

Conflict Theory and Conflict Motives

The obstacles to a theory of ethnic conflict are formidable. Until lately, conflict theory has been an impoverished category of analysis in the social sciences.¹ Many of the recent attempts to redress this deficiency and develop conflict theory in political science have been made in connection with international relations. The notoriously treacherous intellectual terrain of international relations, however, has of necessity made this a halting enterprise. Although a number of important similarities can be identified between international relations and interethnic relations, attempts to base a theory of ethnic conflict on theories of international conflict seem likely to end by resting one unknown upon another.

Among the elusive elements in ethnic conflict theory is an acceptable definition of conflict. Most definitions embody an element of struggle, strife, or collision, and in this way distinguish conflict from competition. Some go further and suggest that conflict entails the struggle for mutually exclusive rewards or the use of incompatible means to a goal. Although much ethnic conflict is properly described in these terms, mutually exclusive ends or means nevertheless need not be intrinsic to all conflict. For me, a version of Lewis Coser's definition serves well.² Conflict is a struggle in which the aim is to gain objectives and simultaneously to neutralize, injure, or eliminate rivals. This leaves the nature and incompatibility of objectives and methods open to investigation rather than closed by definitional fiat.

Despite the slow start that conflict theory had, as ethnic conflict has

1. See Jessie Bernard, "The Sociological Study of Conflict," in International Sociological Association, *The Nature of Conflict* (Paris: UNESCO, 1957), chap. 1. For ethnic conflict in particular, see Joseph Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1981), 19–24.

2. Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1956), 8.

gathered worldwide momentum, theoretical statements have been advanced to explain it. Some of these statements have gained a measure of acceptance.

The theories provide a useful starting point—and not just because they afford us a glimpse of the state of the art against which to develop new conceptions. Most current theories of ethnic conflict are derivatives of other concerns. They have often grown out of a fascination with an ongoing process (such as “modernization”), to which they have attempted to relate ethnic phenomena, or out of commitment to a broader theoretical perspective (such as class analysis), under which ethnic conflict might be subsumed. The subsidiary origins of these theories have virtually guaranteed them a partial character: they fit certain aspects of ethnic conflict much better than they fit other aspects. Furthermore, at key points these differing perspectives are mutually inconsistent. Although existing theories are not wholly satisfying, their deficiencies cast what needs to be explained in rather bold relief. In particular, their points of difference raise some basic issues about conflict motivation. My effort to construct a coherent explanation of ethnic conflict begins, therefore, with a critical but highly selective review of the state of the art.

TRADITION AND MODERNIZATION

Naturally enough, the dominant concern in studies of developing countries has been the process of change, particularly those interrelated changes in thought and experience that can be labeled “modernization.”³ Ethnicity has often been studied in the context of modernization.

There are three ways of relating ethnic conflict to the modernization process. The first is to view ethnic conflict as a mere relic of an outmoded traditionalism, doomed to be overtaken by the incursions of modernity. The second is to regard ethnic conflict as a traditional but unusually stubborn impediment to modernization. The third is to interpret ethnic conflict as an integral part—even a product—of the process of moderni-

3. For an introductory treatment, see Myron Weiner, ed., *Modernization: The Dynamics of Growth* (New York: Basic Books, 1966). For some of the intellectual history associated with the concept, see Samuel P. Huntington, “The Change to Change: Modernization, Development, and Politics,” *Comparative Politics* 3 (Apr. 1971): 283–322. For a reassessment, see Lucian W. Pye, “Political Modernization: Gaps Between Theory and Reality,” *The Annals* 442 (Mar. 1979): 28–39.

zation itself.⁴ In important respects, each of these approaches is at odds with the other two.

ETHNICITY AND TRADITION

The optimism that pervaded the first studies of the new states made it easy to perceive ethnic allegiances as purely vestigial affiliations, survivals of a traditionalism whose lack of contemporary utility would be made apparent by the onslaught of modern forces. The same innovative strata associated with modernization in general—educated elites, urban dwellers, and army officers—were asserted to be the most “detrified” sectors of society as well.⁵ Surely they would lead the movement away from traditional ethnic loyalties.

The strength of ethnic affiliations and the status of many who held tight to them have made it impossible to regard ethnic conflict as an anachronism on the verge of disappearance. The very elites who were thought to be leading their peoples away from ethnic affiliations were commonly found to be in the forefront of ethnic conflict. Militantly ethnic political parties sometimes had their deepest roots among educated elites,⁶ ethnic violence flared up in urban areas all over the developing world, and armies were divided by ethnic tensions that led to coups and killings. An upsurge of ethnic sentiment in Western countries demonstrated that ethnicity could not be explained solely in terms of a fading traditionalism that the West had outgrown.⁷

Perhaps, on the other hand, ethnic conflict is the result of an extraordinary persistence of traditional antipathies so strong that they can sur-

4. A variant of the first and third ways of relating ethnic conflict to modernization is to see this conflict as part of the “stresses and strains” of moving away from traditionalism, but as a purely transitional phenomenon. Cf. Harold A. Gould, “Religion and Politics in a U.P. Constituency,” in Donald Eugene Smith, ed., *South Asian Politics and Religion* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), chap. 3.

5. See David E. Apter, *Ghana in Transition*, 2d rev. ed. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1972), 148; Lucian W. Pye, *Aspects of Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1966), 179–80.

6. See, e.g., Myron Weiner, *Sons of the Soil: Migration and Ethnic Conflict in India* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978), 274–93; Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, *Ethnicity and Equality: The Shiv Sena Party and Preferential Policies in Bombay* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1979), 63–81; Craig Baxter, “The Jana Sangh,” in Smith, ed., *South Asian Politics and Religion*, chap. 4.

7. In the West, too, survey research has shown that support for ethnic movements often increased with education, income, and high-status occupations. See, e.g., Erwin C. Hargrove, “Nationality, Values, and Change: Young Elites in French Canada,” *Comparative Politics* 2 (Apr. 1970): 474 n.1.

vive even the powerful solvent of modernization. If so, it becomes possible to explain the persistence of ethnic allegiances even among modern elites and modern countries.⁸ From time to time, ethnic conflict has been regarded as peculiarly potent when it reflects ancient enmities, and it has sometimes been dismissed as artificial or ephemeral where no such long-standing antagonism could be identified.⁹ A corollary of such a view may be that the strength of ethnic conflict is proportional to the depth of its traditional origins.

It is true, of course, that some ethnic antagonisms are of long duration. Memories of earlier, lapsed conflicts, centuries and sometimes millennia old, can be revived to fit contemporary conditions. The Sinhalese and Tamil kingdoms fought recurrently in ancient Sri Lanka (Ceylon),¹⁰ as did Mende and Temne in pre-colonial Sierra Leone and Maronites and Druze in what is now Lebanon. The Acholi and Langi clashed intermittently in pre-colonial Uganda,¹¹ and the Assamese king, Chakradhvaj Singha, "fought for independence with the war cry, 'Better death than submit to the Bengalis.'"¹² These old hostilities are all significant again. The role of historical memory in contemporary ethnic relations is perhaps further suggested by survey evidence indicating that African university students from groups which boast a glorious (and generally monarchical) past—Baganda, Bakongo, Ashanti, Yoruba—seem to possess somewhat more ethnocentric attitudes and behavior patterns than do their fellow students from other groups.¹³

Nevertheless, ethnic conflict is not just the persistence or recrudescence of earlier antagonisms. As we have seen in Chapter 2, many ethnic groups are rather new creations. As the groups are not themselves traditional, they could not have had traditional rivalries among themselves. Whether or not recently formed, many groups encountered each other for the first time during colonial rule. Their relationship, obviously, is the product of this relatively recent encounter. Finally, just as some tra-

8. See Michael Parenti, "Ethnic Politics and the Persistence of Ethnic Identification," *American Political Science Review* 61 (Sept. 1967): 717–26.

9. See, e.g., Robert I. Rotberg, "Tribalism and Politics in Zambia," *Africa Report*, Dec. 1967, pp. 29–35.

10. S. Arasaratnam, *Ceylon* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964).

11. Nelson Kasfir, "Cultural Sub-Nationalism in Uganda," in Victor A. Olorunsola, ed., *The Politics of Cultural Sub-Nationalism in Africa* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1972), 70.

12. Hugh Tinker, *India and Pakistan: A Political Analysis*, rev. ed. (New York: Praeger, 1968), 15.

13. Otto Klineberg and Marisa Zavalloni, *Nationalism and Tribalism Among African Students* (Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1969), 77–81.

ditional antipathies persist, others lose their relevance. The Maharashtrian Hindu folk hero, Shivaji, who led the armed struggle against the Muslims in the seventeenth century, was invoked once again in the twentieth, in the form of the Shiv Sena (Army of Shivaji). But this militant Maharashtrian movement directed its animus mainly against recently arrived migrants to Bombay—not Muslims, except secondarily, but South Indian Hindus. Here, then, is an adaptation of historical memory to fit a wholly new conflict. History can be a weapon, and tradition can fuel ethnic conflict, but a current conflict cannot generally be explained by simply calling it a revived form of an earlier conflict.

ETHNICITY AND MODERNIZATION

More frequent and more systematic statement has been given to the view that ethnic conflict is a by-product of modernization itself. The mere statement that ethnic conflict is a by-product of modernization might invite the rejoinder that such a theory is necessarily timebound.¹⁴ How can it explain ethnic conflict in the pre-modern period, unless perhaps the term *modernization* is given a capricious meaning that makes it the equivalent of all change or unless ethnic conflict is given an unduly narrow meaning that limits it to the modern period? There is something to this skepticism about the ahistorical quality of modernization theories. Yet this limitation need not be decisive if such theories are not to be taken as explaining all aspects of ethnic conflict—and I shall so interpret them.

Karl W. Deutsch first advanced the idea that “social mobilization” was related to ethnic conflict. Social mobilization was conceived as “an overall process of change, which happens to substantial parts of the population in countries which are moving from traditional to modern ways of life.”¹⁵ It involves the substitution of new patterns of behavior for old, and it includes “involvement in mass politics.”¹⁶ The components of this process are exposure to mass media and changes in literacy, residence (especially from rural to urban), occupation (especially from agricultural to non-agricultural), and other characteristics that break

14. For a useful corrective, see John A. Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1982).

15. “Social Mobilization and Political Development,” *American Political Science Review* 55 (Sept. 1961): 493–514, at 493. See also Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1953).

16. Deutsch, “Social Mobilization and Political Development,” 494.

down “commitments to traditional ways of living”¹⁷ Deutsch suggested that ethnic conflict is the product of something analogous to a race between rates of social mobilization and rates of assimilation. The proportion of mobilized but unassimilated persons is “the first crude indicator” of group conflict.¹⁸

These views have subsequently been given more explicit theoretical formulation.¹⁹ Social mobilization, it is argued, fosters ethnic competition especially in the competitive modern sector, for “it is the competitor within the modern sphere who feels the insecurities of change most strongly and who seeks the communal shelter of ‘tribalism,’ ”²⁰ even as he seeks the many new rewards brought by modernization. Educated, urban elites “organize collective support to advance their position in the competition for the benefits of modernity.”²¹ Indeed, it is even said that

Ethnic groups persist largely because of their capacity to extract goods and services from the modern sector and thereby satisfy the demands of their members for the components of modernity. Insofar as they provide these benefits to their members, they are able to gain their support and achieve their loyalty.²²

The fundamental assumption underlying modernization theories has been articulated in terms of converging aspirations:

People’s aspirations and expectations change as they are mobilized into the modernizing economy and polity. They come to want, and to demand, more—more goods, more recognition, more power. Significantly, too, the orientation of the mobilized to a common set of rewards and paths to rewards means, in effect, that many people come to desire precisely the same things. Men enter into conflict not because they are different but because they are essentially the same. It is by making men “more alike,” in the sense of possessing the same wants, that modernization tends to promote conflict.²³

17. Ibid.

18. *Nationalism and Social Communication*, chap. 6. Deutsch, however, has not been wholly consistent on this subject. See the careful review of his writings by Walker Connor, “Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying?” *World Politics* 24 (Apr. 1972): 319–55.

19. See especially Paul R. Brass, “Ethnicity and Nationality Formation,” *Ethnicity* 3 (Sept. 1976): 225–41; Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe, “Modernization and the Politics of Communalism: A Theoretical Perspective,” *American Political Science Review* 64 (Dec. 1970): 1112–30; Robert H. Bates, “Ethnic Competition and Modernization in Contemporary Africa,” *Comparative Political Studies* 6 (Jan. 1974): 457–84. For a comparative application, see R. S. Milne, *Politics in Ethnically Bipolar States* (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1981), 83–105.

