyalties remain divided between their commitment to clan structures and the appeal of the modern, Marxist PKK.

The PKK is the only Kurdish political party that is independent of tribal structures. It fights against the

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16Ibid., 207.
17Ibid., 210.
18Robins, 663.
19Ibid., 664.
20Rouleau, 124.
Turkish-organized Village Guards and its Marxist-Leninist ideology is aimed as much at the defeat of local landlords as the Turkish government.\textsuperscript{21} Its leader and founder, Abdullah Ocalan, denounced the feudalism of both Barzani and Talabani in Iraq, calling them traitors to all Kurds.\textsuperscript{22} Nonetheless, even in Turkey, the pre-modern social structures play an important role in the conflict.\textsuperscript{23}

Nagel notes the difficulties of explaining ethnic separatism in Kurdistan by the destruction of social order through penetration of the periphery. According to their theory, conflictual modernizationists expect that "the greater the degree of penetration of a peripheral ethnic group by the central state, the greater the likelihood the group will engage in separatist action."\textsuperscript{24} However, separatist violence in Kurdistan occurs in the absence of penetration.

\textsuperscript{21}Michael Gunter "The Kurdish Problem in Turkey," Middle East Journal (Summer 1988): 392-98. Gunter credits the outlawed status of both Kurdish nationalists and leftist organizations for the leftist leanings of Kurdish nationalism, since both ideologies can alternatively be used to oppose the Turkish state.

\textsuperscript{22}Christian Science Monitor, 13 August 1991, 4.

\textsuperscript{23}Van Bruinessen, 372. Van Bruinessen notes the importance of the tribal leaders and the maintenance of tribal structures to the government's indirect rule of the region.

\textsuperscript{24}Nagel, 285.
It was the moment of greatest weakness, not strong penetration, that the Kurds chose to launch their republic (Mahabad)—a strategically wise move that indicates the limited usefulness of penetration (modernization) explanations of separatism.²⁵

Conflictual modernizationist assumptions of the destruction of old order as a pre-condition of conflict miss the importance of the tribal and clan leaders in the ethnic violence in Kurdistan. Modernization and the displacement of traditional leaders has not occurred to the extent necessary to cause ethnic conflict. Kurdish nationalist leaders are not vying for new positions of authority within a enlarged polity. Rather, for the most part, they rely upon old structures of power as a means to resist the central governments.

Elites and Their Motives

As shown by the persistence of tribal and feudal structures, the makeup of the Kurdish ethnonationalist elites defy the descriptions of the conflictual modernization theorists. The disgruntled elites of Smith's The Ethnic Revival, and the economically-motivated elites of Rogowski's rational-choice model are not present in Kurdistan.

²⁵Ibid., 289.
Although they are Western-educated, it is inaccurate to portray Kurdish elites as disgruntled bureaucrats. The most important leaders of Kurdish resistance movements all received degrees from modern universities. However, except for possibly Ocalan, they did not fail to find positions of authority within the state and decide to incite ethnic unrest. Rather, they used their familiarity with Western ideas to enhance their existing authority as leaders and to increase their ability to resist the central governments.

Ocalan most closely fits the modernized ethnic elite envisioned in The Ethnic Revival. He formed the PKK after gaining an education in Political Science at the University of Ankara. While he did not fail as a bureaucrat, he apparently felt a sense of discrimination against Kurds while at college and began criticizing Turkish oppression. He was jailed for his opinions and turned to promoting ethnic separatism.

Only the dominant Kurdish movement in Turkey reflects the conflictual modernizationists' portrayal of likely ethnic leaders. The motivations of Kurdish elites do not match the materialist motivations of their scenarios. An insightful comment of Paul Brass applies to the situation in Kurdistan.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{26}}\text{Mango, 988.}\]
The objective or subjective perception of inequality is indispensable to justify nationalism, but it is not in itself an explanation for it. The only certainty is that every nationalist movement has always justified itself in terms of existing oppression by a rival group.²⁷

Kurdish nationalists use economic grievances to justify the conflict, but such grievances are not the source of the dispute.

Modernization as an Influential Variable in the Conflict

The changes associated with modernization exacerbate and promote ethnic conflict in Kurdistan, rather than cause it. The Kurds suffer from a cultural division of labor, and the economic disparities between the people of Kurdistan and their respective economic centers worsen the relations between them and the Persians, Arabs, and Turks. Kurds from regions of high unemployment and little industrialization have had little to lose economically by joining their traditional leadership or the PKK against the central governments. Economic oppression accounts for much of the appeal of the Kurdish movements and, certainly, explains some of the appeal of the leftist Komala and PKK.

