

Oct. 13 & 14, 2009

## 10 & 11 ETHNIC CONFLICT I & II

Read: Maybury-Lewis, Genocide and ethnic cleansing  
Eller, Rwanda and Burundi: When two tribes go to war?  
Eller, The Kurds: Frustrated nationalism  
Malkki, National geographic: the rooting of peoples and the territorialization of national identity among scholars and refugees

### I. Introduction

- A. I will first discuss a typology of ethnic conflict based on the characteristics of the parties and the structure of the conflict
- B. I will then illustrate how to construct a typology based on historical origins of conflict
  - 1. Please remember that typologies allow sorting; can aid in analysis
  - 2. But sooner or later they will be found to be inadequate or distorting

### II. Types of ethnic conflict based on characteristics of the parties and the structure of the conflict

- A. First: ethnic/state
  - 1. Examples
    - a. Chechnyans in Russia
    - b. Zapatistas in Mexico
  - 2. Forms it can take
    - a. Expulsions
      - 1) Chinese from Vietnam
      - 2) Asians from Uganda
    - b. Enclaves and other types of restrictions
      - 1) Apartheid in South Africa
      - 2) Ghettoes—Jews in Warsaw under Nazis

- c. Other forms of repression intended to put down ethnic separatism, nationalist movements
  - 1) Basques
  - 2) Native Americans in Canada and US in 19<sup>th</sup> century
  - 3) Islamic separatists in Philippines
  - 4) Tibetans and the Peoples' Republic of China
  - 5) Berbers in Morocco and Algeria
  - 6) **DISCUSS:** any others you know about?
- 3. Note that the *kind* of state is extremely important
- 4. A colonial power will deal with its minorities in a different manner than an independent state
  - a. Although knowing this does not allow us to predict what kind of ethnic/state conflict will occur in a given independent state
- B. Second: ethnic group vs. ethnic group within a single nation-state
  - 1. Examples?
    - a. Sri Lanka
    - b. Nigerian civil war in 1960s
    - c. India Muslim and Hindu Nationalists
    - d. Belgium (Flemish and Walloons)
  - 2. Note that international interests almost always are involved
- C. Third: state/state conflicts that are highly inflected ethnically
  - 1. Examples?
    - a. Somalia invading Ethiopia
    - b. Turkish invasion of Cyprus, conflict with Greece

2. Often the issue is ownership of a territory, and ethnicity is involved
  - a. Cyprus
  - b. Kashmir (India/Pakistan)
  - c. Argentina and Britain dispute over Malvinas was state/state conflict that did not involve ethnic conflict
    - 1) But a great deal of nationalist rhetoric was involved

D. Fourth: cases where third-party states are significantly involved

1. Lebanese civil war (although combatants were religious-based militias rather than ethnic)
2. Bosnia, Kosovo
3. Hmong in Laos during the Vietnam war
4. India playing a substantial role in Sri Lanka
  - a. Migration of Tamils out of India

III. Second typology based on historical origins of conflict

A. Struggles against colonial domination

1. Not all independence struggles have involved ethnicity or race
  - a. U.S.'s struggle against England was *not* an ethnic one
    - 1) Spoke same language, same culture in many respects, religion, etc.
    - 2) Non-ethnic is characteristic of earliest independence movements
    - 3) South America—Bolívar, etc., not ethnic either
  - b. But race and ethnic divisions in these colonies were extremely important in shaping the arguments in favor of independence
2. Most anti-colonial struggles that followed did have ethnic and race aspects

3. The earlier British colonization of Ireland and Scotland (the Celtic frontier) can be seen to involve ethnic dimension<sup>1</sup>
  - a. The “wild Irish”
  - b. Queen Elizabeth’s nobles determined that in order to assure success of the colony the Irish had to be exterminated and labor from England brought in
  - c. Other examples of extermination policies
    - 1) Tasmanians in Australia
    - 2) Mapuche and other indigenous groups in Argentina
    - 3) Native Americans in the US West in 19<sup>th</sup> century (not a national policy, though)
    - 4) Armenians in Turkey
    - 5) Jews and Roma in Nazi Germany
  
4. Algeria: war of independence 1954-1962
  - a. France’s colonial policy was to claim colonized peoples as “citizens of France”
  - b. Hasn’t worked; Jews and Muslims prime examples
    - 1) French colonial settlers confiscated land, stripped Algerians of political, economic rights
  - c. Algerians fought against Germans in WW II; Algiers was capital of “Free France” during occupation
    - 1) Algerians expected to be granted independence following the war
  - d. Film “Battle of Algiers” shows struggle against French colonial domination

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<sup>1</sup> See William Christie MacLeod, 1928. Celt and Indian: Britain’s old world frontier in relation to the new. In MacLeod, *The American Indian Frontier*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf. Reprinted in Paul Bohannon and Fred Plog eds., *Beyond the Frontier: Social Process and Cultural Change*. Garden City, NY: The Natural History Press: 25-42.