20. Melson and Wolpe, “Modernization,” 1115.

21. Bates, “Ethnic Competition,” 468.

22. Ibid., 471.

23. Melson and Wolpe, “Modernization,” 1114.

Here one is reminded of Francis I, who, when asked to identify the differences that made for constant warfare between him and Charles V, replied: "None whatever. We agree perfectly. We both want control of Italy!"²⁴

Whereas ethnic conflict was conceived earlier as a vestige destined to disappear and then as a vestige stubbornly resistant to change, recent theories of conflict view it as no vestige at all, but as part and parcel of the very process of becoming modern. With this, we may have exhausted the logical possibilities, but have we moved ahead?

In two ways, certainly, we have. Theories that stress the relationship between ethnic conflict and modernization are quick to call attention to two important themes in ethnic conflict: the role of elite ambitions and the role of the differential modernization of ethnic groups in fostering conflict.

The modern middle class, rather than playing the detribalizing role earlier assigned to it, often furthers its interests by invoking ethnic support. The point here is that elites *have* distinctive interests that relate to the benefits of modernity: good jobs, urban amenities, access to schools, travel, prestige. The many bitter stories that circulate in the developing world about those new tribes, the Wabenzi (those who drive the Mercedes), and the Beentos (those who have "been to" Europe or America), suggest a prominent differentiation of class interests. But if this is reflected in ethnic conflict, it gives rise to two further questions: (1) why should nonelites render their support? and (2) why are class interests so strongly reflected in ethnic tensions which, after all, usually cross-cut class lines? Both questions require attention.

MODERNIZATION: LEVELS, RATES, AND DISPARITIES

Modernization theories of ethnicity commonly also stress that the benefits of modernity are not equally spread among ethnic groups.²⁵ This uneven distribution of economic and educational opportunities in the modern sector is an important source of group tensions. How and why?

One answer given by modernization theories is that, because some groups gain a headstart in the competition for the rewards of the modern world, the social classes that emerge tend to overlap and reinforce ethnic

24. Quoted in Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, The State, and War* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1959), 187–88.

25. Brass, "Ethnicity and Nationality Formation," 231–32; Melson and Wolpe, "Modernization," 1115–17; Bates, "Ethnic Competition," 462–64.

group boundaries, thereby making ethnic group confrontations more intense. "The fewer the cross-cutting socio-economic linkages, the more naked such confrontations and the greater the likelihood of secessionist and other movements of communal nationalism."²⁶

Another answer, not inconsistent, puts the matter in terms of class resentment. Ethnic groups that "are more wealthy, better educated, and more urbanized tend to be envied, resented, and sometimes feared by others; and the basis for these sentiments is the recognition of their superior position in the new system of stratification."²⁷

Is it adequate to cast the significance of differential modernization, as these theories do, in terms of reinforcing cleavages or social stratification—in other words, in terms of class? I intend to show in the next chapter that ethnically differential modernization is a highly useful starting point for analyzing the collective psychology of ethnic conflict. But its importance is not captured in straight social class terms. Partly, the facts alone suggest this: the opportunity structure in the modern sector may be skewed in favor of one group or another, but it rarely approaches being completely closed to particular groups. In any event, the modern sector is, of course, not the only determinant of stratification. Then, too, and most important, more than just incipient class feeling lies behind the envy, resentment, and fear of those groups which seem to be benefiting unduly from modernization. To mark the issue as one worthy of pursuing at length, rather than to pursue it just now, I shall simply state my view that the basis of this envy, resentment, and fear is to be found, not in the ethnic distribution of opportunities and benefits *per se*, but in what this indicates about relative group capacities and what it portends for group relations across the board.

Modernization theories place most of their emphasis on modern elites, the modern stratification system, and the modern sector of developing societies in general. I noted a moment ago that these theories tend to give insufficient attention to the conflict motives of nonelites, whose stake in the benefits being distributed is often tenuous at best. The same point needs to be made across countries as across classes. In those countries, as in those sectors within countries, where modernization is not far advanced, this theoretical perspective proves inadequate. Thus, modernization theory provides no convincing way to explain why so much ethnic conflict (and so much ethnic conflict that has gone as far as civil war)

26. Melson and Wolpe, "Modernization," 1116.

27. Bates, "Ethnic Competition," 462.

has occurred in some of the least modernized areas of the world: Chad, Ethiopia, the Southern Sudan, Mauritania, the mountainous areas of Iraq, Northeast India, the periphery of Burma, and Papua New Guinea. These are not just deviant or exceptional cases. They are in many ways quite central and typical, of ethnic secessionist movements, for example, as Chapter 6 will show. It is no surprise, therefore, that empirical efforts to confirm the role of modernization level as an intervening variable between ethnic diversity and political instability have come to nought.²⁸

The possible solutions to the poor fit between modernization theory and conflict among less modernized populations and countries only compound the problem. Deutsch, for example, accords at least as much importance to *rates* of social mobilization as to absolute levels. Naturally, if all else is equal, rates of change are higher where starting levels are lower. Therefore, rates of social mobilization may be relatively high in the least modernized parts of the developing world. But this proves too much. In such countries—particularly in the least modernized areas of such countries, where ethnic resentments seem to be concentrated—the fraction of the population that could be considered socially mobilized would still remain very low, too low to rest an explanation for an entire conflict on it. Here it is worth recalling Deutsch's early formulation that the proportion of mobilized but unassimilated persons is "the first crude indicator" of group conflict. Though rates of change may be high in the areas and countries just mentioned, this critical proportion remains quite low. It is therefore difficult to avoid the conclusion that an explanation that relies on social mobilization or modernization would not be sufficient to account for conflicts as widespread and serious as the ones that have been named.

Unless, of course, what counts is neither absolute levels nor rates of modernization but the span of ethnic *differences* in either or both of these variables. That is, ethnic conflict may be a function of a "modernization gap" between ethnic groups or a function of the rate at which such a gap is being widened. But in that case it is not adequate to frame the explanation in terms of modernization or in terms of everyone's

28. Donald G. Morrison and H. Michael Stevenson, "Cultural Pluralism, Modernization, and Conflict: An Empirical Analysis of Sources of Political Instability in African Nations," in John N. Paden, ed., *Values, Identities, and National Integration: Empirical Research in Africa* (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1980), 11–23; Lynn F. Fischer, "Mass Education and National Conflict in Thirty African States," in *ibid.*, 265–68; Walter L. Barrows, "Ethnic Diversity and Political Instability in Black Africa," *Comparative Political Studies* 9 (July 1976): 139–70, at 164.

becoming “more alike,” because in key respects the differences between groups may remain constant or may increase. Certainly, neither version of the gap explanation would necessarily postulate that everyone is becoming significantly “more modern”: what would count, according to such explanations, is not the overall level or rate of modernization in a society but the distance between groups on some specified attribute or attributes. Such a gap might exist at levels of modernization so low as to render explanations in terms of the global modernization process tortured and artificial at best, misleading at worst. There are, then, basic differences among explanations for ethnic conflict founded, respectively, on overall levels of modernization, overall rates of modernization, and group disparities in levels or rates of modernization. Modernization theories have not been very clear about the implications of these various explanations.

To the suggestion that modernization is not sufficient to account for severe ethnic conflict in unmodernized parts of the world, modernization theorists might rejoin that the elites in those areas, small though they may be, are disproportionately important. It is their ambition that ignites the conflict. As we have seen, such an assumption is already present in modernization explanations of ethnic conflict. But this assumption leaves open, once again, the insistent question of why the masses follow. One is left to surmise either that elite manipulations can, without more, induce mass action or that the masses follow only so long as there is a payoff. Recall the statement that “groups persist largely because of their capacity to extract goods and services from the modern sector and thereby satisfy the demands of their members for the components of modernity.” Ethnicity, in the words of a cynic, entails not the collective will to exist but the existing will to collect.

The assumption that nonelites follow because there is a payoff in goods and services runs into difficulty as soon as we recognize that there are losing as well as winning groups in ethnic politics. Those groups which are increasingly excluded from the “extractive” process usually do not cease to exist. They may, on the contrary, fight to the death. Ethnicity has a much more frail basis than most observers would grant it if ethnic groups really did wax and wane with their capacity to extract goods and services. That tangible benefits alone might be the basis of ethnic solidarity is belied by the intense passions that ethnic allegiances regularly elicit. The ethnic group is not just a trade union.

The alternative assumption—that elite machinations and deceptions bring the masses along—requires a leap of faith, and a far-reaching one

at that. What it suggests is that nonelites are suffering from a case of "false consciousness," for they are serving interests other than their own. Such an argument, implicit in modernization writings, has also been advanced quite explicitly: "... tribal movements may be created and instigated to action by the new men of power in furtherance of their own special interests which are, time and again, the constitutive interests of emerging social classes. Tribalism then becomes a mask for class privilege."²⁹

It is important to be clear on what is at stake at this point. Plainly, middle-class careerist interests have been a prominent part of ethnic conflict. The question is why others follow. One answer is that the others have been misled. Such an explanation presumes that enormous masses of people in country after country do not have a sound conception of what concerns them. This is a presumption difficult to square with mounting evidence that nonelites in Asia and Africa are far from ignorant about politics.³⁰ Before jumping to an explanation based on manipulation, it would seem incumbent to exhaust all other plausible explanations that do not require such a presumption. For I presume instead that if elites pursue a policy of deflecting mass antagonisms onto other ethnic groups, such a policy must strike roots in mass sentiments, apprehensions, and aspirations in order to succeed. By failing to attend to the "unmodernized" strata, modernization theories of ethnic conflict tend to neglect the potential heterogeneity of conflict motives. This is a paradoxical omission for a theory that starts from the premise that populations are undergoing profound, and yet uneven, changes.

ECONOMIC INTEREST

Ethnic conflict has generally been an embarrassment to proponents of class politics and of the class analysis of politics. Ethnic groups and social classes rarely overlap perfectly; ethnic affiliations generally seem

29. Richard L. Sklar, "Political Science and National Integration—A Radical Approach," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 5 (May 1967): 1–11, at 6. Compare Sklar's earlier views, expressed in Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), 474–80; and in Sklar and C. S. Whitaker, Jr., "Nigeria," in James S. Coleman and Carl G. Rosberg, Jr., eds., *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1964), 620, 646–47.

30. Fred M. Hayward, "A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom About the Informed Public: National Political Information in Ghana," *American Political Science Review* 70 (June 1976): 433–51; Joel D. Barkan, "Comment: Further Reassessment of 'Conventional Wisdom': Political Knowledge and Voting Behavior in Rural Kenya," *ibid.*, 452–55; Marvin L. Rogers, "The Politicization of Malay Villagers," *Comparative Politics* 7 (Jan. 1975): 202–25.

to elicit more passionate loyalty than do class allegiances; and certainly there has been no marked trend in the developing world for class interests across ethnic lines to supersede ethnic ties. For all of these reasons, class theories of ethnicity have not been richly developed.³¹

Still, economic interests may play a role in ethnic conflict, and the economic underpinning of group hostility has been a persistent undercurrent in the literature of ethnic conflict.³² Only recently has the theme been given more explicit statement. Several variants can be identified.

The first I have already touched on. According to this view, ethnic conflict is artificial. Belief in the importance of distinct ethnic interests constitutes part of an ideology (in the Marxist sense) that masks class interests and diverts the working classes from pursuing their interests. Ethnic conflict amounts to "challenging nonexistent or barely dangerous enemies" and avoiding "the real issues" and the real enemies, namely "the ruling class."³³

A second version of materialist theory stresses, not irrational mass submission to elite manipulation, but rational working-class competition. There may be manipulation here, too, but also discernible competitive interests. Employers use the labor of one ethnic group to undercut the price of labor of another group. Higher-paid laborers are, of course,

threatened by the introduction of cheaper labor into the market, fearing that it will either force them to leave the territory or reduce them to its level. If the labor market is split ethnically, the class antagonism takes the form of ethnic antagonism. . . . [W]hile much rhetoric of ethnic antagonism concentrates on ethnicity and race, it really in large measure (though probably not entirely) expresses this class conflict.³⁴

Ethnicity, then, is not an artificial diversion from economic interests, but a faithful reflection of those interests.

31. The class theory has, however, been developed in the case of something approaching "ethnic caste," that is, rigidly ranked systems. See Oliver C. Cox, *Caste, Class and Race* (New York: Modern Reader, 1948); Marvin Harris, *Patterns of Race in the Americas* (New York: Walker, 1964).

32. See, e.g., Tamotsu Shibutani and Kian M. Kwan, *Ethnic Stratification: A Comparative Approach* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 168, 196–97, 380–82; Richard G. Fox, Charlotte H. Aull, and Louis F. Cimino, "Ethnic Nationalism and the Welfare State," in Charles F. Keyes, ed., *Ethnic Change* (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1981), 198–245; Nancy L. Snider, "What Happened in Penang?" *Asian Survey* 8 (Dec. 1968): 960–75.