The social structures of pre-modern Kurdistan remain largely intact and Kurdish nationalists utilize them to

²⁷Brass, 43.
continue their struggles. The PKK fights the feudal landowners and the militia as well as the Turkish government. The KDPI and the Komala rely upon the support of tribal leaders, while the KDP and PUK, despite their modern-sounding party names, consist of traditional leaders.

While economic variables account for important aspects of the ethnic conflict, the Kurdish violence precedes modernization. This fact casts doubts upon its influence as the sources of the dispute. Kurdish leaders resisted the central authorities prior to governmental road building and industrialization. In Iran and Turkey, Kurdish revolts began under the leadership of Ismail Agha Simko and Shayk Said, respectively, before Reza Kahn and Mustafa Kemal had even fully established control over their states. In Iraq, King Faisal, who was installed as the state's first monarch, complained of ethnic sentiments among the Kurds in the Mosul region, and said that there "is not yet an Iraq or an Iraqi people".

The conflict broke out before the modern states were formed and before the differential impact of modernization could have affected ethnic relations. Although the

28 See Van Bruinessen.

29 Entasser, 12 and Izady, 61.

30 Ghareeb, 2.
conflictual modernizationists identify and analyze economic backwardness and economic disparity as forces that promote persistent ethnic violence in Kurdistan, these are not the causes. Scholars of ethnic conflict must look to the constructivist school to find the sources of the conflict.

**Primordialism and the Kurds**

Like conflictual modernizationist theory, primordialist theory receives a mixed review for its description of Kurdish ethnic conflict. "Kurdishness" offers an example of an identity that commands the strong, "irrational" loyalties that are prominent in the primordialists discussions. However, the loyalties of ordinary Kurds are not focused upon an ethnic Kurdish nation. Although it enhances the understanding of the persistent, ethnically-motivated violence, primordialist theory lacks explanations for the initial cause of the conflict.

History has left the Kurds a legacy that is characteristic of the stereotypes that are outlined in Horowitz's *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Writers have described them as backwards, or hillbillies, and, yet, fiercely proud. They are portrayed as independent, war-like and rugged.\(^{31}\) Supposedly, they value self-sufficiency and

\(^{31}\)Izady, 186 and 207
disdain civilization. This type of ethnic identity is the kind that primordialists argue encourages powerful, "irrational" loyalties.

Their valued, "backwards" characteristics condition the conflict between the Kurds and their ethnic neighbors. Their independent, warrior lifestyle is reinforced by examples of the resistance of the peshmerga (those who face death) to the central authorities in Teheran, Baghdad, and Ankara. Even the infighting among Kurds, attributable to their reputation as hillbillies with an affinity for feuding, strengthens the "unique" qualities of "Kurdishness," while it weakens their ability to unite.

Kurds perceive the threat to their valued identity, an important source of pride to Kurds who have little economic success to bolster their collective sense of worth, as a threat to themselves. Military success fighting the Persians, Arabs, or Turks is a glorification of "Kurdishness," while economic achievement is a sign of assimilation and submission. Thus, the defense of their Kurdish identity has a psychological imperative that accounts for some the destructive nature of the war and the willingness of the peshmerga to sacrifice their lives.

On the other hand, it is questionable whether the psychological affinity for their "Kurdish" identity is
channelled to an unified, ethnic Kurdistan. Although Kurdish nationalists and intellectuals have promoted the concept of a single Kurdistan, ordinary Kurds have given their loyalties to their tribal leaders, who have often mobilized them against other Kurds. Kurd versus Kurd fighting is as bloody and persistent as any in the region. Far from a common commitment to a unified identity, many refer to greater Kurdistan as "the five parts," lacking an expression for the single whole. Primordialists who study the Kurdish identity may determine that the local Kurds actually demonstrate loyalty to more basic identities, such as a Dimili or Gurani linguistic identity, or membership in the Barzani or Talabani clan.