- 1) Film shows how Algerian militants take advantage of ethnic/racial assumptions of French colonists
  - 2) One Algerian woman dyes her hair blond, dresses European style
  - 3) Her gender and non-Arab appearance mean her purse won't be searched at the gate
  - 4) Leaves a bomb in a restaurant frequented by French
5. We have discussed how most colonies contained several or many culturally distinct groups
- a. Deliberate partitioning of colonies by European countries to cut across ethnic geography
  - b. Developing various ways of exacerbating inter-ethnic tensions to avoid alliance-building against the colonial administration
    - 1) For example, “ethnic soldiering”
    - 2) Carib Indians were used as “cannibal soldiers” against Arawaks by European powers on Guianese coast of South America during conquest<sup>2</sup>
    - 3) United Fruit Company policies in Panama provide an example<sup>3</sup>
      - a) Company was a para-state in that region—acting like a state
      - b) Deliberately favored indigenous Kuna employees
      - c) To create resentment among Emberá employees
  - c. Some analysts argue that British policies in Ireland deliberately exacerbated religious conflict
  - d. The use of the Hmong by the CIA in Laos during the Vietnam war is a case of explicit “ethnic soldiering”

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<sup>2</sup> See Neil L. Whitehead, 1988. *Lords of the Tiger Spirit: A History of the Caribs in Colonial Venezuela and Guyana 1498-1820*. Dordrecht: Foris Publications Holland.

<sup>3</sup> See Philippe Bourgois, 1989. *Ethnicity at Work: Divided Labor on a Central American Banana Plantation*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

6. Many situations where a culturally distinct group straddles one or more boundaries
  - a. Tuaregs in Chad and Niger (Africa)
  - b. Kurds in Turkey, Iran and Iraq (some in Syria)
  - c. Maya nationalism growing; Mayas are found in Belize, Mexico (Chiapas), Guatemala
  
7. Post-colonial states have found it difficult to engage in nation-building due to these legacies of colonialism
  - a. Indonesia a prime example
    - 1) Not only Timor and Irian Jaya
  - b. Rwanda
    - 1) Ethnic conflict results in part from Belgian colonial policies of setting up minority Tutsi to dominate majority Hutu
  - c. Partition of India and Pakistan
    - 1) Horrible violence; legacy continues<sup>4</sup>
    - 2) Kashmir a good example
      - a) Population is predominately Muslim
      - b) But the Raj was Hindu, so he arranged for Kashmir to be within India's borders upon independence
  - d. Bangladesh—horrible conflict too, over religion
  
- B. Struggles within a national state or between neighboring states that were never colonies
  1. Because of fairly long-standing cultural diversity within present boundaries
    - a. France
      - 1) Bretons

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<sup>4</sup> See Veena Das, 1995. *Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

- b. Yugoslavia
  - c. Greece (Macedonia)
  - d. Catalans in Spain
  - e. Basques in France and Spain
2. Or because of more recent migrations
- a. Labor
    - 1) Persecution of Chinese brought over as laborers in 19<sup>th</sup> century in US and Canada
    - 2) Second largest Turkish city is Berlin
      - a) Anti-Turkish violence in Germany
3. Or as a result of war elsewhere—refugees
- a. Hmong in California, Minnesota
  - b. Laotians and Vietnamese fishers on Texas coast
4. Or relatively recently established states that favor one ethnic group for nation-building
- a. Israel
    - 1) Israeli non-Jewish citizens: Arabs, Christians, Druze

IV. What happens to armed ethnic conflict over time?

A. Stalemate

- 1. Neither side can eliminate the other
- 2. Examples of state vs. ethnic group that became a stalemate?
  - a. Mapuche of Chile vs. Spain...a centuries-long stalemate
  - b. Seminoles in Florida and USA

- c. Stalemate is comparatively rare—history contains a huge number of examples of states persecuting, exiling, killing ethnic groups to the point of extermination
  - 1) When they resist:
    - a) Colonial administration
    - b) Forced religious conversion
    - c) Economic policies (trade, labor, extractive industries like mining)
  
- B. The violent conflict ends
  - 1. Either enough of the combatants get killed, or go away
  
- C. Or the armed conflict gets routinized, channeled into non-violent forms
  - 1. Pressure from international organizations like the UN, or other states is often brought to bear
    - a. To sign conventions, peace accords, treaties, etc.
      - 1) Rwanda
    - b. These accords lead to political structures being set up
    - c. Examples
      - 1) Palestinian-Israeli conflict: Oslo accords, or in Dayton meetings there were “Road Map” discussions
    - d. In some cases violence is employed during “routinization”—NATO bombing during the conflict in former Yugoslavia
      - 1) Responding to the huge problem of “ethnic cleansing” in Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia
  - 2. Mexico: the San Andrés Peace Accords
    - a. Important moment
      - 1) For example, how the state defines ethnic groups might be negotiated during these discussions