33. M. S. Prabhakar, "The 'Bongal' Bogey," *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay), Oct. 21, 1971, pp. 2140–42. See also Okwudibia Nnoli, "Ethnicity as a Counter Revolutionary Force," *Africa Review* 7 (1977): 1–12.

34. Edna Bonacich, "A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism: The Split Labor Market," *American Sociological Review* 37 (Oct. 1972): 547–59, at 553.

A third formulation of economically based ethnic conflict focuses on tensions between “middleman minorities” and their “host societies.”³⁵ Middleman minorities are said to concentrate in trade and commerce and often to act as intermediaries “between producer and consumer, employer and employee, owner and renter, elite and masses.”³⁶ The Chinese in Southeast Asia, the Asians in East Africa, and the Jews in pre-war Europe are among the groups referred to in these terms.

Trading minorities, it is argued, come into conflict with business rivals of other ethnic groups. Conflict occurs, not merely because of ordinary business rivalries, but because immigrant minorities are able to undercut their rivals by the use of their own credit institutions, their guild techniques of restraining competition among themselves, and their use of cheap, usually family, labor. Their interests also collide with the interests of those with whom they transact business: consumers, tenants, clients. Finally, because trading minorities have the ability to obtain their own cheap labor, they depress the prospects for labor in the host society. The tractable character of labor in middleman minority firms insures that rising wages in competing businesses would not be accompanied by similar increases for workers of minority firms. A competing firm in the host society that granted a wage increase would find itself priced out of the market. Eventually, workers in host society firms come to identify immigrant businesses and the low wages they pay as the source of the low wages paid in the economy generally.

“The middleman and the host society come into conflict because elements in each group have incompatible [economic] goals.”³⁷ Even the most extreme measures taken against such groups can largely be explained on this basis. So powerful, economically and organizationally, are the trading minorities that they are

extremely difficult to dislodge. . . . The difficulty of breaking entrenched middleman monopolies, the difficulty of controlling the growth and extension of their economic power, pushes host countries to ever more extreme reactions. One

35. Edna Bonacich, “A Theory of Middleman Minorities,” *American Sociological Review* 38 (Oct. 1973): 583–94. For other statements, see Pierre van den Berghe, *The Ethnic Phenomenon* (New York: Elsevier, 1981), 137–56; Sheldon Stryker, “Social Structure and Prejudice,” *Social Problems* 6 (Spring 1959): 340–54; Irwin D. Rinder, “Strangers in the Land: Social Relations in the Status Gap,” *Social Problems* 6 (Winter 1958–59): 253–60; Onkar S. Marwah and James H. Mittelman, “Alien Pariahs: Uganda’s Asians and Bangladesh’s Biharis” (unpublished paper presented at the 1973 annual meeting of the African Studies Association).

36. Bonacich, “A Theory of Middleman Minorities,” 583.

37. *Ibid.*, 589.

finds increasingly harsh measures, piled on one another, until, when all else fails, "final solutions" are enacted.³⁸

This attempt to place genocide on a solid economic foundation raises a host of interesting questions which it might be tempting to pursue. Here, however, I shall simply deal with the extent to which ethnic conflict rests on realistic economic competition.

Unlike modernization theories of conflict, class theories may acknowledge the diversity of conflict motives among various classes. In fact, they attribute to different classes different economic reasons for ethnic hostility. At least three levels of competition have been identified: businessman versus businessman, businessman versus customer, and worker versus worker, where each of these roles is occupied by members of opposing ethnic groups. These economic rivalries unquestionably exist. From time to time and from country to country, they may become significant, as we shall soon see. Nevertheless, their frequency and severity are in general far less pronounced than might be imagined. Diverse though these conflict motives may be, together they do not add up to the extent or level of ethnic hostility they purport to explain.

ECONOMIC RIVALRY AND THE ETHNIC DIVISION OF LABOR

The fundamental deficiency of the class theory of ethnic conflict is that it credits with conflict-producing power every rationally competitive interest that can conceivably be identified, while ignoring all of the forces that work against the emergence of such competitive interests. In fact, there are many forces that operate to inhibit competitive relationships and therefore blunt the impact of economically based conflict.

Foremost among these forces is the ethnic division of labor. By this phrase I mean ethnic specialization of occupation in general; the phenomenon is not confined to "labor" in the narrow sense. The concentration of particular ethnic groups in particular sectors of the economy and in particular occupations within sectors is a feature of many societies, but it reaches its apogee in the ex-colonial countries. There ethnic-occupational differentiation may be elaborately organized. A trade, a department of a factory, or a government office is not infrequently the preserve of a group completely unrepresented in a related trade, a neighboring department, or the next office.³⁹

38. Ibid., 592.

39. See, e.g., Burton Benedict, *Mauritius: The Problems of a Plural Society* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1965), 19–20, 26; Adrian C. Mayer, *Indians in Fiji* (London: Oxford Univ.

The origin and ongoing support of the ethnic division of labor are to be found in a network of interrelated conditions. Colonial policy often played an important part. Sometimes, but not always, specialization resulted from migration, internal or international. Colonial governments recruited or opened the door to immigrants whose services were thought indispensable to the performance of certain economic tasks. In Malaysia, Chinese were encouraged to enter to mine tin and to trade, Indians to tap rubber, Ceylonese to run the railroads. In Trinidad, Guyana, Fiji, and Mauritius, Indians were imported to cut sugar cane. Intracolonial migration for new economic ventures was also encouraged, and, because distances were shorter and boundaries did not have to be crossed, internal migration was easier to accomplish. At all events, much occupational specialization began in the colonial period, when, after all, many new occupations opened up. To a perhaps surprising extent, this specialization continues today.

The initial rationale for using ethnic specialists was generally economic. Quite often the migrants came from deprived backgrounds and deprived homelands, so that they were receptive to working in occupational ventures that others had no comparable incentives to enter or, much less frequently, receptive to working in established enterprises in need of cheaper labor. In Guyana and Trinidad, for example, conditions in the world sugar market made it difficult to pay the wages demanded by emancipated African labor; the importation of Indians was designed to depress wages or, as it was more delicately phrased, to provide "a fresh labouring population, to such an extent as to create competition for employment."⁴⁰ In that objective, it succeeded admirably, driving large numbers of Africans from the canefields to the towns and to the neighboring villages. Cane-cutting remains a largely Indian occupation.

Press, 1963), 94–95, 132; Hugh Tinker, *India and Pakistan: A Political Analysis*, rev. ed. (New York: Praeger, 1968), 155, 167; Morris David Morris, "The Effects of Industrialization on 'Race' Relations in India," in Guy Hunter, ed., *Industrialization and Race Relations* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), 146–52; Leonard Plotnicov, *Strangers to the City: Urban Man in Jos, Nigeria* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1967), 51; T. G. McGee, "The Cultural Role of Cities: A Case Study of Kuala Lumpur," *Journal of Tropical Geography* 17 (May 1963): 178–96, at 190–91; John F. Cady, "Burma," in Lennox A. Mills et al., eds., *The New World of Southeast Asia* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1949), 135–36, 146; Leo A. Despres, *Cultural Pluralism and Nationalist Politics in British Guiana* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1967), 141–43, 164; Merran Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class in Monrovia* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), 227–28.

40. "Resolutions of the House of Commons Committee on the West India Colonies," July 25, 1842, in Kenneth N. Bell and W. P. Morrell, eds., *Select Documents on British Colonial Policy, 1830–1860* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1928), 422.

Africans who work on the estates tend to be employed in the sugar factories, rather than in the fields.

Despite the economic rationale for the recruitment of ethnically specialized functionaries, justifications based on the alleged special qualifications of the group being recruited were prominently advanced. A dogma of ethnic skills developed, which asserted, for example, that, in Guyana and Trinidad, Indians had the right combination of thrift, industriousness, and docility for field work at low wages, that Malayalees made the very best clerks on Malaysian rubber estates, and that, in Bombay textile mills, Pathans and Punjabis were most suitable for heavy labor, Sikhs were the most outstanding artisans, and Muslims were the most accomplished weavers.⁴¹ These assessments of special ethnic aptitudes have survived. In this way, the residue of colonial policy is felt in sentiment, as well as in the perpetuation of early occupational specialties, long after the initial economic rationale has disappeared.

A variety of public policies and private practices impinging on credit, savings, land tenure, education, and bureaucratic recruitment also supports occupational specialization. If it is difficult for Chinese in Southeast Asia to acquire the land to become *padi* farmers, they will channel their energies in other directions. If the Lebanese in West Africa found it easier than Africans to get bank loans,⁴² this was a business advantage they could build on. If, on the other hand, South Indian Brahmins are prevented from obtaining civil service posts in proportion to their educational attainments, they will turn their attention to the private sector.⁴³ And, finally, it would seem that if wages can slowly be built into savings by plantation laborers, they may have an advantage over peasants in their ability to enter those business opportunities that require some small accumulation of capital.⁴⁴ (Indeed, one is tempted to postulate ethnic differences in paths to social mobility on this basis: laborers become traders, whereas peasants become bureaucrats.)

Cementing the ethnic division of labor is the preeminent role of ascriptive ties in economic relations in the developing world. Family and close friends—certainly members of the same ethnic group—tend to be instrumental in locating economic opportunities for kinsmen. Job-finding is by no means the impersonal search that it tends to be depicted as

41. Morris, "The Effect of Industrialization on 'Race' Relations in India," 154.

42. R. Bayley Winder, "The Lebanese in West Africa," in L. A. Fallers, ed., *Immigrants and Associations* (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), 122.

43. Tinker, *India and Pakistan*, 150.

44. See, e.g., Mayer, *Indians in Fiji*.

in the West. Families may hire relatives or steer them to friendly sources of employment. Job-finding is one of the most important functions performed by ethnic associations throughout the developing world. In part, of course, this may reflect a preference for ethnically homogeneous places of work. In any case, the result is exactly the kind of ethnic homogeneity of occupation and workplace that was noted earlier. Recruitment is often, therefore, to established occupational niches on an ascriptive basis.

For these reasons, certain occupations, certain offices or shops, become well known as the preserve of one ethnic group or another. Partly as a cause, partly as a consequence of these occupational preserves, aspirations are channeled accordingly. A sample of final-year secondary-school students in the Basque city of San Sebastian, Spain, revealed, for example, that 90 percent aimed at a career in the private sector, while *none* wished to enter the public service.⁴⁵ Presumably, these clear-cut preferences have something to do with both Castilian domination of the civil service and the many opportunities open to Basques in business.⁴⁶ Moreover, ethnically differentiated aspirations can be quite persistent. Business is a family tradition among non-Malay Muslim businessmen in Penang, Malaysia, but not among Malay businessmen. When both groups of businessmen were asked their aspirations for their children's future, 83 percent of the non-Malay Muslims preferred a business career for their children, but 78 percent of the Malay businessmen preferred salaried (including civil service) employment.⁴⁷ The preference for a secure salaried job survived even the entry of these respondents into business.

Many studies have documented ethnic differences in patterns of motivation and aspiration, as well as ethnic differences in the grading of occupational prestige.⁴⁸ The point would scarcely be worth making again, were it not so often overlooked in theories of ethnic conflict. Ethnic groups often have distinctly preferred occupational paths that are

45. Juan J. Linz and Amando de Miguel, "Within-Nation Differences and Comparisons: The Eight Spains," in Richard L. Merritt and Stein Rokkan, eds., *Comparing Nations* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1966), 304–06.

46. See Kenneth Medhurst, *The Basques* (London: Minority Rights Group, Report no. 9, 1972), 6.

47. Judith A. Nagata, "Ethnic Differentiation Within an Urban Muslim Mercantile Community in Malaysia," *Ethnicity* 4 (Dec. 1977): 380–400. The sample, however, was small.

48. See, e.g., Andrew M. Greeley, *Ethnicity in the United States: A Preliminary Reconnaissance* (New York: John Wiley, 1974), 178–85.

related to the structure of opportunities and to differences of culture and history. In Calabar, Nigeria, for example, Ibo were once slaves and Efik were once slave traders. Occupational differentiation persisted right up to the 1960s: Ibo were traders, clerical workers, and self-employed artisans; Efik tended to be farmers or salaried laborers. These differences were supported by divergent orientations toward education and work. Ibo, more than Efik, regard education as a means to a career, and Ibo believe work to be an important goal. Efik, on the other hand, regard education as an end more than a means. They have a more discriminating attitude toward work, distinguishing sharply between “slave” work and “respectable” work, eschewing occupations they regard as demeaning.⁴⁹ Similar distinctions are made by Guyanese Africans, eager to avoid economic behavior that is commonplace among neighboring East Indians, behavior which, if adopted by Africans, might involve backsliding to a lower status. Indians, it is said, are hardworking and thrifty, indeed excessively so: they “work cheap, eat cheap, and save and save. Black people can’t punish themselves so. If we punish ourselves like coolie man [the Indian], we slaves again.”⁵⁰

The point can be put more generally. Every group has defenses against certain kinds of work. Among the major sources of such defenses is the association of particular occupations with ethnic strangers whose ways seem unenviable. A clear example of this is reported from the Nowgong district of Assam, where Bengali peasants settled both before and after the partition of India in 1947. In this district, Muslim Bengalis from Mymensingh (now in Bangladesh) are said to be more proficient farmers and “more hard working than the native Assamese—even the cow of the Mymensingh peasant yields more milk than that of the local farmer,” and only the Bengalis grow vegetables for commercial sale, “usually at inordinately high prices. But the local [Assamese] population refuses to follow suit and share in the profits. And it is not because they are unaware of it; the example is at their doorstep.”⁵¹ The reason, according to Kusum Nair, is that Bengali farmers carry their vegetables to market on their heads, a method the Assamese find incompatible with their “dignity.” For the same reason, the Assamese decline employment on the tea

49. W. T. Morrill, “Immigrants and Associations: The Ibo in Twentieth Century Calabar,” in Fallers, ed., *Immigrants and Associations*, 154–87.