Regardless of the operational level of the conflicting primordial identities, the existence of psychologically-valued identities does not necessitate violence. The Kurds, Persians, Arabs, and Turks (to name only a few of the many ethnies in the region) have well-developed cultural identities. However, a personal attachment to "Kurdishness" does not, in itself, conflict with the existence of other ethnic groups, such as Arabs. Nor, for example, does an attachment to "Turkishness" require aggressiveness toward


[33] MacDonald, 237.
Kurds. Thus, primordialism identifies a reason for the defense of one's identity group, without explaining the beginnings of animosities between groups. For lack of guidance from their own theory, the primordialists must rely on the variables provided in other theories.

The primordialists and the conflictual modernizationists identify aspects of the Kurdish ethnic conflict in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey that influence its persistence and violence. The strong, primordial identities of the ethnis involved in the conflict and the economic hardships that Kurds suffer account for the animosities between the Kurds and their neighbors, and for the intensity of the fighting. These influences worsen and complicate the ethnic conflict but did not cause it.

**Constructivism and the Kurds**

The constructivists school identifies the sources of ethnonationalist violence in the Kurdish regions of Iran, Iraq and Turkey. The national self-perceptions of these three states excludes the Kurds from the imagined national communities. Simultaneously, these states have remained unwilling to part with their Kurdish regions and suffer disintegration. The example of Kurdish ethnic conflict
shows that the constructivist interpretation of ethnic conflict is a key to the understanding of ethnonationalism.

In addition to discovering the source of the conflict in the history of the development of the Kurdish, Persian, Arab, and Turkish national identities, the constructivist school introduces variables that increase the understanding of ethnic conflict. An examination of each relationship between the Kurds and their respective central government reveals how national identities and their proponents affected the ethnic conflict.

Exclusionary State Policies: Iran, Iraq and Turkey

In Iran, Reza Shah attempted to mold his state after the internationally-legitimate, ethnically-homogenous model, despite the residence of a substantial number of Azeris, Turkomen, and Kurds in his Persian-dominated state. To enforce his "artificially imposed Persian consciousness," the Shah called upon the Society for Public Guidance, a police organization that suppressed all non-Persian ethnies and cultures. The monarchy established Persian as the official language for its government and education system and outlawed other languages, such as Kurdish.

34Entasser, 13.
Kurdish leaders and organizations resisted cultural suppression through armed conflict, but the Pahlavi monarchy countered with two tactics, coopting landowning Kurds and crushing all revolts. The shahs offered financial rewards and political offices to gain the cooperation of Kurdish elites. At the same time the Iranian military and the SAVAK applied force against Kurdish nationalists. As a result, the Kurdish movements remained underground until the Iranian Revolution in 1979, which Kurds, except for those who had cooperated with the shahs, supported.

Conditions remained harsh for Kurdish nationalism under the Republic. Although its constitution recognized the existence of linguistic minorities in Iran, the Islamic Republic only offered special status for non-Islamic, religious minorities (Christian, Jewish or Zoroastrian). As Ayatollah Khomeini stated:

Sometimes the word minorities is used to refer to people such as the Kurds, Lurs, Turks, Persians, Baluchis, and such. These peoples should not be called minorities, because this term assumes that there is a difference between these brothers. There is no difference between Muslims who speak different languages, for instance, Arabs or Persians. It is very probable that such problems

\[35\]Ibid., 27.

\[36\]Ibid., 30.
have been created by those who do not wish the Muslim countries to be united.  

The Iranian government banned the KDPI under suspicions that they were Marxist-inspired and sentenced its leaders to death. 

The universal Islamic identity promoted by the revolutionary government was incompatible with the pre-existing secular, cultural identity felt among the Kurds. The Teheran government politicized religion as an ethnic marker. It denied other bases of identity, while implicitly favoring the Persian ethny. The Kurds cooperated with the overthrow of the Shah whose Persian-based nationalism threatened a Kurdish identity. They might have supported an Islamic identity within which they could negotiate Kurdish-Persian equality. However, they rejected an Islamic identity that reinforced Persian dominance. Ethnicity had already been politicized during the Pahlavi monarchy. 


38 A threat they fulfilled when they assassinated Qasemlou in Vienna in 1989. 

39 Hooshang Amirahmadi, "Middle-Class Revolutions in the Third World," in Post Revolutionary Iran, eds. Hooshang Amirahmadi and Manoucher Parvin (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988), 235. Democracy in Iran and resolution of the Kurdish problem, according to Amirahmadi, suffers from the legacy of suspicions aroused during the reign of the
In Iraq, two opposing images of the national community failed to accommodate the Kurdish identity. Arab-dominated regimes in Baghdad promoted civic nationalism or pan-Arab nationalism. Leaders, such as Qasim, promoted Iraq-first policies and tried to use the Kurds to counter the Arab nationalists. The Ba'thists, on the other hand, aspired to international Arab leadership and, as such, viewed the Kurds as a threat to their Arab state.