- 2) Nagel's point about the US
- d. Note that the Mexican indigenous people didn't want to secede
  - 1) They wanted to be included
  - 2) "Jamás un México sin nosotros"—"Never again a Mexico without us"
  - 3) They were accused by President Zedillo of being secessionist, of "balkanizing" Mexico
    - a) This type of complaint often surfaces
- 3. Why outside pressure is so often needed
  - a. Forging temporary unity out of diversity is difficult
  - b. How to deal with the historical power differentials between the various ethnic groups?
  - c. Save face: can claim being forced to come to the table, or "it's an offer we couldn't refuse"—very attractive inducements are offered
- D. There is no guarantee that "equality" or "parity" will prevail
  - 1. Violent conflict can end by becoming routinized in the form of a police state
  - 2. Repression, jails, intimidation are ways of routinizing violence
  - 3. Sheer force can be quite successful at quelling inter-ethnic violence
    - a. A point often made about relatively tranquil socialist Central Europe and what happened after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of Soviet-dominated socialist governments like Marshall Tito's of Yugoslavia
    - b. Or Spain under Franco after Spanish Civil War
- E. Frequently articulated goals:
  - 1. Getting the parties to negotiate
    - a. "Getting to 'yes'"

- b. There's a whole industry that studies and facilitates mediation, negotiation
  - c. Sometimes these professionals are called in to decrease ethnic conflict
  - d. Or high-profile person—Secretary General of the UN; Jimmy Carter several times
2. Educating the warring parties
    - a. To understanding the history, logic and structure of a conflict
    - b. Have a clearer, more objective understanding of what's at stake
    - c. Assumption is that correct information about the other will lead to less prejudice
  3. Change mentalities, sentiments
    - a. Tolerance, etc.
    - b. Embarrassment in front of the modern world<sup>5</sup>

V. Ethnic conflict more generally

- A. Goals behind those engaging in ethnic conflict that involves the state in some way tend to be:
  1. More effective control of a population by the state (and the state is run by one ethnic group)
    - a. Ethiopia
  2. Control of a state by a group
    - b. Sudan's woes
  3. End to control by others
- B. Ethnic conflict not involving the state—a more local conflict

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<sup>5</sup> An example of international embarrassment producing change inside a country: an anti-lynching campaign in the form of lectures in Europe during the 1890s by African-American journalist Ida B. Wells, has been argued to have contributed to a gradual decline of frequency of lynchings (Joane Nagel, 2003. *Race, Ethnicity, and Sexuality: Intimate Intersections, Forbidden Frontiers*. New York: Oxford: 114).

1. Immigration conflicts:
  - a. Anti-Turk resentment in Germany (which periodically flares up into violence)
  - b. Increasingly throughout Europe
    - 1) As nations join European Union and restrictions on travel are lifted
    - 2) Illegal immigration increases, as well

- C. Ideological factors helping to produce high frequency of ethnic conflict
  1. Complicated relationship between individual and collective rights
  2. Rights are usually cast in an individualistic idiom, or discourse
    - a. E.g., competition, even equality itself
    - b. Western liberal theory values self-determination and equality of the individual
    - c. But the struggles over claims are advanced on a collective basis

## VI. Summing up: Why so much ethnic conflict in present-day world?

- A. Clearly not due to atavistic, “tribal” affiliations, allegiances—“age-old” feuds between groups that keep them from joining modern society
- B. Colonialism, empire-building are major factors
  1. Spain and Portugal, later other European nations; Russia expansion as well
  2. Eller’s discussion of Kurds and Burundi/Rwanda; Maybury-Lewis’s of Rwanda
- C. Also notions about “national self-determination” that developed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century
- D. Post-colonial factors
  1. From WW I on, empires and large states have been dismembered in favor of smaller units

2. President Woodrow Wilson established the doctrine of self-determination<sup>6</sup>
    - a. The League of Nations was established
  3. The end of WW II brought about the end of colonial control in Asia and Africa
  4. The growth in notions of equality makes ethnic subordination increasingly illegitimate
  5. The trajectory is one of an increasing number of, at times, very small states
  6. Certainly fueled by ethnic conflict
    - a. Not all of it is violent
- E. It's clear than when powerful empires no longer:
1. Subordinate ethnic, religious, etc. communities
  2. Nor repress ethnic conflict (e.g., central Europe under the Soviets)
  3. And where there are resources, benefits to be claimed
  4. There will be competition and conflict
    - a. Ethnogenesis likely to occur (strengthening, reviving, re-defining ethnic identity)
    - b. And ideologies that justify the struggle will develop
      - 1) Some of them extremely pernicious
- F. In the modern world, ethnicity is one of those forces that is, in moderation, community-building, but community-destroying in excess
1. And cases of "excess" derive from forces outside, not inside the group
  2. Such as the present system of modern states
  3. This system provides the framework within which conflict occurs
    - a. Most states that were never colonies are diverse

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<sup>6</sup> This discussion follows Jason Clay, 1990. What's a Nation? Latest Thinking. *Mother Jones*, 15, 7: 28-30.

- b. And when many of the former colonies became independent
- c. It was not at all clear which population within these countries could claim ownership and “nation-build”
- d. The model of “nation,” “a people” was well established
- e. How to fashion a unified “imagined community” out of these ingredients?

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