50. Quoted in Despres, *Cultural Pluralism and Nationalist Politics in British Guiana*, 93.

51. Kusum Nair, *Blossoms in the Dust: The Human Factor in Indian Development* (New York: Praeger, 1962), 139–40.

estates, leaving that field, too, to immigrants from other states.⁵² Clearly, non-economic calculations intrude into occupational choices in rural as well as urban areas.

These, then, are the bases of the continuing ethnic division of labor: policy, both colonial and contemporary; stereotypes of group qualifications for particular kinds of work; ascriptive factors in economic relations; and ethnic aspirations based on existing patterns of economic activity as well as on culturally conditioned preferences. The net result of the ethnic division of labor is greatly to reduce the occasions for economic competition and to channel competition within trades and occupations in an intraethnic direction.

BUSINESS RIVALRIES

To the extent that the ethnic division of labor produces occupational monopolies, of course some people will resent them. Inasmuch as it represents some groups disproportionately in some trades and constricts opportunities for other groups at points of entry, it can be a source of friction. But, at the same time, the division of labor limits (by definition) the competition of members of different ethnic groups who are in the same business. The business rivals envisioned by theories that predicate ethnic conflict on economic competition among members of opposing ethnic groups are far fewer than imagined. Specifically, the division of labor inhibits the growth of resentment of undercutting and other competitive practices allegedly based on the trading minorities' access to credit on favorable terms, their ability to restrain their own competition, and their use of cheap labor. And, while the division of labor skews the structure of economic opportunities, the very fact that it exists tends, as we have seen, to propel ethnic groups in the direction of complementary rather than competitive occupations. Except at times when great changes seem possible in the entire economic structure, a principal effect of all the ingredients that go into dividing occupations along ethnic lines is to make it "natural" to go into an established trade and "unnatural" to break into a wholly new one. In ethnic conflict, the ethnic division of labor is more a shield than a sword.

Moreover, when the division of labor breaks down as a result of convergence in occupational socialization, it does so primarily because of common educational experience. Among the sectors exposed to this—

52. Ibid., 140 n.5; B. G. Verghese et al., *Situation in Assam: Report of a Study Team* (New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, mimeo., 1980), 14.

the educated elites of the developing world—business is by no means the preferred occupational choice. In Trinidad, where there are data on the career preferences of upwardly mobile secondary students, business is the stated choice of only one percent of both black and East Indian male students.⁵³ In Sri Lanka, soon after independence, a sample of university entrants and a sample of males finishing secondary school were asked in different ways about occupational goals.⁵⁴ Only 3.8 percent of the first group preferred work in a private firm; while 15.6 percent favored self-employment, most of these were speaking of professional practice. Business was not a highly esteemed prospect. But government was: in the second group, the preference for government ranged between 75 and 99.9 percent, depending on the province. Nearly three-quarters of a Malaysian secondary-school sample preferred professional and technical careers. Less than a fifth chose “proprietor, manager, or executive,” a category that mixed salaried employment with independent business careers.⁵⁵ A survey of secondary-school students in the Ivory Coast found that business was among the least preferred occupations. Job security was the most important criterion of occupational desirability. Accordingly, government was the employer preferred by more than 80 percent of all students.⁵⁶

No doubt more than a handful of such students actually end up in business, whatever their initial preferences. But business is not the career in which competitive energies are invested by educated elites.⁵⁷ For the most part, the aspirations of the new elites produced by the schools of the developing societies are turned not toward entrepreneurship but toward careers in the bureaucracy.

To say that there are significant defenses against the emergence of

53. Vera Rubin and Marisa Zavalloni, *We Wish To Be Looked Upon: A Study of the Aspirations of Youth in a Developing Society* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1969), 77.

54. Murray A. Straus, “Family Characteristics and Occupational Choice of University Entrants as Clues to the Social Structure of Ceylon,” *University of Ceylon Review* 9 (Apr. 1951): 125–35; T. L. Green, “Education and Social Needs in Ceylon,” *University of Ceylon Review* 10 (Oct. 1952): 297–316.

55. Yoshimitsu Takei et al., “Aspirations and Expectations of West Malaysian Youth: Two Models of Social Class Values,” *Comparative Education Review* 17 (June 1973): 216–30.

56. Remi Clignet and Philip Foster, *The Fortunate Few: A Study of Secondary Schools and Students in the Ivory Coast* (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1966), 152–63.

57. Henry Bienen, *Kenya: The Politics of Participation and Control* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1974), 143–49; Donald Rothchild, “Kenya’s Africanization Program: Priorities of Development and Equity,” *American Political Science Review* 64 (Sept. 1970): 737–53.

competitive rivalries between ethnically differentiated groups of businessmen is not to imply that such rivalries do not exist. But, where business rivalries of this kind emerge, it is typically after the division of labor has broken down and a new class of ethnically differentiated entrepreneurs or traders has arisen, a class significant enough to have organized itself politically.

There are examples of this, but by no means everywhere. In Sri Lanka, a former activist of the extremist Sinhalese organization, the *Jathika Vimukthi Peramuna* (National Liberation Front), has recounted that its main financial support came from small businessmen in Colombo. These merchants often had Tamil rivals or had experienced difficulty obtaining credit from banks in which they sensed disproportionate Tamil influence.⁵⁸ In Uganda, the commodity boom of the 1940s helped create a new class of African petty traders, the overwhelming majority of them Baganda. These traders were vociferously anti-Indian. But, as would be expected from an ethnic division of labor, when a boycott of non-African businessmen was organized in 1959–60, few Africans except Baganda supported it, and many actively opposed it.⁵⁹ In Kenya, many of the restrictive measures enforced against Indians in the areas of trade and commerce have been sponsored by an active interest group of African entrepreneurs, the Kenya African Wholesalers and Distributors.⁶⁰ The Marwari business community all over India has encountered resistance to its presence where there is a well-organized class of indigenous commercial competitors, such as the Christian merchants in Kerala and the Chettians in Madras.⁶¹ Similarly well-organized Filipino entrepreneurs, represented by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce, have been the source of governmental action against Chinese merchants in the Philippines.⁶² But all of these examples must be matched against the numerous counterexamples of little or no hostility as a result of business rivalry,

58. Here and at later points in this chapter, I am drawing on my earlier paper, "Multi-racial Politics in the New States: Toward a Theory of Conflict," in Robert J. Jackson and Michael B. Stein, eds., *Issues in Comparative Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971), 164–80.

59. Dharam P. Ghai, "The Bugandan Trade Boycott: A Study in Tribal, Political, and Economic Nationalism," in Robert I. Rotberg and Ali A. Mazrui, eds., *Power and Protest in Black Africa* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), 758, 765–66.

60. Donald Rothchild, "Citizenship and National Integration: The Non-African Crisis in Kenya," *Studies in Race and Nations*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1969–70): 1–32, at 30 n.44.

61. Selig S. Harrison, *India: The Dangerous Decades* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1960), 114–22. See also Thomas Timberg, *The Marwaris* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1978).

62. Gerald A. McBeath, "Political Behavior of Ethnic Leaders," *Comparative Politics* 10 (Apr. 1978): 393–417.

including Lebanese in West Africa, Parsis and Marwaris elsewhere in India, Isma'ilis in Pakistan, Minangkabau in Indonesia, Dioula in West Africa, Moors in Senegal, and Hausa in Equatorial Africa. Business rivals are a prerequisite for business rivalries.

Sometimes the emergence of a new class of ethnically differentiated businessmen is not so much the cause as the effect of political action. That may have been the case with the Northern Nigerian traders, merchants, and contractors who, in the 1950s and '60s, gave their vigorous support to the regional government's policy of "Northernization."⁶³ This program was designed to free the North of dependence on Southern Nigerian civil servants and businessmen by giving preference in employment, contracts, scholarships, land, and loans to Northerners. The program flowed from a broad set of apprehensions about the prospects of Southern domination of Northern Nigerian life.⁶⁴ Early Northern businessmen were proponents of Northernization, from which they stood to gain. Yet the policy did not rest on anything so narrow as business rivalries. Indeed, what gave rise to it was not the existence of a powerful class of eager but resentful Northern businessmen, chafing at their inability to compete on equal terms, but a general perception that the *absence* of such a significant class was harmful to Northern interests as a whole. And the Northernization policy spurred the growth of such a class.

Much the same sequence could be documented for other countries that have adopted programs to give priority to businessmen of a particular ethnic group. The very purpose of such programs, as for example in Malaysia, is to break the ethnic division of labor and bring a new class of entrepreneurs into being by holding out competitive advantages for them. Such programs are not properly interpreted as the result of commercial rivalries. Instead, the commercial rivalries are the result of the programs. But, once begun, the programs are supported by emerging business rivals.

TRADERS AND CUSTOMERS

So far we have discussed only the rivalries asserted to exist between "middleman minorities" and their business competitors of other ethnic groups. While sometimes present and occasionally severe, these rivalries

63. Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*, 327–29; Walter Schwarz, *Nigeria* (New York: Praeger, 1968), 240.

64. James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1958), 360–63.

are not universal. Their incidence and importance have been exaggerated. I shall suggest later some reasons other than business rivalry for the hostility sometimes directed at trading minorities. Before moving from the business class to the working class, it is necessary to consider the tensions that are supposed to inhere in relations between businessmen belonging to one ethnic group and consumers, tenants, and clients belonging to another.

Here there is some evidence, much of it rural and most of it counter-intuitive. What it suggests, by and large, is that the supposed economic resentments of businessmen by their customers often do not exist. A major reason they do not exist is that non-economic values intrude into the calculations that customers and tenants are supposed to make. There are intervening variables between economic position and economic conflict along ethnic lines.

One of the persistent themes of the "middleman minority" literature is that alien traders who settle in rural areas to buy produce and sell seed and staples exploit the peasantry with whom they deal and build up a reservoir of hostility toward themselves. Yet, rather than resenting alien rural traders, peasants often welcome them. Partly, this is because trade is generally not an esteemed occupation in village society, despite its relatively high rewards. Then, too, it is easier to trade at arm's length with an ethnic stranger. And these traders provide highly valued services that, villagers have found from experience, less well-capitalized shops owned by members of their own ethnic group or by the government are in no position to provide. Among these services are transportation to get the crop to market, gunny sacks in which to transport it, and, perhaps most important, cash advances in anticipation of harvest.⁶⁵

These services may seem trivial to outsiders, but they are the lifeline tying peasant society to the cash economy. Stranger-groups in a position to meet these needs have often thrived unmolested in rural areas. The Arabs of Indonesia and the Indians of Burma are classic cases. Rural traders and moneylenders, the Arabs long served as the contact point of the Indonesian villager with the market. Supplying peasants with cash before harvest, buying their surplus crop after harvest, the Arabs charged usurious rates of interest. Yet Indonesian peasants tended to prefer the Arabs to alternative credit and marketing institutions offered by the government, which, while "reasonable" (especially in interest rates),

65. For the importance of some of these services to peasants, see Nair, *Blossoms in the Dust*, 77, 140.

were also more rigid. The Arabs were flexible in the amount they were willing to advance, more prepared to take risks, and more willing to lend money at the right moment to meet the cash exigencies of birth, marriage, and circumcision.⁶⁶ Similar reports emanate from Burma, where the government displaced Indian middlemen. "In the old times," complained a Burman farmer, "I sold my rice to an Indian trader. When I needed money for fertilizer or seed I could borrow. Now I must deal with the government. They refuse loans," and in addition their doors are not always open, as the Indian trader's shop was.⁶⁷

Anthropological field studies in Malaysia support the same conclusions and provide some detail on the quality of relations between Chinese middlemen and Malay peasants. Antagonism toward the Chinese in Malaysia has been formidable. Repeatedly, foreign observers and sections of the Malaysian elite have perceived widespread economically based discontent in the Malay villages. There surely has been antipathy and violence (though most of it in towns). But precisely what has been the role played by Malay envy of Chinese affluence and resentment of the trading class? Peter J. Wilson in his village study summarized the prevailing attitude:

... the Malays of Jendram Hilir readily admit the superiority of Chinese in economic affairs and, on the whole, they do not begrudge or envy the Chinese his paramount position. That many Chinese are wealthy whereas most Malays are poor is indeed a topic of concern and self-pity for Malays, but the skill of Chinese businessmen and their ability to meet all the demands placed on them is often the subject of admiration on the part of village Malays. In the same way, the evident ability of the Chinese to work harder than the Malays is admitted and admired.⁶⁸

Malays frequently prefer to deal with Chinese shopkeepers who, because of their strong financial position and wholesale relationships, can provide customers with goods on credit, small loans, lower prices, and a wider variety of goods than many Malay shopkeepers are able to provide. Similar considerations also account for the frequent preference

66. See Justus M. van der Kroef, "The Arabs of Indonesia," *Middle East Journal* 7 (Summer 1953): 311-17.

67. Quoted in the *Washington Post*, Oct. 9, 1978. To the same effect regarding Indian traders in South Africa, see Leo Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie: Race, Class, and Politics in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1965), 300.