Almost as if he had taken a page out of constructivist literature, Qasim worked to establish an Iraqi national identity. Qasim included a Kurdish sun disc (a yellow disc surrounded by seven red rays) on the Iraqi nationalist flag, as if to invite the Kurds into the national community.\textsuperscript{40}
The new government, however, could not establish "Iraqiness" in the mythical past. Also, simple symbolism lacked the strength to overcome the Kurdish sense of Arab dominance of the government.

The Arab nationalists that ousted Qasim removed the Kurdish sun disc from the flag and asserted Arab dominance of the state. Iraq, for the Ba'thists, is a secular Arab state and the Kurds threaten and weaken it. At the same time, however, the Ba'thists disallow the dismemberment of Pahlavis.

\textsuperscript{40}Izady, 67.
their state. The Kurdish region has to remain a part of Iraq so that Iraq can exploit its population and resources for the advantage of Arab nationalism.

In Turkey, Kurdish nationalism also grew as a resistance to the assertion of a non-Kurdish nationalism. Since Ataturk, the government has based its legitimacy upon the claim of ethnic homogeneity. It has denied the existence of ethnic Kurds, claiming instead the they were "Mountain Turks." Ankara backed up its insistence with military force. The infamous Sark Islahet Planı (Plan for Reforms in the East) placed the region under military rule, forcibly relocated Kurds and denied them employment in the civil service. The plan outlawed the public use of the Kurdish language. Although the police enforced the prohibition only fitfully, depending on the disposition of the government in Ankara and local officials, Kurdish nationalists chaffed under the restrictions.

Through its tactics, the government strengthened the PKK. In 1984, the PKK consisted of only 200 fighters and enjoyed little popular support. Based in the Beka'a Valley of Lebanon, it relied on Syria for support and was essentially a foreign-subsidized terrorist group. By 1993,

41 Mango, 983.
42 Ibid., 982.
15,000 battle-hardened, well-armed PKK guerrillas fought from their mountain strongholds and enjoyed the support of 375,000 sympathizers.43 Eric Rouleau, the former French ambassador to Turkey, comments:

The surge witnessed by the PKK cannot be explained by either its Marxist-Leninist ideology, which is alien to the local mentality, or its ultimate goal of establishing an independent state— a goal the majority of the Kurdish population does not share.44

The hard-line PKK grew after the government suppressed moderate nationalists.

During the 1990 Newroz celebrations, the PKK made a decisive change in tactics. It shifted its efforts from rural villages to urban centers where mass demonstrations were organized. The battle for local sympathy was won and the PKK encouraged popular resistance to security forces and the militia. Journalist Aliza Marcus records a local comment: "PKK comes to talk to us. It's the government, the soldiers we are afraid of because they don't talk--they kill."45 Prime Minister Turgot Ozal responded to the PKK threat by granting broad powers to the regional governors to exile citizens, evacuate villages, and censor the press.

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43 Rouleau, 124.

44 Ibid., 125.

45 Christian Science Monitor, 30 August 1990, 10.
Having grown rapidly in numbers and popularity, the PKK was able to take advantage of the Gulf War and the subsequent creation of a no-fly zone in northern Iraq. They could attack bases in Turkey and then flee into the no-man's land of Iraq. The government allied with the leaders of the Kurdish Federated State and launched attacks into the region, but has yet to end PKK resistance.

Kurdish ethnonationalism in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey is a reaction to Persian, Arab, and Turkish nationalism and not the result of uneven modernization. Kurdish movements arose in resistance to the state-building efforts of the dominant groups in their states. Economic disparity increases the inter-ethnic animosities that have resulted from the assertion of a Kurdish identity that conflicts with the dominant identities of the three states.

While the problems among the Kurds is an identity crisis, it is not a simple matter of four strong ethnic identities which are incompatible. The Kurdish, Persian, Arab, and Turkish identities can each trace their roots far into the primordial past. Nonetheless, Kurdish, Turkish, and Arab groups did not experience persistent ethnic violence under Ottoman rule. The conflicts between the Kurds and the other ethnies results from the inability or
unwillingness of the states to create national identities that include their Kurdish minorities.

