

Lesson Plan – Week 8: Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict: Competing Approaches

Announcements

1. Important readings next week- Not many but Goodwin and Skocpol

Section Goals

This week we change gears and study ethnicity. Today we will think about how to define and conceptualize ethnicity and what it means for our society. We will also analyze the existing theories explaining the causes of ethnic conflict. By the end of section we will hopefully be able to answer:

- What is ethnicity?
- What are the various causes of ethnic conflict?
- What is the difference between primordialist and constructivist explanations of ethnic conflict?
- What role does politics play in ethnic conflict?

Discussion Questions

1. **Defining Ethnicity:** What is ethnicity? Where does ethnicity come from? Can ethnic identities be created?
 - a) Everyone write down all of the identities that you hold. Put a check next to the ones that you were born with. What would you consider to be your ethnicity?
 - b) Does religion, language (India has 20!), appearance, race, etc count?
 - c) Primordialists?
 - i. Horowitz: established at birth for most members, based on myth of collective ancestry, which usually carries with it traits thought to be innate; some notion of ascription and deriving from it
 - d) Constructivists?
 - i. Bates: use of symbolism distinguishes ethnic groups from other kinds of groups; collective myths of origin; assertion of ties of kinship or blood, mythology expressive of the cultural uniqueness or superiority of the group; and a conscious elaboration of language and heritage
 - e) What is the difference between a nation and an ethnicity? Do you buy this distinction?
2. **Primordialists v. Instrumentalist v. Social Constructivist:** How would we classify the readings into these categories?
 - a) Primordialist: Horowitz and Geertz
 - b) Instrumentalist: Bates, Posner, and Wilkinson
 - c) Social Constructivist: Nagel
3. **Modernization Theory:** What does modernization theory predict for ethnic violence? How does this relate to reality?
4. **Causes of Ethnic Conflict:** What is the origin of ethnic conflict for each theorist?

- a) Primordialists: Differences between ethnic groups
 - b) Instrumentalists:
 - i. Bates: conflict is rational and strategic; people want resources
 - ii. Posner: political landscape; size of ethnic group
 - iii. Wilkinson: politicians mobilizing votes
 - c) Social Constructivists: political institutions (Nagel)
 - d) (What role does colonialism play in ethnic conflicts?)
5. **Politics and Ethnic Conflict:** What role does politics play in ethnic conflict?
- a) Resources and their distribution?
 - b) Political leaders/parties as mobilizer?
 - c) Institutions? Is it more likely in a democracy?
6. **Mobilization Actors:** Who mobilizes ethnic identities according to each theory? (Group members, politicians, leaders)
7. **Posner:** What is Posner's case and what does it tell us?
- a) Do you buy his methodology and results?
8. **Wilkinson:** Are there different levels of politics that matter? What levels does he look at and what does each tell us?
- a) Does his argument hold outside of India?
9. **Solutions for Ethnic Conflict:** How can you solve ethnic conflict, as explained by each theory? How is ethnic conflict prevented?
- a) What would Wilkinson say?
10. **Effects of Ethnic Conflict:** How does ethnicity, ethnic fractionalization and ethnic conflict affect industrialization and democratic stability?
11. **Goals of Ethnic Conflict:** What are the goals of ethnic conflict? (control state)
12. **Prospects for Ethnic Conflict:** Modernization theorists predict that ethnic conflict will disappear with modernization. Will ethnic conflict ever cease?
- a) With global wealth?
 - b) No inequality?
 - c) High education?