68. *A Malay Village and Malaysia: Social Values and Rural Development* (New Haven: HRAF Press, 1967), 26.

of Malay peasants for Chinese commodity dealers to market their produce.⁶⁹

It is quite widely felt by Malays that Chinese success comes at a high moral price. The Chinese emphasis on economic activity is seen as excessively single-minded. It ignores religious values and requires sacrifices that prevent the maintenance of both ritual cleanliness and personal cultivation. Chinese are only rarely classified as *halus* (civilized, refined, or cultivated). Usually they are regarded as *kasar* (crude or uncultured).⁷⁰ There has not been much desire in the villages either to emulate or expropriate the Chinese. When a Malay politician was attempting to persuade a group of *padi* farmers that a state marketing authority would bring them benefits, he was met with the persistent question, "Will it provide gunny sacks the way the Chinese do?"⁷¹

Malay village society possesses a number of mechanisms that operate to limit economic aspirations, including those that might put Malays in economic conflict with Chinese. Since work relations are also personal relations,⁷² there are important satisfactions besides profit to be derived from them. Economic success, moreover, is only partly viewed as a function of individual effort; the concept of *rezeki*, or resignation to one's economic fate, attributes a large part of success or failure to divine ordination. Much of the remainder is attributed to the action or inaction of government. Finally, there is a decided ambivalence about change, which manifests itself in the parental desire to see children succeed without taking extensive risks or really abandoning village ways for a new lifestyle.⁷³ This conservatism has the effect of restricting the range of ambitions for social mobility and, concomitantly, of retarding ethno-economic conflict.

The studies that suggest these conclusions were not carried out in particularly remote or isolated villages. All of them were conducted on the relatively modernized West Coast of Malaya, where contact with the Chinese is quite regular and not always friendly. One of the older studies was carried out in the Batu Pahat district of Johore state—an area where

69. M. G. Swift, *Malay Peasant Society in Jelebu* (New York: Humanities Press, 1965), 71–72; Kenelm O. L. Burridge, "Racial Relations in Johore," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 2 (May 1957): 151–68, at 157.

70. These themes run through both Wilson, *A Malay Village and Malaysia*, and Burridge, "Racial Relations in Johore."

71. Interview, Alor Star, Malaysia, Jan. 11, 1968.

72. Wilson, *A Malay Village and Malaysia*, 106–07, 132, 147–48.

73. *Ibid.*, 106; Swift, *Malay Peasant Society in Jelebu*, 28–30, 161–62.

fierce ethnic rioting occurred in 1945. Discussing the hostility in Batu Pahat, K.O.L. Burrridge points out that “only those Malays who have come into significant contact with European thought—those with long experience in the administration, or those who have been educated in the United Kingdom—feel, or see, that Chinese control of commerce and economic life creates an issue between Chinese and Malays.”⁷⁴ The ethnic violence, however, was the work of others:

As far as the evidence goes those who were capable of appreciating the economic issues had no hand in making the incidents. On the contrary, they seem to have been taken by surprise and thereafter did their utmost to restore order. And action was taken by the peasants themselves, the Malays and Malaysians, who thought little of economics and who felt that other more important issues were at stake.⁷⁵

Burrridge notes, quite accurately, that this situation presents a paradox only because in the West “it has become increasingly relevant to seek the economic issues which are considered to lie ‘below’ a conflict capable of being expressed in a variety of other terms.”⁷⁶

The point about Malay aspirations can be generalized. We have been unduly accustomed to think of economic ambition as being unaffected by countervailing values like sociability, resignation, and the fulfillment of religious obligations. We are also inclined to think of aspirations for improved status and income as being boundless. In point of fact, there is much evidence to suggest that economic aspirations among peasants and urban workers in the developing world are generally quite modest, certainly far more modest than those of their middle-class counterparts.⁷⁷ Moderate aspiration levels tend to inhibit resentment of the more advantaged ethnic strangers with whom they deal.

Even in conditions of extreme instability, groups bent on violence have often avoided inflicting injury on “middleman minorities.” Greek traders in the Southern Sudan were left completely unharmed in the

74. Burrridge, “Racial Relations in Johore,” 157.

75. Ibid., 159. “Malaysians” here refers to Malays of Indonesian origin. This is different from the later usage, in which the term includes citizens of Malaysia irrespective of ethnic origin.

76. Ibid., 157.

77. See the evidence assembled by Joan M. Nelson, *Migrants, Urban Poverty, and Instability in New Nations* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Center for International Affairs, Occasional Paper no. 22, 1969), 45–53; Nair, *Blossoms in the Dust*, 29, 31; Raymond T. Smith, *The Negro Family in British Guiana* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), 205. Compare aspirations of upwardly mobile secondary-school students reported by Rubin and Zavalloni, *We Wish To Be Looked Upon*.

widespread rioting of 1955.⁷⁸ If there had been old scores to settle against this trading minority, there was ample opportunity to do so then. When Indians were attacked in Burma in the severe riots of 1938, the main victims were Indian Muslims, despite the fact that the landlord class in Lower Burma was heavily composed of Indian Hindus who had profited inordinately from the depression.⁷⁹ Assamese have rioted against Bengalis in Assam on a number of occasions since independence. So serious has this violence often been that in 1960 some 45,000 Bengalis were forced to flee Assam for other states, and in 1972 some estimates of homeless ran to 25,000 or more.⁸⁰ In the most severe violence of 1979–83, thousands of Bengalis were killed.⁸¹ There is some evidence of Assamese-Bengali rivalry in the professions, government service, and, in some localities, small-scale trade.⁸² For such reasons, the conflict has been viewed as “essentially economic.”⁸³ But Marwaris, not Bengalis, control Assam’s wholesale trade, industry, rice mills, oil mills, godowns, and tea marketing.⁸⁴ Yet this trading minority *par excellence* has not (with some minor exceptions) been the victim of Assamese violence in any way comparable to that inflicted on the Bengalis. Participants in ethnic violence have more often than not passed up the chance to attack trading minorities.

From time to time, however, ethnic groups with a strong position in trade and commerce have been the victims of mass violence. But the available evidence suggests it is a distortion to attribute these attacks to economic resentment. What emerges from the data with much greater frequency is political resentment against the groups so attacked. When for once the Marwaris were the victims of a very mild Assamese assault, in 1968 (compared to the fierce attacks on Bengalis, this scarcely qualified as a riot), it was Assamese grievances against the central government, with which the Marwaris were identified, that formed the most

78. Government of Sudan, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Disturbances in the Southern Sudan During August 1955* (Khartoum: Government of Sudan, 1956), 78.

79. Government of Burma, *Final Report of the Riot Inquiry Committee* (Rangoon: Government Printer, 1939), Appendix XI.

80. *The Statesman* (Calcutta), Oct. 19, 1972; *ibid.*, Oct. 30, 1976.

81. In one month of 1983 alone, 3,600 Bengalis were killed. *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Hong Kong), Mar. 24, 1983, p. 5.

82. Charu Chandra Bhandari, *Thoughts on Assam Disturbances* (Rajghat, India: A. B. Sarva Seva Sangh Prakashan, 1961), 12–14.

83. K. C. Chakravarti, “Bongal Kheda Again,” *Economic Weekly* (Bombay), July 30, 1960, p. 1193.

84. For figures, see Bhandari, *Thoughts on Assam Disturbances*, 19.

prominent theme.⁸⁵ The identification of the Biharis of Bangladesh with the West Pakistanis is what aroused the Bengalis against them,⁸⁶ much as the open identification of the Chinese in Thailand with the Kuomintang regime helped bring on the violence against them in Bangkok in 1945.⁸⁷ The anti-Chinese violence in Indonesia that followed the attempted coup of 1965 was linked to the support given by some Chinese to the Indonesian Communists and to their alleged ties to China at a time when China was greatly feared.⁸⁸ Anti-Chinese violence in Malaysia has been connected to elections and other political events with ethnic overtones,⁸⁹ and the great anti-Bengali violence in Assam that began in 1979 was precipitated by the calling of elections in which it was feared that Bengalis from Bangladesh would have a disproportionate impact. These cases all partake of political apprehension, often with a foreign component, far more than they evidence mass economic jealousy. If patterns of violence reflect the "inevitable conflict of interest between buyer and seller, renter and landlord, client and professional,"⁹⁰ they have yet to exhibit this relationship.⁹¹

Attitudinal data seem to show the same gap between mass and elite sentiments toward commercial minorities that evidence of actual behavior suggests. African university students, questioned about the trading minorities in their countries—Indians in Uganda, Lebanese in Nigeria, Ghana, and Senegal, Armenians in Ethiopia—were generally hostile toward them, most often on economic grounds.⁹² Even here, there is unevenness in the responses: a significant fraction of the Ethiopian sample attributed various positive traits to the Armenians.⁹³ Still, these univer-

85. Dilip Mukerjee, "Assam Reorganization," *Asian Survey* 9 (Apr. 1969): 297–311, at 308.

86. Marwah and Mittelman, "Alien Pariahs: Uganda's Asians and Bangladesh's Biharis."

87. G. William Skinner, *Chinese Society in Thailand* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1957), 278–79.

88. Cynthia H. Enloe, *Ethnic Conflict and Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), 196 n.15.

89. Horowitz, "Multiracial Politics in the New States," 177–78.

90. Bonacich, "A Theory of Middleman Minorities," 589.

91. There is a possible exception in the only example of violence cited by Bonacich: the anti-Indian riots in Durban, South Africa, in 1949. However, much more was at work in Durban than shopkeeper-customer tension. See Maurice Webb and Kenneth Kirkwood, *The Durban Riots and After* (pamphlet; Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, n.d.); Union of South Africa, *Report of the Commission of Enquiry into Riots in Durban* (Cape Town: Cape Times, Ltd., 1949); Kuper, *An African Bourgeoisie*, 301.

92. Klineberg and Zavalloni, *Nationalism and Tribalism Among African Students*, 183–87.

93. *Ibid.*, 185, 304.

sity students tended to dislike the trading groups they were asked about, and usually described them as “exploiting,” “money-minded,” or “dishonest.”

There are no cross-national data to test the extent to which these elite attitudes are shared by members of other social classes, who are likely to come into contact with commercial groups solely as customers and without having been educated to believe, as Burrige puts it, that “control of commerce and economic life creates an issue” between ethnic groups. There is, however, a nonelite survey of ethnic relations in Sierra Leone that casts light on this question.⁹⁴ It provides extensive data on attitudes toward Syrian and Lebanese traders and toward other Africans.

Because of the Lebanese “tendency to monopolize commercial activities,” John Dawson hypothesized before he conducted his survey “that attitudes to Syrians and Lebanese might be unfavorable.”⁹⁵ Responses to the social distance scale Dawson administered did indeed rank the Syrians and Lebanese very low, indicating the reluctance of Africans to enter into relationships involving intimacy with those groups.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, the general attitude displayed toward Syrians and Lebanese was markedly friendly. Well over half of all African respondents evinced favorable attitudes toward the Syrians and Lebanese, citing their propensity to learn local languages, marry African women, provide financial assistance, and to deport themselves in ways calculated to gain social approval, despite their relative affluence.⁹⁷

Dawson asked a much smaller sample of Sierra Leone Africans, “Which group causes the most trouble?”⁹⁸ Twenty-four respondents agreed that the Temne did; five (all Temne) suggested the Mende; and only three named the Lebanese and Syrians. Dawson lists about a dozen more or less typical reasons cited: the Creoles (descendants of repatriated former slaves) were seen as too haughty, the Mende too exclusive and domineering, the Temne too aggressive. Not one of the listed responses referred to economic grievances against any named ethnic group.