In addition to addressing the cause of Kurdish ethnic violence, constructivist theory introduces a dimension that is ignored by the conflictual modernizationists and the primordialists. Constructivists ask: What barriers prevent the formation of a Kurdish national identity? This question confronts the forces that keep the Kurds apart and allow the governments in Teheran, Baghdad, and Ankara to use them against each other.

The Question of a Kurdish National Identity

Linguistic, regional, and religious differences among the Kurds cast doubt upon the likelihood of the creation of an identity capable of uniting the Kurds and their nationalist movements. The Kurds lack a common language and a common religion. Furthermore regionalism and political differences among the Kurds undermine their attempts to nurture loyalties to a greater Kurdish nation and nationalist movement.

The Kurdish language is divided into numerous dialects. Several of these dialects might better be categorized as separate languages within a language group, because they are
only as similar to one another as French is to Italian.\textsuperscript{46} The powerful states that divide the Kurds have prevented Kurdish-speakers from developing some form of a lingua franca. Linguistic differences have inhibited the formation of a common Kurdish identity. Lacking a centralized Kurdish state to standardize their diverse linguistic heritage, Kurds must base their nationhood upon another source.

Likewise, religious differences among the Kurds hinder national unity.\textsuperscript{47} Most Kurds are Sunni Muslims, but a significant number are also Shia Muslims, Alawites, and Yazidis. Kurdish religious communities are often divided along linguistic lines. Kurds experience the divisions between the Sunni and Shi'a communities. Additionally, the heretical Alawites and Yazidis within their communities divide the Kurds among themselves, as well as worsening relations with predominantly Sunni Turks, predominantly Sunni Arabs, and the Shi'a majority in Iran.

Finally, the Kurds suffer from regionalism and a politically divided leadership. The Kurds lack unity from

\textsuperscript{46}Izady, 170.

\textsuperscript{47}Van Bruinessen argues that traditional and religious structures offered the most promise for unification of the Kurds at least until the 1950's. Until then, all major revolts were led by the shayks, whose position as holy men provided them the authority to unify enough tribes to resist the central authorities. Van Bruinessen, 371.
one region to another. Even within each of the five states into which geopolitical forces have divided them, there exists factionalism. The political leaders within each state fight each other, their respective central governments, as well as the Kurdish movements in other states.

Kurds within each individual state disagree upon a single leadership even for that region. In Iran, the leftist Komala has engaged in bloody struggles against the liberal KDPI, even while government forces tried to destroy both. The two Kurdish groups in Iraq, the KDP and the PUK, have recently united to form the Kurdish Federated State, but have fought feuds in the past. Talabani's PUK even allied with Saddam Hussein against their KDP ethnic brothers. In Turkey, although some are coerced into joining, many Kurds join the Ankara-backed militia against the rebel PKK.

The Kurds are alienated from the dominant cultures of their states by their ethnic identity and, yet, not unified with one another. Culturally and linguistically, they are distinct from the Persians, Arabs, and Turks. Thus, Kurdish identity is associated, as has been the situation throughout most of Kurdistan, with the support of local clan and tribal leaders who fight among themselves, or the Kurdish identity
is linked to the support of modern nationalist movements like the PKK, with its alien Marxist ideology and whose primary appeal comes from its armed resistance to the Turkish government.

The question of a Kurdish national identity, suggested by the constructivists, points to the value of constructivism as an approach to ethnonationalism. The conflictual modernizationist approach is too ahistorical and focused upon economic variables to illuminate this crucial aspect of Kurdish ethnonationalism. The primordialists begin to address the importance of identity, but stop after examining the psychological appeal of ethnic identity. Constructivist literature opens up the researcher's mind to the role of the argumentative creation of identities in ethnic conflict.

**Summary**

Modern Kurdish ethnonationalism grew as a response to others' efforts at nation-building. As Reza Shah and Mustafa Kemal enforced the dominance of Persian and Turkish identities upon their multi-ethnic states, Kurdish leaders resisted the expansion of central authority as well as the suppression of Kurdish culture. Similarly, the Arab-dominated state of Iraq alienated its Kurdish minority.
Whether Arab nationalists or others controlled Baghdad, Iraqi governments viewed the Kurds as a threat to their newly formed state. All three states attacked any expressions of "Kurdishness."