The hypothesis that trading minorities and their clienteles have an

94. John Dawson, “Race and Inter-Group Relations in Sierra Leone,” part 2, *Race* 6 (Jan. 1965): 217–321.

95. *Ibid.*, 218.

96. *Ibid.*, 224. For the unusual rank order of statements in Dawson’s study, see *ibid.*, 223.

97. *Ibid.*, 218.

98. *Ibid.*, 219–22.

“inevitable conflict of interest” thus rests on a number of dubious assumptions. Among these are the assumptions that traders are seen by their customers as exploiters rather than as expeditors, that those customers are motivated by economic goals that outweigh other kinds of goals, and that their aspirations are so strong as to impel them to resentment. There is a certain woodenness about these assumptions, postulating as they do rather automatic reactions to a given economic situation.

In fact, ethnically differentiated traders appear to thrive in the developing world because they are seen as more useful than harmful, because aspirations are limited, and because economic motives are not necessarily the mainsprings of all ethnic action—a point we have noted in various ways for the Efik, the Assamese, the Guyanese Africans, the Malays, and the various Sierra Leoneans. Ethnic conflict traceable to the divergent interests of merchant and customer, dealer and farmer, even landlord and tenant, seems relatively rare, in spite of the assessments of Western theorists and educated elites in the developing countries themselves that these are (or ought to be) conflict-prone relationships.

WORKING-CLASS COMPETITION

If there is little evidence of economically motivated hostility between traders and their customers, there would seem to be more reason to expect economic competition among urban working classes in ethnically divided societies. Here, after all, the conflict motive is competitive rather than redistributive. Workers are presumably competing for the same scarce jobs and wages, just as businessmen compete among themselves for the same opportunities. Aspiration levels need not be very high for collisions of ethnic interests to occur. All that is required is for members of opposing ethnic groups to be in the same labor market, especially if one group is preferred by employers over another because it sells its labor cheaper or performs some task more efficiently (which amounts to the same thing).

The problem with this line of argument is that this simple precondition is very often absent. Competing labor pools, each ethnically based, do not generally exist. Significant ethnic disparities in wage rates are particularly difficult to find. If business rivalries are not a pervasive source of ethnic conflict, working-class rivalries are even less so.

To be sure, competing labor pools and ethnic wage differentials did exist historically, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During that period, in the industrial countries and in the colonies, migrant labor

was used to undercut existing supplies of indigenous labor. Consequently, it is possible to identify ethnic hostility that was clearly grounded in working-class rivalry. For example, in Guyana, as we saw earlier, East Indian indentured labor was imported to depress wages on the sugar plantations and later in other enterprises. By the turn of the twentieth century, about half of the Indians lived off the estates. There they were used as cheaper alternatives to urban black labor.⁹⁹ Among the results were a serious riot by black laborers in Georgetown in 1905 and a protest movement against further Indian immigration.¹⁰⁰ The Guyanese case was exceptionally blatant, because of the mercantile origins of the colony and the extent to which the British equated the welfare of the colony with the welfare of the sugar estates. Nonetheless, other colonial and Western examples of labor importation and manipulation can be found during the same period.¹⁰¹ In Burma, for example, the British had used Indian Telugu longshoremen on the Rangoon docks. Serious violence occurred in 1930 when British employers brought in Burman labor to replace the striking Telugus.¹⁰²

After about the 1930s, however, this kind of engineered competition everywhere became much more difficult to arrange. Restrictions on emigration and immigration, some of the latter restrictions due to pressures like those emanating from the Afro-Guyanese, constricted the supply of tractable competitors available for undercutting. The growth of trade unions in a number of countries bolstered the power of those already employed and standardized at least some wage rates. The opening up of new economic opportunities, to which members of previously competing ethnic groups could gravitate, permitted ethnic specialization and inhibited undercutting. Rarely can one now identify competing ethnic labor pools or the kind of ethnic conflict associated with undercutting on a large scale.

Rarely does not, however, mean never. The conflict between Ivoirians and Mossi immigrants in the Ivory Coast is a legacy of colonial labor policy. Imported from Upper Volta by the French, the Mossi are em-

99. See, e.g., *The Creole* (Georgetown), Jan. 27, 1906.

100. Ibid., Dec. 30, 1905; ibid., Apr. 28, 1906. During these riots, there were proposals to use East Indians against black rioters.

101. The examples cited by Bonacich, "A Theory of Ethnic Antagonism," are nearly all from this period.

102. Maurice Collis, *Trials in Burma*, 2d ed. (London: Faber & Faber, 1945), 141–47; E. L. F. Andrew, *Indian Labour in Rangoon* ([Calcutta?]: Oxford Univ. Press, 1933), 279–92.

ployed in a wide range of low-level occupations, as agricultural workers and urban menials and domestics. So numerous are they and so prevalent throughout the lowest rungs of urban wage labor that laborers of other ethnic groups could scarcely avoid meeting competition from the Mossi, who are regarded as especially hardworking and reliable. In 1969, they were attacked in Abidjan. The attacks were led by associations of unemployed Ivorian laborers.¹⁰³ Significantly, the riot followed a dispute at an employment exchange, where a prospective employer, a Frenchman, had apparently stated a preference for a Mossi employee.

This, then, was a clear case of ethnically defined, competing labor pools and of violence flowing from the competition. But such cases are exceptional. The 1969 violence in the Ivory Coast is the only post-colonial ethnic riot I have found that can be attributed to working-class economic competition. Such competition is occasionally reported, usually involving group rivalries over jobs in modern sector enterprises, in factories and on the docks.¹⁰⁴ But what is surprising is not that such competition exists, but that it is not the major and most intense theme of urban ethnic politics. After all, cities in the developing world are growing at rates of 5 to 8 percent annually, labor forces generally even faster.¹⁰⁵ Virtually everywhere, modern sector urban employment is growing at slower rates, generally not exceeding 5 percent per annum. It might be expected that the job scarcity reflected in the gap between these two rates of growth would give rise to a significant incidence of economically based ethnic conflict. Yet the evidence for such a development is conspicuous by its paucity. As I have said, such competition rarely breaks out into violence, although urban ethnic violence is by no means uncommon in Asia and Africa. Similarly, working-class job competition rarely plays a prominent part in urban ethnic movements, although these move-

103. J. L., "New Developments in French-Speaking Africa," *Civilisations* 20 (Winter 1970): 270–78. I have discussed this riot in Donald L. Horowitz, "Direct, Displaced, and Cumulative Ethnic Aggression," *Comparative Politics* 6 (Oct. 1973): 1–16, at 10.

104. See David Parkin, *Neighbours and Nationals in an African City Ward* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 31–33; J. S. La Fontaine, *City Politics: A Study of Leopoldville, 1962–63* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), 114–15; Richard Stren, "Factional Politics and Central Control in Mombasa, 1960–1969," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 4 (Winter 1970): 33–56, at 40–41.

105. Joan M. Nelson, *Access to Power: Politics and the Urban Poor in Developing Nations* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1979), 48; Nelson, "The Urban Poor: Disruption or Political Integration in Third World Cities?" *World Politics* 22 (Apr. 1970): 393–414. I am indebted to Joan Nelson for a helpful discussion of urban migration and employment.

ments, too, are not uncommon. The ethnic concerns of urban working classes typically run to other matters.

These concerns are heavily symbolic. They relate particularly to the "symbols of prestige,"¹⁰⁶ such as the name of a town and whether it connotes "ownership" by one group or another.¹⁰⁷ Such matters are especially significant as between groups stamped, respectively, as indigenous and immigrant. There are high rates of rural-to-urban migration in Asia and Africa. Due to internal or previous international migration, indigenous groups in many cities feel swamped by immigrants. Indigenous-minority cities include, for example, Bombay, Freetown, Karachi, Abidjan, Phnom Penh, Mombasa, Kuala Lumpur, Kumasi, Singapore, Jos, Bangalore, and Kinshasa. A common preoccupation in urban politics is the relationship of groups to the locale, with indigenes claiming the right to be free of "domination" by immigrants (and sometimes the right to expel them) and immigrants claiming the right to equal treatment (and sometimes communal autonomy or exemption from certain uniform requirements).¹⁰⁸ The relationship of groups to the city is often expressed symbolically. In one Nigerian town, an issue that divided ethnic groups was "the choice of armorial bearings"; those claiming indigenous status preferred the crossed swords of their traditional ruler, while their rivals wanted "an emblem symbolizing all the three major ethnic groups."¹⁰⁹ Exactly the same issue—the coat of arms—divided Fijians and Indians on the other side of the globe in the town of Suva, in Fiji.¹¹⁰

Such themes of ethnic inclusion and exclusion emerge far more prominently and uniformly than any issue of labor competition. Summing up the situation of Indian cities with nativist movements, Mary Fainsod Katzenstein concludes: "Conspicuous by its absence in all localities is

106. William John Hanna and Judith Lynne Hanna, "The Political Structure of Urban-Centered African Communities," in Horace Miner, ed., *The City in Modern Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1967), 155.

107. Ibid., 155–56; P. C. Lloyd, "Ethnicity and the Structure of Inequality in a Nigerian Town in the Mid-1950s," in Abner Cohen, ed., *Urban Ethnicity* (London: Tavistock, 1974), 242–44.

108. La Fontaine, *City Politics*, 27; Aristide R. Zolberg, *One-Party Government in the Ivory Coast* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1964), 41, 202–05; Lloyd, "Ethnicity and the Structure of Inequality in a Nigerian Town," 240–44; Stren, "Factional Politics and Central Control in Mombasa," 40; Peter C. W. Gutkind, "Accommodation and Conflict in an African Peri-Urban Area," *Anthropologica*, n.s., 4 (1962): 163–74, at 169; Abner Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), chap. 5.

109. Lloyd, "Ethnicity and the Structure of Inequality in a Nigerian Town," 241.

110. Milne, *Politics in Ethnically Bipolar States*, 129–30.

any organized protest between ethnic groups over factory and working-class jobs."¹¹¹ A major reason is the segmented labor market that results from the ethnic division of labor.¹¹² What this means, as suggested earlier, is that workers of different ethnic groups are often steered by helpful friends, patrons, kinsmen, and ethnic associations toward employment in enterprises where members of the same group already have a foothold. Job competition is likely to be intraethnic.¹¹³ The evidence is abundant that interethnic contacts and ties are concentrated in the upper and middle classes.¹¹⁴ At the working-class level, neighborhoods tend to be particularly clustered along ethnic lines, friendships to be intraethnic, marriage endogamous. All of the interpersonal relationships that might lead to new employment opportunities tend, like the workplace itself, to ethnic concentration. That is not to say that any of these relationships is ethnically watertight. But the ethnic insularity of working-class life in the developing world is a strong impediment to interethnic competition. And even where such interethnic competition does emerge, it is not usually in all sectors in a given stratum, as in the rivalry with the Mossi in Abidjan, but rather in a single line of work or even a single factory. In an ethnically divided society, the labor market is ethnically segmented.

There is a further factor cushioning job competition. Rates of rural-to-urban migration in most of Asia and Africa are high, and in most

111. Katzenstein, *Ethnicity and Equality*, 198. In Bombay, where the Shiv Sena, a strong "nativist" movement, emerged in the 1960s, employment data showed the indigenous Maharashtrians to be overrepresented in manual jobs. Katzenstein, "The Consequences of Migration: Nativism, Symbolic Politics, and National Integration" (unpublished paper presented at the 1973 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association), 16–18. There may have been job competition at work in Bombay, but not at the working-class level.

112. Cf. Ozay Mehmet, "Manpower Planning and Labour Markets in Developing Countries: A Case Study of West Malaysia," *Journal of Development Studies* 8 (Jan. 1972): 277–89.

113. A study of the workings of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination sheds some interesting light on ethnic competition for jobs. The Commission acted only on the basis of complaints about job discrimination. The study found that the complaints did not at all mirror the structure of the whole labor market. Rather, the complaints were disproportionately aimed at firms that already had a substantial black labor force. These, after all, were the firms in which black job-seekers would know of and look for opportunities. Leon Mayhew, *Law and Equal Opportunity* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), 159, 165.

114. See, e.g., William J. Hanna and Judith Lynne Hanna, "Polyethnicity and Political Integration in Umuahia and Mbale," in Robert T. Daland, ed., *Comparative Urban Research* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1969), 179; R. D. Grillo, "Ethnic Identity and Social Stratification on a Kampala Housing Estate," in Cohen, ed., *Urban Ethnicity*, 173; A. F. A. Husain and A. Farouk, *Social Integration of Industrial Workers in Khulna* (Dacca: Univ. of Dacca, 1963), 47, 129.

countries migrants retain their ties to rural areas.¹¹⁵ In much of Africa, the intention is usually to return home after meeting economic goals. Visits are paid to home villages. Land may be retained in the village, families left there. Under these circumstances, the commitment to staying in the city is conditional, and an economic failure in the city may not be disastrous. In Mbale, Uganda, where many Kenyans are employed in manual labor, "they have preempted some jobs, [but] the indigenes have not been seriously hurt economically because they can easily return to farming."¹¹⁶ In the words of a Ugandan civil servant, "The people here don't have to work; they go dig."¹¹⁷ The same is said of non-Kikuyu residents of Nairobi, which is viewed as a Kikuyu city. They "perceive the necessity to have an alternative in the rural areas if they should lose jobs in the city (or be forced to leave)."¹¹⁸ The continuing availability of rural employment for urban dwellers who do not fare well in job competition in town is a prospect that prevents job competition from being a major source of working-class ethnic conflict.

Here, however, we are back to the same puzzle regarding working-class behavior. If the motivation for ethnic conflict at the mass level is not primarily economic, then what is the motivation? For it is quite clear that the working class engages in ethnic conflict. Most ethnic riots, for example, are urban, and many of the participants are working class.¹¹⁹ What moves them to political action, peaceful or violent, against ethnic strangers?

The issue is presented sharply by an essay of Peter C. Lloyd, describing ethnic politics in the Nigerian town of Warri in the mid-1950s.¹²⁰ This was the town in which ethnic groups contested the choice of armorial bearings. After noting the absence of ethnic tensions in factories and offices, Lloyd proceeds to pinpoint the divisive issues in Warri, which rather clearly relate to whether the indigenous Itsekiri Yoruba still

115. See Joan M. Nelson, "Sojourners Versus New Urbanites—Causes and Consequences of Temporary Versus Permanent Cityward Migration in Developing Countries," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 24 (July 1976): 721–57.

116. Hanna and Hanna, "The Political Structure of Urban-Centered African Communities," 167.

117. Quoted in *ibid.*

118. Marc Howard Ross, *Grass Roots in an African City: Political Behavior in Nairobi* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1975), 131.

119. See, e.g., the *Times of India* (New Delhi), Apr. 16, 1969, for an occupational breakdown on participants in the Bombay riots of February 1969. See also Ghanshyam Shah, "Communal Riots in Gujarat," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number, Jan. 1970, p. 197.

120. "Ethnicity and the Structure of Inequality in a Nigerian Town."

“own” the town as against their migratory competitors, the Urhobo Edo and the Ibo. One dispute was over whether the traditional Itsekiri ruler should be given a title that might imply he “was paramount ruler over the entire Province—there being no Urhobo or Ibo ruler of comparable status.”¹²¹ This dispute flared into violence when Urhobo mobs attacked an Itsekiri procession.

The intensity of these conflicts Lloyd finds it difficult to explain. He is especially at a loss to understand “What had the Itsekiri common man to gain from these struggles?”¹²² Itsekiri fears of “Urhobo superiority”¹²³ seemed greatly exaggerated, if measured by the current threat posed by the Urhobo. There was “little immediate likelihood that the Itsekiri would lose their ethnic identity But they were encouraged to believe that a diminution in status of [their ruler] and his chiefs would be a substantial threat to their own separate identity. It is such fears which seem to produce mob violence—violence which expresses no specific or well articulated interests, at least of the mob.”¹²⁴

Clearly, the motives of the Itsekiri mob puzzle Lloyd, but he senses a resolution of his puzzlement, which he expresses in a concluding sentence: “. . . one ought always to look closely to see which individuals gain from exploiting this tension and study the means by which they seek to gain their ends.”¹²⁵ In Lloyd’s account, the principal gainers have been the Itsekiri ruler and his chiefs.¹²⁶ Like other writers, Lloyd seems to feel obligated to choose between realistic economic competition and elite manipulation as explanations for ethnic hostility. Ultimately, he puts the puzzling behavior of “the Itsekiri common man” down to his susceptibility to manipulation by his rulers.

As I have suggested earlier, such a conclusion is really in the nature of a presumption about mass political motivation, one which ought not to be indulged lightly. I do not pretend to know, of course, what was troubling the Itsekiri common man, but his situation and behavior seem to have much in common with the situation and behavior of the common man of many other ethnic groups. There are clues to alternative explanations for Itsekiri behavior.

Two features of the Itsekiri reaction to the Urhobo threat particularly

121. *Ibid.*, 244.

122. *Ibid.*, 248.

123. *Ibid.*

124. *Ibid.*, 249.

125. *Ibid.*, 249–50.

126. *Ibid.*, 248.

trouble Lloyd. The Itsekiri seemed to be expressing ethnic hostility out of all proportion to the danger that actually confronted them, and they seemed to focus heavily on what the future might hold for them. Their fears, in other words, were not realistic. This leads Lloyd to infer that the Itsekiri elite had incited its ethnic followers and used them to defend narrow interests that were not really their own. Yet the presence of reactions out of all proportion to the threat that arouses them and the singularly pessimistic concern about what seemingly insignificant present circumstances portend are data that may point in a quite different direction. These apprehensions are strong signs that the roots of mass antagonism may reside in the domain of psychology, rather than in the realm of material interest.

This is not the time to pursue this line of argument any further. I intend to explore the whole subject of group anxieties, returning to Lloyd's dilemma, in the next chapter. What is important now is simply to hold open the prospect of alternative explanations for mass ethnic behavior and to avoid making premature judgments about the motivation of the "common man" that must rest ineluctably on either economic competition or elite manipulation.

GROUP SACRIFICES OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS

If, instead of examining the conflict behavior of particular social strata or classes within unranked ethnic groups, we shift our attention to the actions of groups as a whole, it remains difficult to tie significant aspects of ethnic conflict to economic interests. On the contrary, what emerges quite clearly is the willingness of ethnic groups to sacrifice economic interest for the sake of other kinds of gain.

Consider, for example, the extensive economic sacrifices ethnic separatists are frequently prepared to make for their goals. As we shall see in Chapter 6, most secessionist movements in Africa and Asia have involved regions that stood to lose economically from autonomy or independence. Nor is this phenomenon confined to the developing world. The statement of a French Canadian separatist would be echoed heartily by ethnic separatists in many countries: "English Canada puts up with a lower standard of living in order to remain independent of the United States. Why don't they credit us with the same sort of pride?"¹²⁷

Of course, many ethnic separatist movements would gain in strength

127. Quoted by Mordecai Richler, "Quebec Oui, Ottawa Non," *Encounter*, Dec. 1964, p. 83.

if secession promised economic as well as political benefits. Survey data in some potentially secessionist regions in the West suggest that among the factors preventing separatist movements there from gaining majority support are the anticipated economic costs of secession.¹²⁸ But the more important point for present purposes is not that economic considerations may hamper ethnic separatism, but rather that many separatist groups all over the developing world have proceeded to fight for ethnic autonomy *despite* the costs.

Now, to be sure, we can also analyze secessionist movements by strata. When we do, we may find that, whereas the secessionist region as a whole often stands to suffer a decline in per capita income if it goes its own way, the secessionist elite stands to gain from the many new opportunities that will open up. Once again, it is easier to explain elite behavior on the basis of straightforward rational interest than to understand the wellsprings of mass motivation. But before we abandon ourselves to the conclusion that elite interests alone are decisive, perhaps we ought to consider a case in which elite interests were overridden by mass concerns that ran counter to them.

The case concerns the regional autonomy controversy in Sri Lanka. There, in the 1950s and '60s, the Ceylon Tamils, concentrated in the North and East of the island, were demanding some form of regional autonomy in their areas. The demand was a reaction to the growth of a powerful Sinhalese ethnic movement that had resulted in the imposition of Sinhala as the official language. There was a growing sense among Tamils that they were about to lose their advantages in government employment and in other activities where their educational head-start had placed them in a favorable position. Accordingly, they hoped at least to be able to gain control over their own areas and, by running their own administration, to have positions available for civil servants they thought would be displaced from the South.¹²⁹

128. See, e.g., Maclean's surveys cited in *ibid.*, 79. Cf. H. M. Begg and J. A. Stewart, "The Nationalist Movement in Scotland," *Journal of Contemporary History* 6 (1971): 135–52, at 150; Manfred W. Wenner, "A Comparative Analysis of Modern Separatist Movements: Examples from Western Europe and the Middle East" (unpublished paper presented at the 1969 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association), 12.

129. For general treatments of ethnic politics in Sri Lanka, see Robert N. Kearney, *The Politics of Ceylon (Sri Lanka)* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1973); W. Howard Wriggins, *Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1960); S. Arasaratnam, *Ceylon* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964); B. H. Farmer, *Ceylon: A Divided Nation* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963); Robert N. Kearney, *Communalism and Language in the Politics of Ceylon* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1967). This discussion of the regional autonomy controversy is drawn from interviews I conducted in Colombo in 1968 and again in 1980.

Beginning with S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, who rode to power in 1956 on a wave of militant Sinhalese nationalism, Sinhalese politicians have been attracted by the idea of “solving” the “Tamil problem” at a stroke by various schemes of decentralization. Implicit in many of these schemes was a grant of *de facto* linguistic autonomy in the Tamil areas and probably a return of Tamil government servants to those areas.

Educated Sinhalese, of whom there are many—Sinhalese literacy is nearly universal—might ordinarily welcome such a decentralization, because it would open many government and private-sector jobs previously filled by Tamils. The image of Tamils migrating from Colombo to Jaffna, instead of in the other direction, was surely one calculated to whet the appetites of a large number of aspiring Sinhalese.

On several occasions, beginning with the so-called Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact in 1957 and ending with the District Councils Bill in 1968, the two major Sinhalese parties attempted to effect a decentralization to meet the demands of the Tamils. Each time the government in power was on the verge of implementing such a measure, it was forced by Sinhalese mass opinion, led by politically active Buddhist monks, to repudiate the underlying agreement with the Tamils. Faced with opposition from the villages to decentralization proposals that would allegedly “divide the nation” and “deprive the Sinhalese of their legitimate place in the country,”¹³⁰ first Bandaranaike and then Dudley Senanayake were compelled to withdraw proposals already drafted. In 1968, government party members of parliament were so fearful of running for reelection if their party implemented the district councils plan that backbench rebellions were in progress when the plan was abandoned. Only in 1980, after a new constitution made backbench opposition far more difficult, was a devolution scheme finally adopted.

Why was the opposition so fierce? One hypothesis is that competition between the two major Sinhalese parties limited the options of the government in each case. When the Sinhalese party in power attempted to decentralize, the other opposed; and vice versa. But in each case the opposition was so effective only because it aroused such passion at the local level. In short, the opposition was able to take advantage of the issue because feeling on it was so intense in the villages.

There would seem to be no way of accounting for the intensity—indeed, the virulence—of Sinhalese mass opposition to regional autonomy on economic grounds. Actually, there is good reason to think that

130. Opponents of the district councils proposals, quoted in the *Times of Ceylon* (Colombo), Mar. 30, 1968; *ibid.*, Nov. 19, 1967.

the arid, unproductive Tamil areas might suffer economically from such a decentralization, depending, of course, on how autonomous the regions would in fact become. (That the Tamils nevertheless demanded extensive autonomy suggests, incidentally, that they are another ethnic minority that is willing to pay an economic price for separatism.) The Senanayake proposals carefully circumscribed the powers of the regional councils and placed them under the “direction and control” of the central government.¹³¹ The concession to the Tamils was more symbolic than substantial; and, as we have seen, on economic grounds alone, there is every reason to think that the articulate, Sinhala-educated middle class would have benefited from the exodus of Tamil government servants, company clerks, and traders from the Sinhalese South. It can only be concluded that other, highly salient values—cast in terms of political control of the whole country—intervened at the mass level to prevent popular Sinhalese approval of these rather modest decentralization proposals.

ECONOMIC COMPETITION AND ETHNIC GOALS

I have been at some pains to show that straightforward relationships between economic rivalry and ethnic conflict are difficult to establish. Such relationships are not wholly absent. But economic antagonism explains much more about conflict at the top than at the bottom of developing societies. Beyond that, the pursuit of economic interests in ways that might lead to ethnic conflict is actually impeded by certain features of ethnic pluralism itself. Ethnic diversity usually results in a segmented labor market and to some extent a segmented economy in general, thereby inhibiting the emergence of competitive rivalries. Ethnic differences in culture, history, preferences, and imputed aptitudes often lead groups to pursue their rewards in different spheres. Ethnicity thus inhibits the development of a common currency of gratification that would foster economic competition along ethnic lines. Much more obviously, economic theories cannot explain the extent of the emotion invested in ethnic conflict. As Ed Cairns has pointed out for Northern Ireland, in terms that apply more generally, the passions evoked by ethnic conflict far exceed what might be expected to flow from any fair reckoning of

131. See the text of the bill and accompanying explanation in *Proposals for the Establishment of District Councils Under the Direction and Control of the Central Government* (Colombo: Government Press, 1968).