State suppression and Kurdish resistance created a cycle of violence that persists. Kurdish leaders mobilized their followers around ethnic identity, claiming that discriminatory policies and economic oppression justified their cause. Ordinary Kurds remained generally loyal to their traditional leaders and supported their defense of their valued identity against threat of the state. For their part, the central governments saw Kurdish rebellions as justification for the suppression of the disintegrating threat of the Kurdish identity.

In this light, the economic disparity between the Kurds and their economic centers is best seen as an outcome of culture-based exclusion from the national community, and not as the source of the violence. The failure to modernize Kurdish regions of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey indicates the frustration of the central authorities. Economic development of Kurdistan could very well enhance the strength of an ethny that has, for the large part, resisted assimilation and demonstrated disloyalty. The sense of a "colonial" rule over Kurdistan by Teheran, Baghdad, and
Ankara worsens ethnic relations and complicates the resolution of the conflict, but did not cause the conflict.

Constructivist theory addresses the important issues of the likelihood of Kurdish assimilation within the three Middle Eastern states or the formation of a Kurdish national identity. Kurds, especially since they are well-armed and mobilized along ethnic lines, are unlikely to accept the legitimacy of a Iraq under the guise of an Arab identity or a Turkey under the guise of a Turkish identity. Similarly, they are unlikely to accept a pan-Islamic identity in Iran that favors the status-quo of Persian dominance. At the same time, the obstacles to the construction of a Kurdish national identity have allowed the central governments to divide and suppress their Kurdish minorities.
CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSION

Together, the conflictual modernizationist, the primordialist and the constructivist schools offer approaches that enhance the understanding of the ethnic violence between the Kurds and the Persians, Arabs, and Turks. Each identifies variables that influence the creation of ethnic identities, the reasons for conflict along ethnic lines, the persistence of conflict, or the irrational destructiveness of the violence in the Kurdish regions of Iran, Iraq and Turkey. However, the constructivist approach reveals the original causes of the ethnic conflict and introduces attempts to construct nations as considerations in the ethnic conflict debate. Therefore, constructivist considerations must be accounted for in future studies of ethnic conflicts.

The dependency theorists of the conflictual modernizationist school provide a model of regional economic differentiation for the study of ethnic violence. Kurds in the peripheries of Iran, Iraq, and Turkey lack many of the material goods that modernity has brought to those states.
Additionally, they sense that the "centers" have exploited Kurdistan's laborers and natural resources for the benefit of the dominant ethnies. Kurdish nationalists complain that their people suffer from economic oppression under the rule of non-Kurds.

However, the dependency theorists fail to address the role of ethnic elites in the conflict, other than to suggest that they might argue for economic equality for ethnic groups. This ignores ethnonationalist demands for cultural rights and autonomy. Other than identifying a source of grievance between the Kurds and the ethnies in the economic centers, the competition theorists add little to the understanding of the ethnic violence.

Other conflictual modernizationists argue that the destruction of traditional order and elite attempts to gain power in the expanded polity causes ethnic conflict. The minor attempts to modernize Kurdistan have threatened some Kurdish elites, but the most important impact of modernization upon the violence in Kurdistan has been the introduction of the ideology of nationalism. Leaders of the Kurds, Persians, Arabs, and Turks learned the language of nationalism to argue for their respective group's right to nationhood. History denied the Kurds their own nation, placing them under the state authority of other ethnies.
The primordialists examine the psychological aspects of ethnic identities to understand ethnic conflicts. From this perspective, the Kurds offer an example of a strong identity that commands the psychological devotion of its members. Traits associated with the Kurds dictate war-like behavior, disdain for civilization and, even, infighting. These prejudices, which have roots in the subconsciences of Kurds and non-Kurds, increase the likelihood of violence and militate against the assimilation of the Kurdish identity. However, the existence of strong ethnic identities increases the likelihood of violence, but does not necessitate conflict with other established identities.

The example of Kurdish ethnonationalism demonstrates the advantages of including the constructivist approach and its questions to the study of an ethnic conflict. The focus of the constructivists upon the factors involved in creating national identities reveals the initial causes of the conflicts between the Kurds and the Persians, the Arabs, and the Turks, as well as illuminating the difficulties in establishing a Kurdish national identity.