“conflict of interest.”¹³² Finally, materialist theories leave unexplained the striving for such goals as domination (or autonomy), a “legitimate place in the country,” and “the symbols of prestige,” all of which may take precedence over economic interest in determining group behavior.

CULTURAL PLURALISM

Ethnic conflicts are often labeled cultural conflicts, because cultural differences are among the differences that usually divide ethnic groups. But what has been the role of cultural divergence in fostering ethnic conflict? Is there any reason to believe that the more pronounced the cultural differences that exist between groups, the greater the ethnic conflict? There has been no shortage of offhanded assertions that cultural differences engender ethnic conflict. But as in the case of economic theories of conflict, systematic statements of the relationship are more difficult to find. The theory of the plural society, developed by J. S. Furnivall and refined by M. G. Smith, contains some conceptions of the role of cultural differences in the politics of ethnic relations.¹³³

Furnivall's theory grew out of the colonial experience in Southeast Asia. There the coexistence of large indigenous Asian, immigrant Asian, and European populations within the same political unit led him to emphasize the separateness of the peoples who reside in a plural society. The constituent groups had been brought together fundamentally for commercial ends. As Furnivall saw it, they met only in the marketplace. The community of interest between groups was limited to their few common economic interests. Furnivall's plural society is therefore characterized by cultural divergence, the limitation of cross-cultural contacts to economic relations, economic specialization by cultural sectors (an ethnic division of labor), a lack of shared values, and the absence of a “common will.” Such a society is held together by dint of the force

132. Cairns, “Intergroup Conflict in Northern Ireland,” in Henri Tajfel, ed., *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1982), 277.

133. J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice* (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1948), 303–12; M. G. Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1965); Leo Kuper and M. G. Smith, eds., *Pluralism in Africa* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1969). For a good sample of the controversy surrounding the plural society concept, see Vera Rubin, ed., “Social and Cultural Pluralism in the Caribbean,” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 83 (Jan. 20, 1960): 761–916. For an attempt to weave cultural differences into a more general explanation of ethnic conflict, see Talcott Parsons, “Racial and Religious Differences as Factors in Group Tensions,” in Lyman Bryson, Louis Finkelstein, and Robert M. MacIver, eds., *Approaches to National Unity* (New York: Harper, 1945), 182–99.

supplied by the colonial power.¹³⁴ It is inherently a precarious and unstable social form.

In M. G. Smith's formulation, the emphasis on the economic roots of cultural pluralism is no longer present. The emphasis is instead on cultural differences, regardless of the origin of the plural society. Cultural pluralism consists of the coexistence within a single society of groups possessing "mutually incompatible" institutional systems. By institutional systems, Smith means social structures, value and belief patterns, and systems of action; these form the "core" of any culture. Cultural pluralism, in his view, is more than mere cultural heterogeneity. A society is truly culturally plural only when "there is a formal diversity in the basic system of compulsory institutions."¹³⁵

The main characteristics of Smith's cultural pluralism are clear enough. First, because "any institutional system tends toward internal integration and consistency, each of these differentiated groups will tend to form a closed socio-cultural unit."¹³⁶ Second, "where culturally divergent groups together form a common society, the structural imperative for maintenance of this inclusive unit involves a type of political order in which one of these cultural sections is subordinated to the other."¹³⁷ Since a society ordinarily requires a "community of values,"¹³⁸ a society embracing groups displaying wide cultural differences can only be held together through subordination. Third, plural societies are "defined by dissensus and pregnant with conflict . . ."¹³⁹ Linking dissensus and conflict makes it clear that cultural incompatibility is at the heart of the instability that threatens the plural society.

A society is a "plural society," in this view, only when one of the cultural sections dominates the others. If each section were to carry on its cultural practices freely, each would constitute a separate society. In addition, the absence of consensus requires, as Furnivall also thought, regulation by force. Consequently, plural societies, in Smith's view, tend strongly toward the ethnic hierarchies or ranked systems discussed in Chapter 1.¹⁴⁰ In such cases, there is an identifiably dominant segment—

134. J. S. Furnivall, "Some Problems of Tropical Economy," in Rita Hinden, ed., *Fabian Colonial Essays* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1945), 161–84.

135. Smith, *The Plural Society in the British West Indies*, 82.

136. *Ibid.*, 88.

137. *Ibid.*, 62.

138. *Ibid.*, xi.

139. *Ibid.*, xiii.

140. Smith, "Institutional Political Conditions of Pluralism," in Kuper and Smith, eds., *Pluralism in Africa*, 33, 38, 53–54; Kuper, "Plural Societies: Perspectives and Problems," in *ibid.*, 10–16.

dominant, that is, socially and politically. So strong was Smith's insistence on equating pluralism with the existence of a dominant segment that in the early formulations of Smith's theory, Weber's "ethnic coexistences," the widely prevalent unranked systems which form the subject of this book, were treated as a null category, apparently a logical impossibility.

This omission was later redressed, for Smith distinguishes "differential incorporation" (his earlier plural society), in which one group dominates, from "consociational incorporation," in which there is explicit pluralism without clear-cut domination, and from "uniform incorporation," in which individuals hold their citizenship directly rather than through ethnic-group identifications.¹⁴¹ In ethnic terms, these three forms correspond roughly to ranked systems, unranked systems, and systems in which ethnic groups do not interact *qua* groups in politics.

Nevertheless, Smith still argues that where there is ethnic pluralism, there is a strong tendency toward domination by one of the groups.¹⁴² The existence of a tendency to hierarchy has a theoretical foundation. It is the incompatibility of institutions and values among the groups that gives rise to the need for domination. "Whatever the form of the political systems, the differing sectional values within a plural society are a profound source of instability."¹⁴³ The instability that characterizes culturally plural systems thus seems to be the result of the clash of values. As Smith suggests in another essay, "the moral axioms of one section are not the axioms of another," so that similar events evoke differing interpretations. "The need to express these differences of value and morality governs and reflects intersectional relations, and this insistence on the incompatibility of the sectional moralities is incessantly activated by the differing sectional reactions to common events, especially of course those which involve intersectional relations."¹⁴⁴

Although the plural society framework was originally designed to explain conditions of instability,¹⁴⁵ the theory lacks a mechanism of conflict. When and exactly how are group "differences of value and

141. Smith, "Some Developments in the Analytic Framework of Pluralism," in *ibid.*, 434. The term *consociation* as used by Smith is not synonymous with the usage of the same term by political scientists. Compare Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1977).

142. Smith, "Some Developments in the Analytic Framework of Pluralism," 446.

143. *The Plural Society in the British West Indies*, 90.

144. *Ibid.*, 174. See also *ibid.*, 14.

145. See especially *ibid.*, xiii, 56, 90–91, for Smith's dissatisfaction with earlier theorizing which had postulated cultural integration and minimized the significance of instability.

morality” expressed in conflict behavior? The theory of cultural pluralism embodies an undifferentiated conception of culture, for surely not all aspects of institutional and value incompatibility affect intersectional relations equally. In particular, how far will uniformity of specifically political institutions and values go in mitigating conflict? Need such consensus have any particular content?

Value dissensus may lead to conflict, Smith suggests, if one group infringes the precious norms of another. But value dissensus may equally impede conflict, as we have already seen, by focusing the ambitions of various groups on alternative sources of gratification, thereby preventing them from impinging on each other. Moreover, by emphasizing dissensus, cultural pluralism theory tends to neglect those institutions and beliefs that are held in common. Such elements of shared culture in plural societies may occupy only a small fraction of the total cultural sphere, but they may be among the most highly relevant elements as regards relations among the component parts of such societies.

Just as dissensus may foster or retard conflict, so consensus may be integrative or disintegrative. The colonial experience, for example, may have provided the formerly subject peoples with a shared conception of the purposes of government and politics. If the groups espouse the notion that politics is the art of domination, that shared norm may abet unrestrained strife. On the other hand, if the colonial experience imparts common conceptions of legitimacy, it may generate moderation.

An example will help make this point. In Malaysia, not long ago many Chinese shared the view that the Malays, by virtue of their indigeneness, should be *primus inter pares* in the political system. This view changed only slowly. For many decades, colonial policy, the conditions of Chinese immigration, and the Chinese desire ultimately to return to China all promoted its acceptance. Even after independence, Chinese moderation was manifested in the assumption of party leaders that political legitimacy lay in associating with a Malay political group, if possible, rather than organizing on an explicitly Chinese basis. In the early years after independence, this deference to Malay legitimacy helped allay Malay fears about Chinese intentions and limited the conflict that would likely have arisen from an unrestrained Chinese challenge based on numbers and an uncompromising demand for immediate political equality.

Neither in Malaysia nor in any other severely divided society have shared norms of this sort provided absolute protection against intense conflict. Still, they highlight three features of ethnic politics that are neglected by cultural pluralism theory.

First, they show that very slender threads of consensus can, depending on their content, mitigate severe conflict. Consensus in a limited but crucial sphere—appropriate political behavior—may have an influence out of all proportion to its narrow scope or to the narrow stratum of relevant actors it embraces. If we were merely to search indiscriminately for incompatible “moral axioms” among ethnic groups, we might be led to assume that the groups interact on equal terms, save for obvious disparities of numbers or power. We would miss the impact of unevenly distributed legitimacy, deriving, in the Malaysian case, from indigeneness. Such pretensions to legitimacy may affect profoundly the demands made and the methods adopted by the respective group leaders. The exact content of norms and beliefs probably counts for more than merely whether they are convergent or divergent.

Second, the plural society model has generally tended to denigrate the importance of political variables, envisioning the interaction of whole “cultural sections” in a rather leaderless, extemporaneous fashion.¹⁴⁶ The Malaysian example, simple as it is, nonetheless shows the importance of political forms and of leadership.

Third, since plural society theory focuses on whole groups, it ignores the specific contributions that elites make to ethnic conflict, just as it ignores their contribution to norms of moderation. In the Philippines, for example, there is good evidence that ethnic prejudice is most marked among the professional and salaried middle class, “those elements who constitute the most Westernized portion of Philippine society.”¹⁴⁷ If ethnic conflict is produced by the meeting of incompatible values, there is no explanation of why so much ethnic conflict occurs among strata of the various ethnic groups that are culturally and socially most similar: the “modern” elites that, in education and in occupational life, have typically engaged in the greatest amount of contact and interchange.

TOWARD MORE INCLUSIVE THEORY

It should be apparent that theories invoked to explain ethnic conflict are premised on opposite assumptions. Where the theory of cultural plural-

146. See the criticism by Leo Despres, “The Implications of Nationalist Politics in British Guiana for the Development of Cultural Theory,” *American Anthropologist* 66 (Oct. 1964): 1051–77.

147. George Henry Weightman, “A Study of Prejudice in a Personalistic Society,” *Asian Studies* (Manila) 11 (Apr. 1964): 87–101, at 96. See also Rodolfo A. Bulatao, *Ethnic Attitudes in Five Philippine Cities* (Quezon City: Univ. of the Philippines Social Science Research Laboratory, 1973), 126, 129.

ism conceives of ethnic conflict as the clash of incompatible values, modernization and economic-interest theories conceive of conflict as the struggle for resources and opportunities that are valued in common. Where cultural pluralist theory stresses separation and isolation of the groups, modernization and economic-interest theories stress contact and competition. Where one speaks of divergence and dissensus, the others speak of convergence and consensus.

Theories with such different premises also focus on different features of ethnic conflict. Modernization and economic-interest perspectives are useful in highlighting the role of elites in conflict. Cultural pluralists neglect the role of elites, particularly elites with convergent goals and aspirations. On the other hand, modernization and materialist theories encounter difficulty in explaining why nonelites take part in the conflict at all.

All the theories canvassed here imply that ethnic conflict in unranked systems will be persistent and difficult to manage. For the modernizers and materialists, this is because people are becoming more alike and tangible interests are increasingly in conflict. For the pluralists, it is because unranked systems are inherently vulnerable to dissolution or to the domination of one group. None of the theories, however, addresses the significance of symbolic issues in ethnic conflict. None deals with the important role of ethnic-group anxiety and apprehension, to which Lloyd's study inadvertently commends our attention.¹⁴⁸ None treats the intensity and violent character of ethnic conflict as specially worthy of explanation.

I suggested at the outset of this chapter that careful examination of prevailing theories might help reveal what still needs to be explained. Indeed, it does. Attention needs to be paid to developing theory that links elite and mass concerns and answers the insistent question of why the followers follow. The role of apprehension and group psychology needs specification, as does the importance of symbolic controversies in ethnic conflict. The sheer passion expended in pursuing ethnic conflict calls out for an explanation that does justice to the realm of the feelings. It is necessary to account, not merely for ambition, but for antipathy. A bloody phenomenon cannot be explained by a bloodless theory.

148. For a refreshing exception, see Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics*, 60–66. Cf. Michael Banton, *Racial and Ethnic Competition* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983).