In Iran, the shahs enforced the ethnically-homogenous, French national model. Ethnic minorities, such as the Kurds, that resisted Persian dominance threatened the monarchy's legitimacy and had to be suppressed. The violent
tactics of the government politicized ethnicity in Iran and, when the Iranian revolutionaries overthrew the Pahlavis, the Islamic Republic could not allay Kurdish suspicions that a pan-Islamic state was just another method of continued Persian dominance. Furthermore, the secular principles of the Kurdish nationalists contrasted with the new regime's religious ideologies. Violence and oppression continued as they had during the monarchy.

In Iraq, the Kurds presented the greatest threat to their respective state. Iraqi leaders could neither abide the threat of armed Kurds within their state, annihilate the Kurds, nor accept the dismemberment of their state. The Kurds and Baghdad alternated between open violence, rebellious Kurds seeking outside support from Iran or the United States and the government allying with other Kurdish leaders, and armed peace while the government consolidated its power and the Kurds feuded among themselves.

The Turkish government chose to declare itself an ethnic Turkish Republic that excluded Kurds from the national community. Military and educational policies attempted to enforce an alternative "Mountain Turk" identity upon Kurds within the borders of the republic, but the policy backfired. The Turkish government kept a tight reign upon Kurdish intellectuals and nationalists until the PKK
grew large enough to oppose it. Decades of brutality against residents of Kurdistan created animosities that fuel the Kurdish nationalist movement.

Although Kurds resist their respective government, linguistic, religious, and political differences divide their nationalist movements. If there was an independent Kurdish nation, one must ask which of the mutually-incomprehensible Kurdish dialects would be the official language for government and education. The divided Kurds would have to decide within which guerrilla organization's region the capital would lie. They must determine whether the form of government would be a liberal republic along the lines of the KDPI's desires, one that respected the authority of the powerful clans as the KDP or PUK might wish, or a modern socialist or communist government favored by the PKK and Komala. These are all questions that the founders of an independent Kurdistan would have to address prior to the first negotiations among the feuding leaders.

Constructivism introduces an important variable into the study of ethnic violence that is ignored in the conflictual modernizationist and the primordialist accounts of ethnic conflicts. Constructivism takes the ideological and argumentative aspects of ethnicity and nationalism seriously. Though the claims and demands of
ethnonationalists, whether they call for patriotism, separatism, or autonomy, should not be taken as their honest motives, neither should they be ignored as meaningless. Demands for cultural autonomy or linguistic rights should be taken at face value.

Conflictual modernizationists assume that ethnic conflicts result from the social disturbance of modernization or the interest politics of elites who seek power or economic rewards. Identity is merely a convenient tool around which nonelites more readily mobilize. Demands for cultural preservation, cultural autonomy, and linguistic rights, therefore, are a ruse to mask political and economic interests.

Primordialists assume that ethnic identities are persistent remnants of a bygone era. Ethnicity holds a subconscious meaning to individuals and has proven its psychological value as a mechanism of social unity. Members will sacrifice self interests and even their lives for the group's status and protection. However, the demands of ethnic nationalists, no matter how honestly felt, simply represent irrational attachments and, thus, are not to be taken seriously.

Scholars should take serious the desires of ethnic elites and nonelites for linguistic and cultural rights. To
consider them as mechanisms of manipulation or remnants of prehistoric society misses the imagined and constructed nature of nations. Qasim's flag with the Kurdish sun disc, its subsequent removal, and the Turkish government's arrest and torture of Moussa Anter for authoring a Kurdish dictionary show the importance of these issues. When Kurds seek to standardize "their" language, or write "their" history, or even when they outline the borders of "Kurdistan" on maps, they construct a nation where presently clan loyalties and factionalism persist. Theorists should not hide from these issues behind assumptions that nationalists do not understand their real grievances.

Given its usefulness as an analytical tool of the ethnic conflict in Kurdistan, constructivism should be applied in future studies of this phenomenon. In addition to the questions raised by the other approaches, further studies should ask if the states experiencing ethnic violence have promoted a national community that is inclusive to all significant, potential identities. They should examine the means for fostering regionally-based identities, since nation-states are better defined as regions under a state's control, rather than as ethnic nations under a state's control. For specific cases, political scientists should ask, given past state policies,
what is the likelihood of finding an identity with universal appeal. The answer to the worldwide reduction of ethnic conflict depends upon whether the West, which has promoted the ethnically-homogenous state as both modern and ideal, can peacefully change the international standard, or must the standard change incrementally, through violence.
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